

He Must Become More and More

by A.W. Tozer

The sermon emphasizes the importance of humility and surrender to God's will, as exemplified by John's willingness to decrease and let Jesus increase.

Duration: 47:42

Scripture: Matthew 16:24, Matthew 23:12, Luke 9:23, John 3:30, 2 Corinthians 12:9, Philippians 2:5-8, James 4:10

Topics: "Christ Is All"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on the life of John the Baptist and describes him as a great man who became less and less in the eyes of the world. Despite this, John grew spiritually and became closer to God. The speaker emphasizes the importance of humility and selflessness, using the example of John the Baptist and the teachings of Jesus and Paul. The sermon encourages listeners to embrace the concept of being crucified with Christ and to give up worldly desires in order to live a truly meaningful and powerful life.

Transcript

There are many men over and across America who are speaking about the spiritual life and the matter and the need of being sanctified, but there is none whom I would rather hear and whom I would rather present to you as the speaker along this line than our friend Dr. A. W. Posey, who is now minister of the Abeno Royal Christian and Missionary Alliance Church in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, and the editor of the Alliance with us. It has been a real joy to have had him with us for these weekday afternoons. God bless you, Dr. Posey.

It's been a pleasure to be here. You have to do some things by faith, and preaching here is being done by faith. I don't know what contribution I've made, but I trust him that it has been a little bit with my character, maybe.

Now, I want to talk today, as I promised or threatened yesterday, on the text he must increase but I must decrease. Verse 25 of John 3, there was a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying. And they came to John and said to him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou hast witnessed, behold the same baptizes, and all men come to him.

John answered and said, and I like the way John changed the subject here. John answered and said, a man can receive nothing except that be given him from heaven. You yourself served me witness that I

said I am not the Christ.

I am sent before him. He that has the bride of the bridegroom, but the friend of the bridegroom, which is me, John, which standeth in here of him, he rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. It takes a pristinely unselfish bridegroom, or best man, I mean, to stand and rejoice in the good fortune of the bridegroom and not be jealous.

This my joy therefore is fulfilled. I think this is one of the most selfless testimonies ever given here. And he added, for the last seven words in English were ever released, ever uttered by this man in public, he must be preached, but I must be preached.

Now, these men, Jesus and John, were baptized. In their journey they had come near to each other, although of course Jesus himself didn't actually put people down into the water, but his disciples, as it says across the page in John 4. John was bringing his colorful ministry to a close. No matter how spiritual we get, we're still pretty much committed to our humanity.

Yet down here, up there, it's going to be different. And when I say that John was a colorful man, I'm using a dirty word, a word that's gotten into baseball, into the theater, into politics, got all kicked around. But you can't get away from it.

There isn't any other word. John was a colorful character. Some people have colors.

He used to say about two baseball players, Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig, they said Babe Ruth could strike out and get more applause than the little Lou Gehrig got when he hit a home run. There are colorful men. And then there are men who just preach on the latter part.

I don't have any color, I don't even have any hair anymore. The man who has color is an all-inclusive man. He's an all-inclusive man from the Holy Ghost, so that he knows when it's right.

But a man who is comfortably without color. Now, John had color, and he was bringing his ministry to a close, and Jesus was getting his underway. Each was fulfilling his divine commission.

And there was no rivalry except in the minds of the people, somebody said. But nevertheless, jealousy arose among the followers of John and of Jesus, and they came to him, or came to John, to try to get him to settle his problem about baptism. And it appeared to be a sincere question.

But you know, their theological problem was inspired by causes that were ulterior. When I hear people criticizing each other, or somebody that isn't present, I like to probe and see whether it is a sincere problem. And they thought, or at least they covered up by a doctrinal difficulty.

What about this baptism he's had his, and the disciples of John were coming and saying, that man Jesus is getting a new guest, John, and they're trying to raise trouble there. And I complained to Dr. H. M. Schuman, you're trying to raise trouble in the day of Christ. Now, out of many years experience, I think I can say this with truth, that it's a very rare instance when two God-hungry Christians disagree.

