

## ⑦ Re-Think the Gospel : John

### INTRODUCTION | The Testimony from Heaven

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John the Baptist was the last of the prophets in the Old Testament. He declared, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). He was a very humble man. He confessed in John 1:27 that he was not even worthy to untie the sandal straps of Jesus. However, his disciples didn’t agree with him. Why was this so? Let’s take a closer look at this passage and learn more about our identity, our roles, our life goals and the things that give us joy. We’ll also learn about what it means to walk strongly in fullness of joy.

### SCRIPTURE | John 3:16-21

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22 After this Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean countryside, and he remained there with them and was baptizing. 23 John was also baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because water was plentiful there, and people were coming and being baptized 24 (for John had not yet been put in prison). 25 Now a discussion arose between some of John’s disciples and a Jew over purification. 26 And they came to John and said to him, “Rabbi, he who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you bore witness – look, he is baptizing, and all are going to him.” 27 John answered, “A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven. 28 You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, ‘I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him.’ 29 The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom’s voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete. 30 He must increase, but I must decrease.” 31 He who comes from above is above all. He who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks in an earthly way. He who comes from heaven is above all. 32 He bears witness to what he has seen and heard, yet no one receives his testimony. 33 Whoever receives his testimony sets his seal to this, that God is true. 34 For he whom God has sent utters the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure. 35 The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand. 36 Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

### QUESTIONS |

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1. (v.26) The disciples of John the Baptist felt nervous and unhappy about the fact that many people were going to where Jesus was. What made them feel that way? Let’s examine the differences between John and his disciples. (ref: John 1:26-31)
2. (v.27-30) What was John the Baptist’s understanding of his own identity? Use the expressions John employs to guide your thinking.
3. John says, “I am not the Christ” (v.28). Why is his recognition of this important? How do you introduce yourself to others? What are the things that are critical to your sense of identity? (ref: Tim Keller)
4. John declares that he rejoices greatly. Explain why he says this. Why is he filled with joy?

5. (v.30) “He must increase, but I must decrease”. At first glance, this verse seems to convey a passive attitude, but what is John actually trying to emphasize here?

6. In your life, what are the things, or idols, that compete with Christ? Reflecting on today’s scripture, share about how we can be set free from these idols. Pray for one another.

## Reading (Reference) |

John 1:26-31

26 John answered them, “I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not know, 27 even he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie.” 28 These things took place in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing. 29 The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” 30 This is he of whom I said, “After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.” 31 I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel.”

Tim Keller, Counterfeit Gods, p. xiv

God was saying that the human heart takes good things like a successful career, love, material possessions, even family, and turns them into ultimate things. Our hearts deify them as the center of our lives, because, we think, they can give us significance and security, safety and fulfillment, if we attain them.

## PRAYER |

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1. Are you trying to be your own savior? Do you derive ultimate value from things other than God and Christ Jesus?

2. If there are things other than Christ that have captured our hearts, let’s repent. What are these things? Is it our work or career? Is it a boyfriend/girlfriend or spouse? Is it your own striving and hard work? Is it recognition from others or the desire for harmony in your relationships?

3. Let’s discover how the amazing Christ. He became nothing and came to us, sacrificing his own life on the cross. Let’s focus on his saving love and his truth.

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## UPCOMING EVENTS |

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Grace City gospel choir practice (9th)

Lunchtime meeting (12th @Otemachi)

Movie screening and discussion (14<sup>th</sup> Sat Toho Cinemas Nichigeki @2:50pm )

Presbyterian Church in Japan’s World Missions Festival (14th)

Lunchtime meetings (17th @Akasaka, 18th @Marunouchi, 19th @Otemachi)

Vision meeting (22nd, after Sunday service)