

053120 Growth Group Study

Friend of the Bridegroom

John 3:22-36



Background: After that deeply theological conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus heads back into the Judean wilderness where John is baptizing. And, we hear John's last speech in this Gospel. He joyfully says he is not the bridegroom; he is the friend of the bridegroom. Jesus, the one from above, is the bridegroom (implying he is God), while those who receive him become his bride (implying a new people of God). For John, as the friend of the bridegroom, his job was to connect the bride to the bridegroom. When he does his job, he can joyfully fade out of the picture, an attitude captured in his final statement, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (3:30). What if we were to live by that same attitude as well?

Sermon Text (ESV):

John 3:22-36

22 After this Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean countryside, and he remained there with them and was baptizing. 23 John also was 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.

Discussion Questions:

- Preparation
 - As you reflect on the sermon, what stands out to you most?
 - What question(s) did you come away with from the sermon?
- Sermon Questions
 - The Friend of the Bridegroom (25-30)
 - Shawn said that rivalries were there from the very beginning of the church, as John's disciples exclaim, "John, everyone is leaving your church and going to the other one...!" Why should there be no boasting, jealousy, or competition in God's kingdom?
 - What can we do to avoid these things? How can we balance laboring for excellence, while also recognizing that at the end of the day it is all about what God is doing?
 - In this text, John speaks again about a wedding/uses a wedding analogy. What are some reasons he used the bride/bridegroom analogy to speak about the relationship between the Church and God? Would this analogy have been familiar to 1st century Jews?
 - What were some of the responsibilities of the Friend of the Bridegroom? Ultimately, he steps aside because "it's not about him". Do you have any examples at home, work, or in family/friend relationships where you have "become less" for the sake of someone else?
 - The Bride of Christ (31-36)

- We are invited to respond to Jesus with either rejection or reception, where the latter brings Zoe life and the former leads to no life and the wrath of God
 - What are your thoughts on Packer's description of rejection: "no one stands under the wrath of God except those who choose to, and this is not capricious anger/fury (like pagan gods), or sinful, malicious anger (like humans)... God's wrath is a function of His holiness"
- On the other hand, when we receive Jesus, we rearrange our lives around Jesus and His ways, and attest/certify/authenticate His truth in our lives
 - What does it look like for us, for you to be a "walking stamp", stamping truth everywhere we go & serve God and others?
 - Where do you look for joy & contentment? What is it that truly brings joy to your life?