If they're not God-hungry, they can disagree over, they'll not likely disagree. What passes for zeal, very often, is not zeal at all, but it is zeal for opinion. Religions rarely have an honest origin.

Almost always, they are the result of a deeply unspirited soul, they come and start a religious problem. Not religious at all. So when they came to see the baptizing over here, he lifted their question up to it, and very

gently for John, that is what I mean he did something, that is he wasn't a gentle man, he saw through their pettiness, and instead of halving it and covering it over and calling it positive thinking, he spiked it for what it was.

But he did manage to do it. He said to them, in effect, your problem is not ritual, it's not water, your problem is your far-off relation to God. He said no man can receive anything except it be given him from heaven, and if I receive something from heaven, and Christ received something from heaven, what are you jealous about? If it isn't from heaven, why are you jealous? But if it comes from heaven, there's a lot of religious and there are good valid arguments against it.

These men get kicked around by a lot of people that are just plain jealous of them. And almost every man who gets into prominence gets attacked by men who are just jealous. John was found last year, and he didn't fool with it.

He said, you're jealous. This one that's coming is the Christ, and my joy is in standing in his shadow and rejoicing as he rejoices. And therefore, I and you must remember this, smile and smile.

He must become more and more, and I must become less and less. Now who said this? Some of us, when we try to become less, don't have to work very hard at it. And if it was the secret of his greatness, he must increase, but I decrease.

And here condensed into this sentence is the secret of this great man, John. Did you know he was a wonderful contradiction, a wonderful divine? And before the world, he did get less and less until while he was getting less, if he had been jealous of Jesus or tried to block him, and had listened to the brandishments of his loyal disciples, and had allowed them to catch him in through a feeling of jealousy, he would have ended everything right there. And it's the we have, well now this is the secret of victory.

These are the days when people want victory, and a lot of books being, there is no short in, nobody must increase, and as he increases, and as I taper off, my ministry is prolonged and perpetuated. And said John, as I get smaller and smaller, God adds centuries and centuries to my influence and my power. The dear old saints that lived way back there, they had nothing.

There were two men who lived there and preached, great preachers. One of them was T. G. Whitt Talmadge, the American orator. The other was Charles Spurgeon, the great English Baptist preacher.

Charles Spurgeon preached the Bible, and T. G. Whitt Talmadge roamed the skies and reached upwards for a text. He was the orator. They both died, and Spurgeon's tabernacles still were running, and T. G. Whitt Talmadge just died with him.

It's always that way. If you want to last and influence the next generation and the next generation and the next generation, taper off, be nobody, and God will bless you and you will know it. That's the wonderful thing.

Now, I want you to hear these words, he must increase and I must decrease. I must decrease in order that he may increase. Now, those are strange sounds for a modern year.

Sometimes I feel I'm what they call wrongly now, an anachronism. You know, an anachronism is something that outweighs degeneration. Really, an anachronism means exactly the opposite, but we're using it like that now.

Like somebody having a coal stove in the apartment here in Pittsburgh. Nobody has coal stoves anymore. I hear Isaiah say things that I don't know whether anybody else is hearing, but they hear.

I hear him say, you've got to decrease, soldier, in order that Jesus Christ can increase. He must increase and you've got to get little if he's going to get big before the people. Now, in this religious vanity fair where we find ourselves, all the Church of Christ today, the Evangelical Church, including the Alliance, it's just religion.

All of the government looks for saying a thing like that. They want that realness when we describe it, and yet we do it when we justify it. And one of the reasons they don't is because they can't.

Some people go to the mission field or marry a preacher or church in Hollywood. A lot of singers can't make it in the record business, in the recording business, and so they stay and sing around the church. Too bad, my brother, too bad.

