

Attitude Adjustment

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[0:00] Let's pray.

And this is the testimony of John. He said, I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord, as the prophet Isaiah said.

Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him, Then why are you baptizing if you are neither the Christ nor Elijah nor the prophet? John answered them, I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not know.

Even he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie. These things took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

May God add a blessing to the reading of his word. Would you please be seated? When a person is given a lot of opportunity to speak publicly, it's inevitable that even the most polished speaker will, at some point in time, put their foot in their mouth.

[1:54] This week I did some math and I determined that in a given year, I'll preach for a total of between 30 and 35 hours.

Now that's a good amount of time to make a mistake and many of you know that I make them. For instance, one time at my church in Leavenworth, we were about to take communion, much as we are going to take communion today.

And back there, the deacons would stand at the back of the door. And so I'd get up in front of the church, much like I'll do today, and I would, you know, prepare everybody for communion.

And so after I had, you know, prayed and explained again, you know, why we participate in communion and whatnot, then I would ask for the deacons to come forward.

So I'd pray, and now I'll ask for the deacons to come forward. Well, this Sunday, instead of asking for the deacons to come forward, I asked for the demons to come forward.

[3:01] Yeah, everybody was ducking under the pews like, well, demons are infiltrating the church.

So that was pretty bad. But there was an even worse occasion where, again, at my previous church, much like we do here at the beginning of our time together, there's a call to worship, a song that we sing, and then I'll get up and have an invocation prayer, right?

Just a time of prayer for us to really focus again on why we've gathered and what we're here to do, that we're here for Christ and to worship Him.

And so usually I'd begin by saying something like, will you bow your head with me as we prepare our hearts for worship? Will you bow your heads with me as we worship?

Well, this time I forgot a very important word, which is the word with. And instead of saying, will you worship with me, I said, will you bow your heads and worship me? And it was, I mean, it was silent.

[4:15] You could hear a pin drop like, oh, are we turning into a cult all of a sudden? Yeah, and we didn't realize that that was the case. And I was, I caught my mistake right away and I apologized profusely.

And, you know, looking at the ceiling waiting to be struck by lightning at any moment. That was really embarrassing. But while that was just an unfortunate slip of the tongue for me, oftentimes, regrettably, that kind of attitude does exist within the church.

If you've grown up in the church, you've either experienced or heard of power struggles taking place within the congregation, church leaders who are working to try to get rid of the pastor, or maybe you've experienced a pastor who wanted to be in absolute control of everything and everyone.

And those kinds of attitudes reflect an attitude that says, well, it's about me. I'm here primarily for myself. And unfortunately, when that happens, the church suffers.

And unfortunately, there are many in the church who have those kinds of self-centered attitudes.

And let me tell you that this is not a new thing to our times.

[5:38] A classic early example of this issue is the case of Diotrephus, who's mentioned in 3 John verses 9 through 10. I want to read that scripture to you this morning.

I have written something to the church. But Diotrephus, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority. So if I come, I will bring you what he is doing, taking wicked nonsense against us.

And not content with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers and also stops those who want to and puts them out of the church. So here we see very early on in the history of the church, here's a man who was attempting to hijack the church for himself.

He wanted to be preeminent in everything. Therefore, he perceived everyone else as a threat to his position and to his power, including John, one of the 12 disciples, one of the inner three who was very close with Jesus.

He was an apostle. He was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write much of our New Testament. Yet, this man desired so much for his personal glory that not even John the apostle was going to stop him from that.

[6:59] And so he gets this letter and he tries to hide it from everyone else. He may have even destroyed it because he didn't want anyone else to threaten him or his place within this church.

So now, here, third John. John Wright wrote this letter again inspired by the Holy Spirit, but he writes it to Gaius to let him know of this previous letter's existence and of this individual who has hijacked the church from the Lord.

So I hope you see that church politics is not a new thing. And it's not a unique thing either to our times. This kind of drama has played out throughout the history of the church.

And behind it all, I believe, is a selfishly motivated attitude. If you think about it, every false teaching, every kind of rebellion against God is ultimately rooted in a desire to be preeminent over Him.

To be in authority over Him. To have your will accomplished over His will. Self-centeredness is such a big deal in the church because it's an attitude that expresses the opposite of everything that Jesus said and did.

