

Pointing to Jesus

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John 1:6-8

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There once was a man who was foretold in the Old Testament. Angels and miracles accompanied his conception. He was from a prominent Jewish family. When he grew up, he had a ministry in Israel that many thousands of people participated in and many of the religious leaders were incredibly skeptical of. Eventually, he was killed because he became far too influential and the leaders didn't like all the influence that he had. God told his parents, "This is what you will name him." And his name started with a J, and his name was not Jesus. Did you think it was, though? I bet you did. No. We're talking about John the Baptist, who was not a Baptist. That's not what that means. John the Baptist means that he was a baptizer, that he baptized people.

John the Baptist was a man of conviction. He knew what he believed, and he proclaimed it with, unashamedly, unashamed boldness, because he knew it was true. He was also a man of courage who refused to compromise. Even when his life was on the line, even when it would cost him his life, he would not back down. And he was a man of humility. He knew that his role was never to be the focus of anything, but that his role was to point to the only one who truly matters. Jesus describes him in Matthew 11:11 with these words. "Among those born of women, there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist." Did you hear that? Greater than Abraham, greater than Moses, greater than David, greater than every president, every celebrity, every athlete, every emperor, every king, every person who has ever lived at the very top of that pyramid, Jesus said, is John the Baptists.

However, many of the scholars I read this week said that John the writer interrupts himself in verse 6. He was talking about the word, and then he just kind of pivots and goes, "Well, I need to talk about John the Baptist too," that this discussion of John the Baptist is kind of out of context. However, it seems John the writer saw something about John the Baptist that we missed. That's why it wasn't strange for him to put John the Baptist right here. We think it's weird right at the beginning, because we don't know much about John the Baptist. We don't see why the writers of the New Testament would place him first. In all four gospels, his ministry is right at the beginning. His ministry is mentioned multiple times in the book of Acts. As we see the sermons, here's what the early Christians preached, and they talk about John the Baptist, but yet he's kind of forgotten by modern Christians.

My assumption when there's some kind of, quote unquote, problem in the Bible is that the problem is with me, not with the text. So let's ask, what is it we're missing? What is it that we don't see about John the Baptist? What is it that made him so great to them in the Bible, but not to us? And as we answer that, I think we're going to see why John the writer placed John the baptizer right here, right at the very beginning, but I think we're also going to see a little bit about the Christian life as well. Because as we look at John the Baptist, I think we will desire to grow in what he grew and what he really embodies, which is pointing people to Jesus. That is what John is famous for, pointing people to Christ. You can always spot him in medieval arts. If you Google medieval art today, and medieval art, John the Baptist, you will see John the Baptist doing this. This is what he's always doing. He's always pointing. That's how you always know

it's John the Baptist. He's pointing. And he's either pointing in the picture to the cross or to Jesus, or he's pointing off the canvas up to the sky, pointing to Jesus in heaven. He's always pointing to Jesus. Medieval art gets a lot of things wrong, but they don't get that wrong. More than being John the Baptist, we should really think about him as John the witness. Look at verse 7. "He came as a witness to bear witness about the light." So why put John here right after this section on the word in verses one to five? Well, because in the ancient world, a king didn't just show up unannounced. "Hi, I'm the king. You didn't know I was coming, did you?" They would never do that kind of thing. When they're going to show up to your town or your city, they would send their servants there first. The servants would arrive and they would tell all the people, "Get ready. The king is coming." The roads were poorly maintained, so the servants would remove the rocks and fill in the potholes and smooth out all of the rough spots to prepare the way for the king. And as the king was approaching, the servant would stop. They'd see the king approaching. They would stop, cup their hands over their mouth, and announce, "The king is here. The king is here. Get ready to receive your king." So more than merely being a king, what we've been seeing in verses 1-5 is that the word was what? God. The word was God. However, the word who is God is also God's king, his messiah, his Christ. You see that all the way in verse 17, which we'll get to like three months from now. But that is where John is headed. This word, this one who is God became a human being to fulfill this role as the messiah, as the king. And when the king is arriving, he needs a servant to come along and prepare the people and then proclaim, "Get ready to meet your king."

