

Celebration Services (February 9th & 10th, 2008)
"Ambitiously Decreasing"

John 3:22-30

INTRO

DIAGNOSING HIDDEN AILMENTS

Iron deficiency anemia is characterized by pallor, fatigue and weakness. Because it tends to develop slowly, adaptation occurs and the disease often goes unrecognized for some time. (Wikipedia)

Symptoms of being Iron Deficient: Fatigue... Weakness... Palpitations... Fainting... Weak Immune Sys.

Symptoms of being Humility Deficient:

- History of Relational Conflict (particularly family)
- Prone to Criticism & Negativity
- Lack of Contentment
- Problems w/ Irritability and Anger

STANDING IN THE SHADOW OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

Jn 3:22-30

Whatever we Label as GREAT will Awaken Ambition in Our Hearts

When John the Baptist Discovers True Greatness His Ambition is for that Which is Truly Great to Increase and That Which is Not to Decrease

v. 26 The Provocation of Comparison *"look, he is baptizing, and all are going to him"*

– "LOOK" the temptation of comparison

“ Humility towards men will be the only sufficient proof that our humility before God is real, that humility has taken up its abode in us and become our very nature, and that we actually, like Christ, have made ourselves of no reputation. When in the presence of God lowliness of heart has become not a posture we pray to Him, but the very spirit of our life, it will manifest itself in all our bearing towards our brethren. The lesson is one of deep import: the only humility that is really ours is not that which we try to show before God in prayer, but that which we carry with us, and carry out in our ordinary conduct It is in our most unguarded moments that we really show and see what we are. To know the humble man and to know how the humble man behaves, you must follow him in the common course of daily life.” **Andrew Murray**, “Humility” (Chap. 6)

– “**he is baptizing**” this is John’s Identity (he’s John “the Baptist”); this is what he’s known for!

– ***What Are You “Known For”?*** Athlete? Wealthy? Funny? Leader?
..... Talent? Beauty? Popularity? Parenting? Spirituality?

.... How Do You Do in Comparing Yourself to Others?

.... How Do You Do When This Area “DECREASES” in Your Life?

– “all are going to him”

.... *how do you feel about "BEING REPLACED" or "REDUCED"?*

v. 27 John's Answer — the Remedy to a Heart Being Controlled by Pride

All Greatness Finds Its Origins and Developmental Cause in God ... Our Existence
.... Our Talents Our Intellect & Skills Our Wealth Our SALVATION Our
SANCTIFICATION

“ This sentence is the statement of a general truth in religion. Success, promotion, and growth of influence, are gifts which God keeps entirely in His own hands.” **J.C. Ryle**, “Expository Thoughts on John,” vol. 1, p. 180

“ God’s sovereignty stands hidden behind all human claims, for a human being does not have anything but what he has received.” **D.A. Carson**, “The Gospel According to John”, [PNTC] p. 211

Deut 8:17-18 Beware lest you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.' 18 You shall remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers,

Psa 75:4-7 I say to the boastful, 'Do not boast,' and to the wicked, 'Do not lift up your horn; 5 do not lift up your horn on high, or speak with haughty neck.'" 6 For not from the east or from the west and not from the wilderness comes lifting up, 7 but it is God who executes judgment, putting down one and lifting up another.

1 Sam 2:7 The LORD makes poor and makes rich; he brings low and he exalts.

1 **Chron 29:10 - 16** And David said: "Blessed are you, O LORD, the God of Israel our father, forever and ever. 11 Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all. 12 Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all. 13 And now we thank you, our God, and praise your glorious name. 14 "But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able thus to offer willingly? For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you. 16 O LORD our God, all this abundance that we have provided for building you a house for your holy name comes from your hand and is all your own.

... Similar thought— **1Co 4:6-7**

- Being the receiver rather than the originator eliminates Boasting

1Co 5:1-2 ... the blinding effect of arrogance

“ The root of all virtue and grace, of all faith and acceptable worship, is that we know that we have nothing except that which we receive, and bow in deepest humility to wait upon God for it.” **Andrew Murray**, “Humility”, (Chap. 3)

v. 29 Humility is a Highway for JOY

What Types of Things Tend to Crowd Out Joy? Fear Jealousy
Discontent Despondency

– *How Many of These Things are Growing in the Soil of Self-Oriented Pride?*

Fear ... of Losing Position, Possessions, or People that we think are necessary for the Good Life We Want for Ourselves

Jealousy ... of those who THREATEN who we are or want to become

Discontent ... believing that we DESERVE BETTER

Despondency ... Giving up because things are going "YOUR WAY"

The Difficulties of the Craving for Greatness:

- The Difficulty of Living with God When Our Ambition is to Increase (to be Great)
- The Difficulty of Living with Others When Our Ambition is to Increase (be Great)
- The Difficulty of Living with Ourselves When Our Ambition is to Increase (to be Great)

“ [Humility] is not a something which we bring to God, or He bestows; it is simply the sense of entire nothingness, which comes when we see how truly God is all, and in which we make way for God to be all. When the creature realizes that this is the true nobility, and consents to be with his will, his mind, and his affections, the form, the vessel in which the life and glory of God are to work and manifest themselves, he sees that humility is simply acknowledging the truth of his position as creature, and yielding to God His place. ” **Andrew Murray**, “Humility” (Chap 1)

TRUE HUMILITY is Only Ambitious for GOD to be Seen as Great!!and there is UNTOLD FREEDOM in That Ambition!!

v. 30 John’s Emphatic Ambition

“ this humility is not a thing that will come of itself, but that it must be made the object of special desire and prayer and faith and practice.” **Andrew Murray**, “Humility”, (Chap 1)

WHAT JOHN THE BAPTIST SAYS IS KEY TO BOTH WORSHIP AND FREEDOM!!!

- WORSHIPEvery Moment of the Pursuit of Increased Greatness is a proclamation of an INFLATED View of Self and a DIMINISHED View of God
- FREEDOM Nothing will Bind You Up (in FEAR INSECURITY COMPARISON) like the QUEST/NEED FOR GREATNESS