[8:20] And everything about how He told us to live our lives. Everything about the gospel. Everything the church is designed to be. And everything we learn from Christ's example reveals that we should seek to put the self-centered attitudes that exist within us to death.

Because they're so harmful, not just to us, but to our church, to our unity. And ultimately, it will ruin our witness to the world and take us off of our mission, which is to go and to make disciples.

Another example of self-centeredness affecting the church is the example of the Corinthians, the Corinthian church. The Bible says that when we were saved, when we are saved, we're given spiritual gifts by the Holy Spirit.

And the purpose of these gifts isn't for us to use them for ourselves. These are gifts that we are supposed to put to use for others within our church.

However, the church in Corinth had this all backwards. They desired certain gifts because they thought that these gifts would bring them greater attention and make them more important and more integral part of the church than other people.

[9:40] And so Paul says to them in 1 Corinthians 12, 14-19, For the body does not consist of one member, but of many. If the foot should say, because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body, that would not make it any less a part of the body.

And if the ear should say, because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body, that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be?

If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, God arranged the members of the body, each one of them as He chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be?

As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. And so I listen to that, and what I take that to mean is that a church filled with people who have these kinds of self-centered attitudes that are not Christ-centered are a monstrosity.

Think about it. How would you feel if somebody was... Imagine a person whose face was comprised of ten eyeballs, and it was attached to a torso with four arms and one leg, and it was crawling towards you.

[10:59] You would probably be afraid. I know I would be, right? Because it would look like a monstrous thing. That's not a pretty sight. And neither is it a pretty sight, I think Paul is telling us, neither is it a pretty sight when people in the church act in this way.

Because they're not embodying what they're supposed to be as a church, and as a result of that, the body is mutated. It's monstrous. It's ugly.

It does not accomplish. It cannot accomplish. The purpose for which it's been given by our Lord. So the first 18 verses of John's Gospel, which we've covered, serve as a prologue for the rest of the book.

So far, we've seen that John has presented Jesus as the Word of God. He's presented Jesus as the light of God, as the Son of God, and now he presents Him as the Christ.

John the Apostle now takes us to the first week of our Lord's earthly ministry and begins with the witness of John the Baptist.

[12:06] John the Baptist was such a great witness for Christ because he exhibited the attitude that makes for an effective witness. And that's the point or the main idea for this morning's message.

Self-centered attitudes ruin a Christian's witness and is dilapidating to the church's effectiveness. Christ-centered attitudes produce a Christ-exalting witness and are a blessing to both the church and to the world.

When we are self-centered in the church, our focus is inward. But when we in the church are Christ-centered, our focus becomes outward. That makes a huge difference for a church.

And so I ask you, do you want our church to grow God's way? Do you want to see people come to faith in Jesus Christ and God using us to do that?

Do you want to see our children and our youth and all people of all ages who attend this church growing and maturing in Christ-likeness? Well, I hope that you do.

[13:22] And I hope that Wes isn't the only one. And I know that you're not. But if you don't, then I hope that you listen carefully to this message.

But again, if you do, I hope that you'll also listen carefully, realizing that this hope is not possible without you. You.

You. Each and every one of you. Each and every one of us. Living like Christ. Being Christ-centered.

Pursuing Christ-likeness. And encouraging and equipping others within our church to do that as well. So how do we become Christ-centered?

Well, first of all, you must be saved. You must know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior and then have His Holy Spirit living inside of you. Then from there, it's a matter of your attitude.

[14:23] In verses 19 through 28, John the Baptist provides us with a great example of what it means to have a Christ-centered attitude. And we see that his attitude had great results for the kingdom of God.

So the first thing I want you to see is that a Christ-centered attitude says, it's not about me. I want to read verses 19 through 22 again.

And this is the testimony of John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who are you? He confessed and he did not deny, but confessed, I am not the Christ.

And they asked him, What then? Are you Elijah? He said, I am not. Are you the prophet? And he answered, No. So they said to him, Who are you? We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?

So John the Baptist was born six months, about six months before Jesus, his cousin, was born. And he had a very important ministry that most agree, began around the age of 30, similar to around the age that our Lord began his.

[15:37] So he was born just a little bit before Jesus, and he started his ministry just a little bit before Jesus did too. We also know from Scripture that John was the son of a priest, that he was born miraculously to parents who were unable to conceive children, who were advanced in years, that an angel of the Lord appeared to his father and told him that he would have a son, his name is to be John, that he will be a witness, that he will make the path straight for our Lord's coming, right?