And that's John the Baptist. Before the arrival of Jesus, John is famous. Thousands and thousands of people are coming to see him. But as soon as Jesus arrives, John fades away, because a good servant recognizes that all focus must not be on him, but on the king. And that's what John the Baptist does. That's why he says, John 3:30, "Jesus must increase, but I must decrease." That humble recognition of who he is points to his greatness.

Now, let's get to know him starting in verse 6. "There was a man sent from God whose name was John." There was a man. Now, why would John start that way? John is starting that way in verse 6 because he's contrasting John the Baptist with the Word. You see the contrast clearly in verse 8 where it says, "He was not the light." John the Baptist was not the light. But how is John the Baptist not the light? What's going on here? Well, up until verse 6, what is John doing? He's talking about this eternal uncreated one who existed at the beginning, who was with God, yet distinct from God, and yet is God.

So we move from all of this lofty talk about heaven before creation and creation itself, and then we run right into verse 6. There was a man. The word in verse 1 was God. John the Baptist, verse 6, was what? Sent from God. The word always existed. That's chapter 1, verse 1. John the Baptist was, it says there in verse 6, "There was a man." That was verse 6 is different than the was in verse 1. Those are two different wases. One was means always existed. Before the beginning began, the Word existed. He already was there. This Word in verse 6 means to come into existence.

Now, there was a time when John the Baptist wasn't, but then he was created. He came into existence. Jesus is the creator, verse 3. John the Baptist, in other words, is his creation. Verse 7, "John the Baptist came to bear witness to the light," but Jesus, the word what? He is the light. And then finally, verse 7. "People came to believe," notice verse 7, "through John, but people came to believe in Jesus and were saved from their sins." Now notice verse 6. It says about John that he was sent from God. This is why he is significant. He was sent from God. This puts him in

a category like Moses and prophets and Jesus. So that small category of the billions of people who've ever lived, they're in this small category of people sent by God. And the idea there is that he's sent with a mission. He has a goal. He has an assignment to accomplish. And now, all kinds of people say, "I'm sent from God. I'm on a mission from God," all of that. But how do we know? What does the Bible say about John the Baptist that lets us know, no, no, he is very special, he was on a mission from God, he had an assignment.

Well, first, Isaiah and Malachi both explained his ministry hundreds of years before he was born. And so the idea there is, hundreds of years before he's born, getting people to understand those ideas, embrace those truths, so that if this shows up in your lifetime, you know, no, there's something special about this guy because he was talked about hundreds of years earlier. Second, if you read Luke chapter 1, you see that his birth was miraculous. His parents were old, probably in their 80s. His mom couldn't have kids, the text says, but she got pregnant. We throw the phrase miracle baby around, but John really was a miracle. Third, his arrival came with angelic announcements. So your baby might be a little angel, but angels didn't announce his or her birth. Something special is happening there.

Fourth, God gave him his name. We kind of read through that, that there's this interchange between Zechariah, John's dad, and the angels, and what's that all about? Gabriel saying, "This shall be his name," all of that. We kind of read through that. What's significant about that? It's incredibly special if God shows up to give you your name. Think about it. Abraham and Sarah, their names get changed. Why? Because God's rescue mission for the world is beginning through Abraham. Well, Jacob, we're going to change your name to Israel. Why is that significant? Because that rescue plan is going to be proclaimed by this group of people, Israel, so I'm changing your name because something significant is happening here. Then you get to Jesus. He's kind of significant, right? He is the rescue plan, so you make sure to name him this. Yahweh is salvation. And then John is in that even smaller category of people that God specifically names because he's going to proclaim the rescue mission.