Let us all find these good while he goes to the world. Many of our pop, our men who began singing in a church choir and to sing with girls, as soon as they found they were good enough to put it over, they were about to sing. Out they went.

Now, that's the Christianity that we're in today. Don't pray for butter. Ah, there's a voice I hear, and I hope you hear it, and we must decrease.

Now, that voice sounds very strange in this day, I say. It sounds like a voice out of the past. It sounds like a voice out of the future.

It sounds like a voice with no past and no future. A voice speaking out of eternity. If you want to be grace-delivered, if you want to be high, get low.

If you want to go up, step down. If you want to be blessed, seek to bless others. If you want to live, die.

If you want to do it, give everything away. And if you want to be mighty, be weak. That's the voice of John, the voice of Paul, the voice of Jesus.

Take your cross and follow me, but we don't like it in our day, and yet it's here. I'm the rarest soul that can hear this. I speak for the rare people that can hear.

The astonishing thing is to me that anybody comes to hear me, except to have no sin, because I positively, or anybody listening to me that's hearing another voice, I'm too big for myself. Well, your spiritual life is going to depend upon what you do with this sound you hear, this voice, the intensity and quality of your spiritual life, and the fruit of your Christian testimony, and the result of your labors. It all depends on what you do with this, see Jesus must increase and I must decrease.

If you're not willing to get little, well, all right, you take a second or third or sixth place in the kingdom. But if you're willing to get little, the Lord will push you up. When you make a feast, he said, Jesus, and you invite your guests, he said, you guests, don't go in and get to the top, because you get bumped down as somebody that's a ... But you take the low place, and then if you're a VIP top, you know, a lot of you, dear people, are being little because you're trying to be big.

Now, if you would try to be little, that'll make you big after a while and on. Not right away. You know it's better than to do it right away, because then you'd blow up like a small ice bomb.

But if you do it a little at a time, and the beautiful thing is, some of the biggest people I know are as naive as a kid, and they don't know it, just as humble and weak as I am. Well, that conscious you, Jesus Christ, also depends upon whether you're little or big. You stand in his way, you can't have much communion with him, but it will shine, and it will shine through you.

Now, if I were to ask this congregation, do you want to get something from the Lord? I'd have half the congregation at the altar. Everybody wants to get something. But if I were to ask the congregation, who wants to get rid of something? There'd be half a dozen, and some of them wouldn't be.

Well, the fact is, we don't want to get rid of it. Who wants to get blessed? Who wants to get filled? Who wants to get a gift? And they'll all come. But when we say, who wants to get smaller and smaller and smaller? You can't get crowds that way, and you can't get people to listen to you much.

But I have a feeling some are hearing me now. I want you to make your loom and tough and spiritual. Well, now, how about this? These are our thoughts, O Lord.

He's getting bigger and bigger, and I get smaller and smaller. Getting these thoughts over everything, Lord, over me, Lord, over my friendship. A lot of people would rather have friends than to have friends.

They'd rather have a number of friends than to have the one friend, so their friendships get in their way. But you've got to be willing that your reputation should get smaller and smaller. Most preachers fight to keep their reputation going up and up and up, but John said, my reputation's on the way out.

He said, pretty soon I'll retire and go to Carlisle, and sit third from the end on the bench, you know. Nobody wants to think that. He said, I'm retiring.

I'm getting smaller and smaller, because there's somebody coming that's much greater than I am at a new seat, and I don't know anything that I'd rather and say. We can't listen to Tozer. We're hearing Jesus Christ, let's pray.

That would be the best thing that could happen. And you've got to get rid of your reputation. Some of us fight for our reputation.

If anybody criticizes us, we send a hot letter back. You have to put it in your lap or wrap it up, you know, so it doesn't burn, because we want to defend our reputation. If you defend your reputation, you'll have a job of doing it all by yourself.

But if you sacrifice your reputation, the Lord will look after it for you. You'll see nobody will love you for your reputation. And then my ministry and my ambition.