He gave him specific instructions on how this child was to be raised, and that one day this child would be a great man of God. Luke 1, 14 through 17, I want to read that to you as well.

I think it's interesting in understanding who John the Baptist is. Again, this is the angel's instruction to his parents.

He will be great before the Lord, and he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb. And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God.

And he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared.

[17:04] So John grows up from here, and he begins to fulfill his calling, and he's garnered a lot of interest at this point in the gospel we've been reading.

People from all around are going to see and to hear this man preach. Why? Why was he so appealing to them?

Well, first of all, it had been about 400 years since Israel had had a prophet of any kind. So they were hungry for one, and here was one. I will never forget the first time.

Now, we don't obviously have pictures of John the Baptist, but, you know, we have children's Bibles that do their best to try to paint portraits that help us figure out maybe or put an image in our minds of what things must have looked like or might have looked like.

And so the children's Bibles that they used to have had these portraits that were sometimes terrifying, honestly. I'll never forget the picture of Jonah and the whale that I saw, this big yellow eye glowing out of the water in the midst of this great storm and being terrified by it.

[18:12] They're much different than we have now, where everybody's smiling and they're all cartoon characters and whatnot. And so I'll never forget in that Bible the picture of John the Baptist. He's standing on the rock.

His hands are outstretched. He's got this garment on. He's got wild, crazy hair. He's obviously yelling and shouting or something like that, depicting by how his mouth was pictured in that portrait.

And I remember seeing that picture and taking it to my dad and saying, was this a bad guy?

Because he looked so wild. He looked so crazy. He was so different. And that was part of the appeal that he had to people.

He was authentic. And they were hungry for somebody who was real, who was truthful. And so also there was a lot of confusion about who he was.

Here he is. He's this individual. The Bible said he's filled with the Spirit. He's preaching. He's certainly unique in his appearance. He's wearing camel hair clothing. He's unique in what he eats, locusts and honey.

[19:19] This catches the attention of people, especially the Jewish leaders who send priests and Levites out to question him and find out who he is. And so they ask him point blankly, who are you?

Who are you? Now, when somebody asks you that question in a typical situation, it's not very pleasant, is it? You know, for example, somebody comes to you or they hear or overhear you speaking and they want to come and they want to give you advice and they want to give you criticism on how they think you could do things better or whatnot, and you don't know who this person is.

What is your first response? Who are you? Who are you? As if, like, I don't care who you are. Go away. And that was part of the feeling, I think, behind the Jews who were sending these people to question John.

They wanted to know who he was. He was becoming popular. He was becoming maybe a problem. They were starting to feel uncomfortable. He certainly didn't fit the mold of who they thought or how they thought a prophet or a priest should look and how they should dress and how they should act. And so they wanted to figure him out. Who was he? So then they could either determine whether this was someone, hey, we can work with, we can mold and we can shape, we can use, or if it was somebody who they would have to work against.

[20:48] And I want you to notice what John didn't say in response to their question. Because, again, he could have responded in a lot of ways.

He could have shared his testimony. It was pretty amazing. Certainly much more miraculous than any of theirs. He could have said something like, well, my dad was a priest.

And an angel appeared to him and told him that I was going to be born and that I would serve the Lord, that I'd be filled with the Holy Spirit, that I would prepare the way for the Son of God.

He could have said that and he would have been honest in saying that, but he didn't. In verse 20, we see that he confessed and did not deny, but confessed, I am not the Christ. See, verse 19 starts out, this is the testimony of John. Well, what's the testimony of John? It wasn't a testimony primarily about himself, but about Jesus.

[22:07] John was more focused on telling people who he wasn't than telling them who he was. He wanted all the attention to be on Christ and not on himself.

Again, in verse 21, we see that those who questioned him were not satisfied with this response. So they said, well, what then? Are you Elijah? And he said, again, I am not.

And they said, are you the prophet? And he answered, no. And again, I love his answers because here's a man who understands his mission in life. It was to be a witness for Christ and he wouldn't let anyone or anything get in the way of his fulfilling that mission.