And then fifth and finally, everybody knew that John was a prophet. In other words, God's spirit within them matched God's spirit, the message coming out of John, and they recognized, no, there's something different about John. So much so that Jesus says in Matthew 11:9 that, "John was a prophet." So as a prophet, he's clearly on assignment from God. And as the first follower of Jesus, he's a bit of a paradigm for all followers of Jesus in that, like John the Baptist, you should, point #1) ***Accept your assignment. Accept your assignment.*** All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and all of it is profitable. It benefits us, teaching us, rebuking us, correcting us, and training us. Even these verses about John, in John 1:6, even this has an application for our lives, and I think that's what it is. John clearly had an assignment, and when you were saved, you got an assignment. And that assignment, like his, is pointing people to Jesus. So, what is your assignment? My assignment, as Christians, it's pointing people to Jesus. All of God's people got assignments. Adam, first created, you have an assignment. "Don't eat from that tree." Abraham got an assignment. "Go to Canaan." Moses got an assignment. "Get my people out of Israel and into the promised land." David got an assignment. "You will be king over my people, Israel." Matthew 28:19, the risen Jesus, with all authority in heaven and on earth, gives us our assignment. "Go and make disciples of all nations." That's our assignment, every one of us.

Making disciples means using your life to help other people come to know Jesus in salvation. It means using your life to help other people come to love him more and more in obedience. And it means using your life to help them grow in their service of him, living their life for him, so that

as they live their life of pointing to Jesus, because they're seeing your life of pointing to Jesus, other people are drawn to Jesus because they're pointing to Jesus as they're watching your life. All of life goes from pointing to self, devoted to self, living for self, to pointing to Jesus, devoted to Jesus, living your life to please him and him alone. Then as you do that, as you're pointing to Jesus, you're not pointing at who? Yourself, right? And people are like, "What are you pointing at?" Like, "Oh, he's amazing. He's wonderful. I want to give my life to him because he's satisfying. He's incredible. He's amazing. Yeah, you're right. You're pointing to him. Now I'm looking at him. He's amazing. I want to give my life to him."

It's kind of like you're a spy in a foreign land. You're going about your business, you're living your life, you're doing your thing, but underneath everything you're doing is your assignment. No matter where you are, who you're with, your assignment, my assignment is the exact same. Make disciples by pointing people to Jesus. This is what grace produces. The more you hear about Christ, the more you care about how wonderful he is, how amazing he is. That grace, that glory, as that fills your heart, you can't help but go like, "No. Point to him. He's the one. He's the best."

Now, you may be wondering about the specifics of your assignment, but that you have an assignment is set. Make disciples by pointing people to Jesus. That's the assignment every Christian has, not every pastor has. You already have it, and it might change your life more and more to see the specifics of that assignment. Maybe you're like, "Okay, this is what I'm doing with my assignment." And maybe that's not going to stay that way forever. Maybe your assignment, the specifics of that are going to change a little bit. Don't assume that what you're doing now is the only way you're going to do this assignment of pointing people to Jesus. God may be getting you ready for a more specific application of how you point to Jesus and where you point to Jesus. So be open to that. Be ready for that. Say to him, "Lord, anything, anywhere. You're the Lord. You own me. Wherever and however you want, use my life to point people to Jesus."

And practically speaking, it's going to start in your home. That's where it'll start, and it'll go from there. Because here's the thing. You look at verse 6, and I hope that my life and that your life, that maybe one person, or maybe through your life, thousands of people will say about you one day, "There was a man sent from God whose name was Sam. There was a man sent from God whose name was Jared. Because you pointed to Christ, God used you in my life, God sent you into my life." Or someone will reflect on the impact of your life and say, "There was a woman sent from God whose name was Pam. There was a woman sent from God whose name was Trisha. And because you were faithful to point me to Christ, now I'm following Christ. God sent you to me." That's the hope. And in reality, I mean, we know this, all people that know we're Christians kind of see us pointing to Jesus anyway. Right? Whether we like it or not, that's kind of what it is. They know you're Christian, and it's like, "Okay, well, what you did right there, oh, you're Jesus would do that? Oh, okay. Great." All right? Everybody knows that whether we accept the assignment or not, we are pointing to Jesus. Right? So, the idea there is, let's just be intentional about it. Let's not say we're pointing to him, but we really aren't. Let's accept our assignment.

