

## **ADVENT THREE: JOHN'S PURPOSE!**

Why did God send John the Baptist into the world? Here are at least four of the reasons.

**NUMBER ONE: JOHN'S PURPOSE WAS TO TESTIFY.** His purpose was to point people to Jesus. He came to lay the groundwork for the coming of Jesus so that people would believe in Him as the one, true light and so be saved.

**That should be our purpose to.** Is your purpose to point people to Jesus? Does the one true light shine through you? You are the light of the world, but the switch must be turned on. Are you turned on? We are stars, bold, blazing, light-giving stars. We don't need to shout, scream, or make a scene. Just shine. Are you shining?

Jesus said, "**John was a lamp that burned and gave light, and you chose for a time to enjoy his light.**"

John wasn't **THE** light, but he was **A** light. It's been said that John was enlightened, but Jesus was enlightening. John exuded the light of Christ, the One true light. When John was born his father, Zechariah, gave this Spirit filled prophecy about him in Luke 1:76-80: **And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace."** And the child grew and became strong in spirit; and he lived in the wilderness until he appeared publicly to Israel.

John the Baptist was a prophet. He was a voice calling in the desert, preparing the way for the coming of the Messiah. He had spent his years growing in the spirit. Now it was time for him to come into the spotlight. God had been preparing him to prepare the way. Preparing him to testify to what God had revealed to him concerning Jesus, the Messiah.

**God is trying to do the same with us.** Are we focused on growing and becoming strong in the spirit? Are we allowing God to prepare us to go out and prepare the way for others to come to Jesus? Are we a light pointing people to Jesus who is the one true light?

John came to testify that Jesus was the long-expected Messiah. To 'testify' means to 'give evidence'. It is what we say and how we act that gives others evidence that Jesus is alive in us. Are you showing people Jesus? Do you demonstrate his love, joy, and peace? Is your life a testimony to His life changing power? Is this your purpose?

**NUMBER TWO: JOHN'S PURPOSE WAS HUMILITY.** John was humble. He had a following. He had disciples. But he kept things in perspective. If he was tempted to let all this attention go to his head, it never showed. He was asked if he was the Christ. What greater compliment could a Jew receive?

Here the crowds were focused on finding out who he was, and John's focus was to get the attention off him and onto Jesus. "No, I am only a witness to the Messiah. He is coming, and if you think I am something special I am nothing compared to him. I'm not even worthy to untie his sandals."

Albert Barnes' in his commentary on verse 27 wrote: "**The latchet of sandals was the string or thong by which they were fastened to the feet. To unloose them was the office of a servant, and John means, therefore, that he was unworthy to perform the lowest office for the Messiah. This was remarkable humility. John was well known; he was highly honored; thousands came to hear him. Jesus was at that time unknown; but John says that he was unworthy to perform the humblest office for Jesus. So, we all should be willing to lay all that we have at the feet of Christ and feel that we are unworthy to be his lowest servants.**"

John did everything possible to get the attention off himself and onto the one who deserved it. John's focus was in bringing Jesus to the forefront. When Jesus started to baptize people, the disciples of John were concerned that they were now turning away from John and turning to Jesus. So, they went to John. John needed to remind them of what he had previously said. It was a great teaching moment.

His attitude was this: "**I'm not jealous; I'm joyous! My desire is to decrease so that Jesus can increase.**"

**What about us?** As we live out our salvation is our purpose to have Christ increase in us and through us? Do we have the goal that as each day moves forward that there will be more and more of Christ in us and less and less of us in us?

Dr. Bonar once remarked that he could tell when a Christian was growing. He said, **“In proportion to his growth in grace he would elevate his Master, talk less of what he was doing, and become smaller and smaller in his own esteem, until, like the morning star, he faded away before the rising sun.**

He said, **“Jonathan was willing to decrease, that David might increase; and John the Baptist showed the same spirit of humility.”**

Humility is not an ideal. Humility is the unconscious result of a life being rightly related to God. Do we regard our desires on the lowest level and Christ’s on the highest? Do we want God to have the glory over our accomplishments or do we want praise? Do we thank God for giving us the ability or do we take the credit? Can we accept Jesus being the focus or do we want our 15 minutes of fame? If we are humble like John the Baptist we won’t be jealous; we’ll be joyous.