But I do want to stop here and unpack a little bit for a moment the meaning behind the questions that the priests and Levites are asking them because at first glance, it could be a little bit confusing. So now that they know that John says, I'm not the Christ, they start working their way down the list. Well then, are you Elijah? Who was the Old Testament prophet of renown?

[23:17] John MacArthur comments on this passage. He says, based on the prophecy of Malachi, the Jews expected Elijah himself to return in bodily form just before the Messiah returned to establish his earthly kingdom.

Even today, many Jewish people have an empty seat at the table for Elijah when they celebrate the Passover Seder. John's appearance was strikingly similar to Elijah's.

According to Mark 1-6, John was clothed in camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist.

While 2 Kings 1-8 describes Elijah as a hairy man with a leather girdle bound about his loins.

John's call for repentance and warning of coming judgment would have further reminded his hearers of Elijah. So John the Baptist, though, says he's not Elijah, at least not in the literal sense, but he was in a figurative sense.

As Jesus points out in Matthew 17, verses 10-13. And the disciples asked him, then who do the scribes say why that Elijah must come? And he answered, Elijah does come and he will restore all things.

[24:25] But I tell you that Elijah has already come and they did not recognize him but did to him whatever they pleased. So also the Son of Man will certainly suffer at their hands.

Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist. So, Jesus interprets this Old Testament prophecy as a meaning that there would be one like Elijah and John certainly was very much like him.

However, the Jews still weren't satisfied with that answer. So they asked next, are you the prophet? Capital P. This goes back to the prophecy of Moses in Deuteronomy where he said that the Lord will raise up for you a prophet.

However, this prophecy was speaking to Christ, not to John. So, all that being said, we see that John's Christ-centered attitude resulted from an understanding that it wasn't about him, that all the glory, must go to Jesus Christ.

In football, they kind of lump players into one of two categories. There's the skill players, the wide receivers, the running backs, the quarterbacks, the ones who are faster and quicker, the ones who make the plays, who typically score the touchdowns.

[25:48] And then you have the other guys, which they're kind enough to not say they're non-skilled players, but they're the big guys. They're the big dudes that are on the line. They're the ones that push everybody around, right? Many of you know, this being the great state of Oklahoma, that Kyler Murray was last year's first round number one overall pick.

You also know that he's a little guy for football, about 5'10", maybe. Now, if you put Kyler Murray on the offensive or defensive line, he's worthless.

What is he going to do against those guys that are 300 pounds, right? He's going to get crushed. He's going to get stomped into the ground. He's not going to be drafted to play one of those positions because he's ill-fitted.

He's ill-suited for that. Likewise, if you took a center and you lined them up as a wide receiver or as a running back or as a quarterback, you know he's not built for it.

He's slow. He would get winded quickly. He's not made for that position. Going back to the image of the church being like a body, all of us, again, have been gifted spiritually and those gifts are meant

to be given to others.

[27:06] They're not meant to be used to benefit ourselves, but to benefit everyone else in the body. They're not for you. They're for others.

And you're giving them isn't for your glory, but it's for God's glory. He's the one who gave those gifts to us in the first place. There's a lot of dysfunction on a team when players start thinking about their needs before the needs of others.

People who are focused on their own needs, you know what they start to do? To whine and complain. And if you've ever played team sports or coached team sports, you know how a whining and complaining attitude soon begins to affect everybody else.

So yesterday, Jack's football team had their scrimmage, and it was hot. I mean, I was hot. And my job, I guess, was to kind of police the sidelines. And you know, you get kids and the helmets are tight and they're thirsty and so you do what you can within reason to try to make them feel comfortable, but with the understanding that, hey, you've got to be ready at any moment you could go back into the game.

But all it takes is that one kid, I'm thirsty. And then the other kid thinks, well, I'm thirsty too. And then everybody's thinking about how thirsty they are and they've forgotten about the fact that we're here to play a game.

[28:38] That's how it works in life. This is why it's so detrimental to the church. We start thinking about my needs only and then I start becoming a whiny and complainy person. And I share my whines and complaints with others and guess what?

Then they start thinking about their needs that aren't being met within their church and they start whining and they start complaining and before you know it, the church is in dysfunction. The world needs the church to be the church.

Like John the Baptist, we need to point the focus to Christ, not to ourselves. When we do that, it produces an amazing result.