Now, if you're like me in high school, waiting till the last minute to do your assignments, let's not do that with this one. Let's not get to the end and go, "Gosh, I really wish I lived my life differently. I really wish I spent my time pointing people to Jesus. I don't have enough time anymore. Time's running out." Let's not do that. And if that is you and you're like, "Yeah, I'm working on my assignment. I've accepted it. I'm embracing it. I'm seeking to live it," then in the

words of first that's only 1Thessalonians 4:10, just keep going. Do that more and more. Keep going. Keep at it.

And we get a glimpse into the assignment in verse 7. "John the Baptist came as a witness, to bear witness about the light." Notice it says there, "He came as a witness." The idea there is their intention here is why he came as a witness. This was his goal, to be a witness to Jesus who is the light. And when you hear that word witness, what do you think of? When I hear that word, I think about courts, legal proceedings, witness stands. And that was how this word was used in the ancient world. It's used for one who gives proof, who gives evidence, who gives information concerning a person or an event that they know something about. So, to be a good witness, the information that you give has to be what? Has to be true, right? So this word witness here speaks to his identity. This is what he would be. And as a witness, verse 7, his job was to bear witness. It was to proclaim the truth. And if you think about it, if you're on the witness stand, you're not hiding. You're not secret. You're like, "I'm staking a claim on this. I'm saying, 'This is the truth. I'm going to proclaim it. I'm not going to be neutral. I'm not going to hide, secret agent.' I'm all in on this." And what John the writer is doing with John the Baptist is he's saying, "This is my first witness in the trial of who Jesus is and what he did." He's presenting Jesus and saying, "You need to believe that he is the Christ and the Son of God so that you will have eternal life, and here's my first witness, John the Baptist."

So, to better accomplish our God-given assignment, you should, point #2) ***Understand Your Identity. Understand Your Identity.*** When you were saved, your identity changed. Now you are a disciple of Jesus. Now you are a child of God, and now you are a witness. Or the way that I put it, to complete point #2) ***You are a pointer to Jesus.*** We point to Jesus because we are pointers to Jesus. It's the same idea there, as he came as a witness to bear witness. This is what I am. This is what you are. We are pointers to Jesus. Acts 1:8, speaking to those in the room, his disciples, but by application, all of us are included in this statement where Jesus says, "You are my witnesses."

Now, it's one thing to be a witness when everybody loves the truth, right? You speak the truth, everybody's like, "Oh, that's awesome. Thank you." It's another thing to be a witness when people are not fans of the truth. Witnesses aren't liked very much in that context. And Jesus prepares us for this. Luke 21, he says in verse 12 and 13, "It will be costly to be a witness." He says, quote, "They will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name's sake." So you're thinking, Okay, that doesn't sound fun. That doesn't sound great. That sounds costly. That sounds painful. And then verse 13, Jesus adds, "All this persecution and going to jail, this will be your opportunity to bear witness." It's not going to be your opportunity to be silent. This is going to be your opportunity to bear witness.

Now, this was fulfilled in the book of Acts, but it's happening all over the world. As this word, in verse 7, translated, witness is the word martyrria. Sound familiar? You get the word martyr from this. Why? Because martyrs seal their witness with their life. Martyrs are saying, my life is not more valuable than the truth I'm proclaiming. And I'm showing you the value of this truth because I'm not going to lay down. I'm not going to stay silent. It's so important, I would rather die than be silent. That's how important their witness is. And so on the one hand, being a pointer to Jesus is going to be very costly, but it is also the highest of privileges. 1 Peter 2:9, Peter, who suffers greatly as a witness, says, "It's also a privilege to be a witness," he says, "to proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." So what you

witness to, what you point to as a pointer to Jesus could not be any more opposite than words like boring, uninteresting, irrelevant. What you have to say when you point to Christ, Peter calls excellencies, the most excellent, wonderful, satisfying, relevant ideas in the history of the world. And you get to point to things that aren't irrelevant, that don't pass away, but that one day every human being will not need a pointer anymore, because all of reality will be oriented to the one that we get to point to now, the Lord Jesus Christ. So, John the Baptist is seen as the first witness on the witness stand, but John the writer gives seven more witnesses on the witness stand in the rest of his book. And so quickly, those are the Father and Jesus miracles and the Bible and Moses and the Spirit and his disciples.