### **NUMBER THREE: JOHN’S PURPOSE WAS SIMPLICITY.**

Luke 7:24-28 reads, **“When John's messengers had gone, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind. What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing. Behold, those who are dressed in splendid clothing and live-in luxury are in kings' courts. What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is he of whom it is written, ‘Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you.’ I tell you, among those born of women none is greater than John. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.”**

To look at John the Baptist you wouldn’t think of him very highly. He was not dressed in fine clothes. He didn’t own a fine house. He lived in the desert.

Matthew 3:4 reads, "**John's clothes were made of camel's hair and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey.**"

God led him into the wilderness to live until it was time for him to come into the public arena. In the desert he lived meagerly. He lived an ultra-simple life. Yet Jesus spoke highly of him. This goes to show that it doesn't matter who you are. It doesn't matter how good you look or how much money you have. Great or small you can be used in a miraculous and powerful way by God. In fact, God often uses people who don't look the part to accomplish his purposes so that he would get the glory, not the person. John's purpose wasn't to draw attention to himself but to Jesus.

**What about us?** Do we see as our purpose in life that of drawing attention to Jesus? In all we say and do, are we focused on bringing glory to God? Or do we find ourselves spending too much time talking about our own accomplishments? Do we spend too much time focused on ourselves? Do we spend too much time accumulating things in order to bring us satisfaction?

What about our goals? Are we focused on how we can be used by God in whatever field we're in or moving toward? It's okay to pursue what we're interested in or gifted in. As long as we go into it desiring to be used by God. Too often we don't say, "God use me"; we say, "God give me". We are to be like John and care less about our own agenda and more about fulfilling Jesus' plans for us.

Simplicity is the answer for people who are tired and weary. Simplicity is marked by a contented lifestyle that rests in God's grace. It is the commitment to clear out, scale down, and realize the essentials of what we truly need to live well. The intimate search for wholeness is not found by accumulating more things, but by entering into God's presence every single day.

Simplicity brings clarity to our lives and hearts. Worry begins to drop away because we stop worrying about things that cause us worry and focus on accomplishing God's purposes in us. Our goal is that of loving God and our neighbor and helping others become disciples. Simplicity narrows our focus from many things to a primary group of things such as faith, family, and service. Other things do not matter like they once did.

Samuel Logan Brengle said: **“Spiritual leadership is not won by promotion, but by prayers and tears. It is attained by much heart-searching and humbling before God; by self-surrender, a courageous sacrifice of every idol, a bold, uncompromising, and uncomplaining embracing of the cross, and by an eternal, unfaltering looking unto Jesus crucified.”**

**NUMBER FOUR: JOHN’S PURPOSE WAS TO BE BOLD AND COURAGEOUS.** John was bold and courageous to accept his calling. Here John was, living much of his life in the desert. Possibly with little contact with others. But, when it was time for him to be used on the next level he didn’t respond with, “I’ve lived all this time in seclusion and now you want me to go and speak out in public? Are you crazy? I can’t do that.”

Instead, he accepted the monumental challenge and stark contrast to what he was comfortable with. He was bold and courageous.

Second, not only was he willing to become a public voice, but he was also willing to be a confrontational voice. That’s hard. It’s difficult being the voice crying out in the wilderness. We read of John in Matt. 3:7-10, **“But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father,’ for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.** John told it like it was.

I saw a Christmas card this past week that could well have been written by John the Baptist. On the front there was a beautiful winter scene. On the inside were these words:

**“The fire of the Holy Spirit,  
That should be your desire.  
To follow and obey him,  
For the Gospel, be a crier.  
So if Jesus comes back this year,  
May you not be found a viper.  
May you be gathered into the barn  
And not tossed into the lake of fire.”**

That pretty well says it like it is. That was John. John, like Jesus, was not afraid to stand up to the religious leaders. If they were in the wrong, John’s love for what was right compelled him to speak out no matter what the cost.

Having the religious leaders as enemies was no minor problem. You could be put out of the synagogue which would’ve labeled you as an outcast of society. Having those in power upset at you could bring serious consequences.

John had a passion for standing up and speaking out for what was right. No matter who was in the wrong. Sharing the message he received from God was more important than the risks for doing so. Ultimately, it cost him his life. The purpose God had for John the Baptist was not one of comfort. It was non one of ease. It was one filled with challenges, obstacles, temptations, and risks. Yet John willingly accepted his purpose in life.

**What about us?** What kinds of challenges are you facing? What is God calling you to do that is risky? How do you respond when God’s purpose conflicts with your wishes? How like John the Baptist are you?