I got a bite of that, brethren. Your ministry and your ambition to be great. I have a bigger church.

Lord bless me. And when we're called to a bigger church, we pray over it while we pack our goods, you know, to see if it's the Lord's will while we're packing. That's all my ministry, my ambition.

Occasionally in the Alliance, we find some fellow who is godly enough to take a project, we call it a Keith Lettman, and I'll need a wonder on the many, because there aren't many like that, but there are a few. Then my property. Lord, be exalted over my property.

I don't have to have property. Be exalted over my family, Lord. And you know, this American Christianity, she's suckled around the door in the yellow rose bush on the lawn and the dog lying with soup on the unpainted porch and grandma rocking while she nips, with a smile on her face and her old Bible there on the table with her wire rimmed glasses.

That's American Christianity. We have the remotest concept of what it is. We equate it with Americanism.

Christianity and Americanism are no more. You can be an American and a Christian and a Christian and an American, but they're two identical, you know. And besides that, you can be a Christian and never see a hound dog sleeping on the porch, and never smell a honey bee, and never see grandpa nipping, or grandma nipping.

You can do it. So, let's get this idea that Christianity is that kind of Christianity that we hear men preach about. My brother sometimes, if you're going to act with God, you're going to have to bust your family.

You're going to have to stand against them. I am from the hills of Pennsylvania out here, and when I got converted finally over in Ohio where I moved, my mother was poor, and everybody looked at me as if I had suddenly lost my mind or blown a snooze. When I got converted, God took, and I went home, went up to the attic, and got.

Then when I began to preach on the street myself, my mother said, why, next month I'm preaching. Not I'm preaching, but preaching on the street. She was a Presbyterian, and she couldn't stand it to know that anybody preached on the street.

I had to turn my back on my family before I could get right with God. I had to do it. We were guided on them.

But you know what happened? It wasn't very long until my father got converted, then my mother got converted, then my two sisters got converted, then my brother-in-law got converted, and my brother got converted. I had the third house, you know, but then my back on the old crowd. Oh, Lord, make me smaller and smaller that you can get bigger and bigger.

A lot of people's families stand in their way. I know preachers who have wives, and they let those wives get in their way. Listen, Reverend, there's some, you know, stand up there and help God to reach for heaven, because the Lord won't get bigger and bigger.

If you've got a good wife who understands you and prays for you and puts up with you, thank God for everybody. If you don't have such a wife, don't, and for that reason, refuse to go on with God. Socrates, a young man asked Socrates, shall I get married or not? Yes, he said, get married.

And he said, if you get a good wife, you've got a wonderful thing, and if you get a bad wife, you'll make a philosopher out of it. John Wesley said, my wife is my sanctification. So your family, your family, don't sit back and talk.

There were two men I know who had heart trouble. One of them went out to California and retired, and he sat around, waited, and listened to his pictures, and took his own course and waited around. He lived five, eight years, but he wasn't alive.

He just thought he was. He was so afraid he would die, he passed away. And another man, what was that great big tall, handsome fellow who used to get at the Simpson Bible Institute, Philidor, he came to me and he said, you know, I just seem to be here.

He said, I've got a coronary condition here, too, and he said, I might just die any minute. But he said, am I going to sit around? I said, I'm not. He said, I want to die internally.

And he did just exactly that thing. Exactly one year later, they found Philidor lying beside his bed. His soul had gone to do a job.

But in the meantime, he'd had one whole year preaching and teaching and praying. Oh, my friend, if you're so worried about your health, that old practice that you're cramping around in, that old days of 1914, that you've got, it'll go to pieces one of these days, and they'll throw it out on the old rust pile. But when the Lord comes, he'll give you a new body like unto his glorious body.

So don't worry about your health, and don't worry about your life. Don't worry about your life. The Lord will say, if you must let my life taper off.

John soon lost his life. I'll give you this illustration in quick. Take a look at my watch.