These are all identified as witnesses to say, "Here's who Jesus is. Here's what he did. This is all true, so give your life to him." And then the final witness he adds is himself in John 19:35. He's speaking about himself at the foot of the cross, watching Jesus die, and he says about himself, "He has borne witness." So he's speaking about himself in the third person. "He has borne witness, his testimony is true, and he knows that he's telling the truth that you may believe."

There is a goal for the witness, and it's not information, it's transformation. And we see that in verse seven. Why are we witnesses? Why was John the Baptist a witness? Verse 7. "He came as a witness to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light but came to bear witness about the light." I love that part. "He was not the light." So in case you get confused, there's only one light. That's Jesus. He's the light of the world, John 8 and John 9. This one, he's not the light, because the light, according to Hebrews 1:3, is the radiance, the brightness, the effulgence of God's glory. He tells us who God is. He proclaims the truth. His majesty reveals our need. His holiness reveals our darkness. Jesus came, in the words of John 12:46, "He came into the world as light so that whoever believes in him may not remain in darkness." But that's the goal, that's the hope, is that your witness, my witness, that God will use that, in the words of verse 7, to bear witness about the light so that all might believe through him. Verse 7 there. All might believe.

Well, how is that possible? I mean, John lived... His ministry was about a year long, maybe six months to a year. And it was localized. It's not like he got on a plane and traveled all over the world like Billy Graham preaching the gospel to tens of millions of people. He was just there in that one little spot for that short amount of time. How is it that that's true, that all might believe through John the Baptist? Because every time the gospel is preached, every time the Bible is read, the gospels are read, each one begins with John the Baptist. And each time that happens, people see his ministry pointing to Jesus, and because of pointing to Jesus, people believe. Now, here's the thing. All people are not going to believe through you, and they're not going to believe through me. But if we accept our assignment, if we point people to Jesus, some people might believe. So, point #3) ***Ponder your Mission Field. Ponder your Mission Field.*** As you think about your mission field, recognize that you have no pointless relationships. There's not a single relationship that you have, that I have, that is pointless.

Who are the some people who may believe through you, because just like John the Baptist in verse 6, God sent you to them? See, there are about 8 to 15 people that you interact with most. Some of those people, some of those 8 to 15, are your partners in the mission field. The others, though, what? They are your mission field. And none of those relationships are pointless. The relationships you have with people who aren't followers of Jesus are so that you will point them to Jesus so that they'll be saved someday. Because you think about those 8 to 15 people. Maybe it's a coworker or one of your children. Maybe it's a neighbor or a family member. Maybe it's

another student, a kid on the baseball team. Maybe it's a friend. Whoever that is, they are part of your assignment. God has placed them in your life, or better, God has sent you into their lives to point them to Jesus.

In 2 Corinthians 5, Paul talks about motivation for the Christian life. You can turn there if you want. It's page 1,068, 2 Corinthians chapter 5. So he's talking to this group of Christians and he's saying, "Here's the motivation. Here's the goal for the Christian life. Here's what you should be striving for." Verse 9. He says, "as Christians," quote, "We make it our aim to please the Lord." That's our goal. He's watching. He knows our actions, our heart. We want to please him. We do things that do please him, that that's not to be saved. That's a result of salvation. We're seeking to please him with our lives. Why? Verse 10. Because we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one, so that each Christian may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