Matthew 5, 14-16, Jesus preaching the Sermon on the Mount. He says, You are the light of the world. The city on a hill cannot be hidden, nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand and it gives light to all in the house.

In the same way, let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. This church, our church building, is literally positioned on top of a hill.

[29:49] You can see it from pretty far away. Have you ever wondered or thought, what do people think when they drive by this place?

Chances are, a lot of them don't think about us at all. They just keep on going. We have a vision here. Engaging, enlightening, encouraging, equipping.

And the point of the vision is so that we be the church that God has called us to be. That we're engaging. We're going.

Or we're having events like we do with Engage where we're bringing people here but with the purpose that we enlighten them. That we say, you know, why are we here? Why are we doing this for you? Because we want you to know the love of God through Jesus Christ.

And then hopefully in hearing that and they're enlightening them, we encourage one another.

Because this life is hard. We've been called to bear the cross. That's not easy. And so God has put us within a body so that we can bear one another's burdens and encourage one another to live as we ought to in this life.

[31:05] We need each other's support and love. And so we equip one another that we would go and engage and let more people know sharing the good news of Jesus Christ.

And if we possess this attitude, it's not about me. We will be a place. We will be a church that will not just be physically a light on the hill but will be spiritually a light in this community.

And our hope and our prayer should be that other churches are the same. This is a big dream. It's a big vision but it starts small.

And it starts with each and every one of you and me and developing this attitude, cultivating this attitude within ourselves that you know what?

When I come on Sunday morning, it's not about me. As I serve in God's church, it's not about me. I'm not coming here primarily for myself though yes, we have needs, right?

[32:12] And we need to be aware of one another's needs. But I think my primary focus in going to church is because I want to give praise and I need to worship my Lord and Savior who has saved me.

So it's not about me. That's the first attitude. The second is that it's all about Christ. And again, this was John's point. He said, I'm just a voice. I'm crying out in the wilderness and I'm here to make straight the way for another.

Again, they're seeking to find out who He is but John keeps pointing them back to Christ. He doesn't get into who He is or what He's accomplished or where He's come from.

Right? Every believer has a testimony to share and the hero of every believer's testimony should be Christ and not themselves.

As you share your testimony, are you building yourself up more than you are Jesus Christ? If so, that's a problem. Because again, John is a big deal.

[33:19] He's the fulfillment of a prophecy. He is the voice that was prophesied long ago in Isaiah 40, verse 3. But even in pointing that out, he was still pointing to Christ.

Saying, I'm just a man. I'm just a voice. And here's what I'm saying. Make straight the way of the Lord. Get ready, you all.

He is here and I'm not worthy for the task that He has given me to perform. One of the worst jobs I ever had was in college and I worked for a place called Just for Feet.

I don't know that you have those in Oklahoma. The business has long been out of business. But I hated it because all day long I'd be running in the back grabbing shoes, spending time on my knees, right?

Taking people's dirty shoes off and nasty socks and my face would be right in line with their feet, right? And so, I didn't enjoy that job.

[34:29] And so, when I come to passages like the one where Jesus is washing His disciples' feet, you know, it amazes me.

Here's the Son of God, the preeminent One, who truly deserves that number one place in all things. And there He is on the ground in a time where hygiene was worse than it is today. People didn't wear socks. They didn't have tennis shoes.

They had dirty, nasty, calloused, smelly, stinky feet. And the Son of God got down on His knees and He washed their feet.

As an example for them and as an example to us that again, we serve a much greater purpose than the purpose of trying to get whatever we want for ourselves in this life.

[35:29] And so, as we prepare to take communion, I want to read Philippians 2, verses 1-11 in conclusion. And let these words of God, I pray, just wash over you preparing us for what we're about to do.

Reminding us of who Christ is, of what Christ has done for us. In His humility, stooping down to our level.

In His love, living His life for us sinlessly. Dying on the cross in our place for our sins. Enduring our guilt and our shame.

Resurrecting on the third day as proof that He is the Son of God. That His sacrifice was accepted by the Father.

That we have eternal life in Him. Philippians 2, verses 1-11. So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

[36:55] Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility. Count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you not look out only to his own interest, but also to the interest of others.

Have this mind among yourselves which is yours in Christ Jesus, who though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men, and being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Therefore, God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

to the glory of God the Father. by the Spirit of God by the Spirit of God Thank you.