Many generations ago, when men used to go to the desert and seek what we call the deeper life, the spiritual life, and sought to get away from the vanity pair of their days, some of them became great saints, great souls, and they wrote great books that have blessed the centuries. Well, one day, one of those old fellows was approached by a young man. The young man said, Father, you are known far and wide as being a man of God, a crucified man, a man who carries his cross.

I want you to know, tell me, what does it mean when it says, I am crucified with Christ, the cross by which I am crucified under the world? He said, what is it to be crucified? Well, as near as I can recall it, before I pull it out of my memory, the old man thought of it, and he said, well, young fellow, here are five things about a crucified man. He said, when a man is hanging on a cross, he's only facing one direction. He said, he doesn't change his mind and go this way one day and the other way.

No, he said, he stays right there facing one direction. He said, now, that's what it means to be crucified with Christ. When Christ hung on the cross, he faced one direction.

Some of you face all directions at once, and that's new trouble, you know. Every new evangelist that comes will go to the office because he's been facing the wrong way, and he gets faced around, and when finally his plane is over Indiana, why isn't he facing around again? He said, the crucified man only faces one direction. He said the second thing about a crucified man who's hanging on a cross, he's making no plans for tomorrow.

He hasn't got any plans for tomorrow. He's not going to be around tomorrow, you know, and so he's making no plans. He isn't worrying his head about the plans.

He's just hanging up there suffering. Somebody else is making his plans, and that's point number three. He said he has no will of his own, and somebody else is making his plans for him.

The Roman government, for instance, made his plans, and he doesn't do a thing but hang up there according to the will of the Roman government. Now, he said the man who's crucified, he isn't planning

and running his life. Somebody else is running his life, even Jesus Christ the Lord.

Then he said another thing about that man hanging up there, he's not going back. He said goodbye to his family, he's not coming back. He said he's out there, and there's no holy bridges up behind him, and he's not coming back.

He said the fifth thing is he's lost all interest in the world. He lost all interest in the world, because he doesn't say, Would you please read the stock market report to me, John? While he hangs there, he knows what the stock market means to him. He had all kinds of stuff, and it was going up like a rocket.

He still wouldn't gain from it, because he was going to be dead shortly. He doesn't say, Who won the hockey game last night, or is so-and-so coming in person to Pittsburgh? He's not worried about who's coming in person or coming in spiritual form. He's lost interest in the world.

That's the crucified man. The Christian Missionary Alliance grew louder, saying, Oh, that we might have it again. That the children of the Lord who gather round our churches might know that the crucified man has lost all interest in the world.

He isn't going back and is making no provision for the flesh. He has no will of his own but the will of God. He's making no plans for the future.

He plans on the hands of God, and he only faces one direction. Oh, what a change it would make in our lives. And that hurts a little bit.

Crucifying isn't an easy thing to know. There is no antibiotic pill that you can take to crucify. You have to go right out there and let them wham the nails into your palms, and that hurts.

It hurts, I tell you. You suffer. Some of you won't suffer, you can't reign.

You won't die, and you can't live. You won't go down, you can't get up. You want to hire people to come in and entertain you and speak to you and make you feel good, and I don't want to be one of them.

It won't work, sisters. There's only one way to get up, and that's to start down. So if you've heard the voice today, get smaller and smaller and smaller.

The Lord is beginning to put you to Christ, bigger and bigger and bigger. And the wonder of it all is that I'm known to you, through you. God will be blessing you and making you greater and greater while you're getting smaller and smaller.

Wonderful paradise. May God grant that it takes place in your life. Amen.

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I think this is one of the most selfless testimonies ever given here. Then he added, for the last seven words in English, rather, at least, ever uttered by this man in public, he must be creased, but I must be creased. Now, these men, Jesus and John, were baptized.

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I'm the latter type. I don't have any color, I don't even have any hair anymore. The man who has color has an awful timing from the Holy Ghost, so that he knows when it's good and when it's color.

But a man who is comfortably without

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