So, we live our lives in a way that pleases Jesus because we will all stand before Jesus and be judged, not for eternal life, but for rewards. Not good and evil. As you think about those words, there could be a whole bunch of different things. But Paul then takes those concepts, please the Lord, judgment seat of Christ, takes those two ideas and gives a specific application in verse 11. He said, "Knowing these things, that we want to please the Lord, knowing we will stand before him and give an account," verse 11, "knowing the fear of the Lord, knowing he's watching, knowing we will stand before him," Paul says, "we persuade others." Knowing all of this is coming, knowing that God is watching, we persuade. We seek to convince. We witness. We proclaim the truth about Jesus. This eventually is fleshed out at the end of the chapter, verses 19 to 21, where Christians are given, verse 19, the ministry of reconciliation. And we often call pastors ministers, but we shouldn't.

We should see ourselves as ministers. You are ministers. I'm a minister. We're all ministers because we're all Christians, because we've all been given the ministry of reconciliation, that God and your non-Christian family members, friends, whatever, God and them are at war, which you've been given the ministry of reconciling them, turning these enemies into friends. How? By telling them about Jesus, by pointing to him. Isn't that what you want for the people in your mission field, those 8 to 15 people that you interact with on a regular basis? Don't you want them to be at peace with the God of the universe?

Last Sunday, we had a baptism service here, and as I've reflected on this, growing up in church my entire life, I think that was the greatest service I've ever been a part of. I know many of you didn't get a chance to be there. You can watch it on YouTube. I met a couple from New Mexico today who said, "We watched that last week, and we're trying to figure out, how do we bring that into our small groups so all watch it?" Because it was so encouraging. If you were here, you know that. There was a group of 18 people, six at a time who got up here and gave their testimonies and said, "This is what God did in my life. God saved me, and here's the story." But in many of those stories, you know what else was in that story? It wasn't just what God did, but it was also, "God used this person, God used that person to save me." So there's one guy who was saying, "My wife's been telling me for decades my life would be better with Jesus, I need to give my life to him. And I kept ignoring her for years until now. I'm so grateful she talked to me. I'm so grateful that she told me about Jesus because I'm here. She was right. I want to get baptized." It was incredible to see that. That's why there are no pointless relationships because there are no pointless people. They will either be in heaven or hell, every single person you've ever interacted with.

Now, God doesn't need you to save them, right? We all know that. Right? He can save them however he wants. But he gives you a gift of his grace. He says, "I'm going to use you in order to save them." He saves, but he uses people like us who see no relationships as pointless, no person is pointless, and who take our assignment seriously, say, "I'm just going to point to Jesus." I mean, how amazing would it be if God used you to save someone or all of your non-Christian to 15 people? I mean, think about that.

What would that be like for you to sit in the audience as they're on the stage, reading their testimonies? What if that was you? What if that was happening? Your family member, your neighbor, your coworker is sitting up here while you're sitting down there. You think you're going to be yawning, you're going to be distracted looking at your phone like some of you right now? Think you're to be taking a nap? No, I think you're going to be crying. I think you're going to be singing with all your heart. I think you're going to be praying. You're going to be blown away. You're going to see your friend, your family member on that stage, and you'll be like, "God, I can't believe you let me do this." And then probably your very next thought will be, "Do it again. Do it again. Who's the next person? Who's my family? Oh, how do I get them that book or get them this thing or invite them to coffee, invite them to church? What do I do? How do I do that? God, help me. Show me how I can be used to point to Jesus in their life." That's probably what you'll be doing. That'll happen as you accept your assignment. That'll happen as you understand your identity. I am a pointer to Jesus, whose job it is to point to Jesus. And it'll happen as you ponder and pray for your mission field. I was talking to a lady after the first service. She's like, "I like that. Pray and point." I'm like, "Thank you. You should have preached." That's what it is. How do we ponder our mission field? We pray for them and we point to Jesus. That's what we do. And we do that as we realize we have no relationships that are pointless. God sent you to them, into their lives, so that you may point to Jesus and maybe they'll believe.

Now, one final word to pastors or those who want to be pastors. Before I give that final word, why would I do that? Most of you won't be pastors at all because I mean, this might not be your church. You might be kicking the tires, like, "I don't know. I don't really like that one. Let's keep going." Maybe you're watching from some other part of the world and you're like, "I'm never going to go to Redeemer, but I really like watching." Whatever. The reason I do this is because every single one of us needs to know what pastors are supposed to be and do. Why? Because we all put ourselves under the influence of pastors, and we need to know whether or not that's good influence or not so good influence. Because not only are the principles of John the Baptist's life helpful for understanding the Christian life, but it's also really helpful for understanding Christian ministry.

And so, the idea here is that a really good pastor points away from himself and points to Christ. That's what good pastors do. It's what good shepherds do, good leaders do, good elders do. They don't point you to themselves. They don't point you to themselves. They don't point you to some other source of help or healing or hope. They point you to Jesus. Paul puts it this way, 1 Corinthians 2:2. "I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I'm going to not point to myself," he says. "I'm going to point to Jesus." We talked about this text back in August in the revival series. We went through 1 Corinthians 2, And what we saw there is that ministry must be free from self-promotion, theatrics, manipulation, and using people for personal gain. So as you think about the pastors that you allow to influence your life, you should be asking, what's the flavor, what's the taste, what's the atmosphere of their teaching? When I

allow myself to be influenced by them, am I drawing closer to Jesus, or am I being drawn closer to them? Am I living more and more to please Jesus and follow him and live for him, or am I becoming a fan of a human being?

Those are all things that are very significant for us to think through as we think about John the Baptist. He's known for pointing to Christ and away from himself. That is what all Christians should do. That is what all pastors must do. Faithful pastors focus on Christ. They're not priests or advisors or coaches. They're not therapists. They're not miracle workers. They're not entrepreneurs. They are witnesses just like John the Baptist. They're sent from God to a group of people to point them to Jesus, and that's it. So they give people the light. They give them Christ. They give them the facts, the truth, the proof from God's Word about who Jesus is, that he is God, that he's the Savior of the world, that anyone's sins can be forgiven through faith in Jesus and Jesus alone.

All Christian ministry, in other words, must work hard to remain Christ-centered. And when you do that with a clear conscience, you'll be a good and faithful servant. And so as one of the pastors here, that's my heart for myself. That's what I want in the center of my heart, Christ. That's what I want for the center of the hearts of our staff and our leaders. That's what I always wanted at the center of our church. Because when we do that, we're emulating the one that Jesus called the greatest man who ever lived. And he was the greatest man who ever lived because he had the greatest job ever, which is pointing to the greatest human being, the greatest being, the God man who ever lived, the Lord Jesus. So if you think about that, pointing to Christ, that is a life well lived. As you think about your life, pointing people to Jesus, doing exactly what John the Baptist did, that is a good life. That is ministry well done. That is true greatness, saying, "Jesus, he's the greatest man who ever lived, and what he did was point people to you? That was his assignment? Okay, I accept it. It's mine too." Let's point people to Jesus, and by God's grace, you will hear, we will hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant," too. Let's pray.

God, that it will not happen without you. We need to see Christ. We need to love him more because we see him in all of his beauty, all of his greatness. Nobody has to be forced to give others good news. It just comes out because the news is so good. So may you fill our hearts with the greatness of Jesus. And yet at the same time, that greatness, that glory, that satisfaction that we experience makes it so much easier to accept our assignment to point people to him. And really, why wouldn't we want to? Our flesh, our hearts want everything to point to us. So give us the grace that we need, give us the determination, give us the help to do that. Give us the courage and compassion for our mission field to do that. Because Jesus, you are all that matters. And one day, like I said earlier, there won't be any need to point to you because all reality will be oriented towards you. We long for that day, yet our hearts ready for day as we seek to point others to you, that they may believe and be saved. May people come to you because of the impact you do on our hearts, in this message from this text. May we see baptisms, because we said, "I'm going to take these things seriously," because Jesus, there's no one better than you. In your name, I pray. Amen.