

John – Week 6 – A Prophetic Voice – Bible Study Helps

Title: A Prophetic Voice: The Humility and Purpose of John the Baptist

Sermon Summary:

This sermon examines the life and ministry of John the Baptist as presented in John chapter 1, emphasizing his role as the forerunner who prepared the way for Jesus Christ. The message highlights how John was born with a divine purpose to bring God glory, fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy of "a voice crying in the wilderness." Through exploring John's miraculous birth to Zacharias and Elizabeth, his faithful upbringing, and his humble ministry, the sermon demonstrates that John understood both his great privilege and his proper place. Rather than seeking personal glory, John consistently pointed others to Jesus Christ, declaring "He must increase, I must decrease." The sermon challenges believers to examine their own lives, recognizing that like John the Baptist, every Christian is born again with a purpose to bring God glory. The message emphasizes that true greatness comes through humility and faithful service, making much of Christ rather than ourselves.

Key Points:

- John the Baptist was sent from God as a witness to bear testimony of the true light, Jesus Christ
- Isaiah prophesied 700 years before John's birth about a voice crying in the wilderness to prepare the way for the Lord
- John's birth was miraculous, announced by the angel Gabriel to his elderly parents Zacharias and Elizabeth
- John leaped in his mother's womb when Mary, carrying Jesus, came to visit Elizabeth
- John was raised from childhood knowing his divine purpose and was faithful to fulfill it
- John understood Jesus' preexistence and deity, saying "He was before me" even though John was born first
- John demonstrated profound humility, declaring he was unworthy to untie Jesus' sandals
- John described himself as the friend of the bridegroom, whose joy was fulfilled in hearing the bridegroom's voice
- The law came through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ
- Believers today are called to be like John the Baptist, pointing others to Jesus rather than seeking personal glory

Scripture Reference:

- John 1:15-28 (primary passage)

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- Isaiah 40:1-3 (prophecy of John the Baptist)
- Luke 1:5-80 (account of John's birth and childhood)
- Matthew 11:11 (Jesus declaring John the greatest born of women)
- Luke 16:16 (the law and prophets were until John)
- John 3:22-30 (John as friend of the bridegroom)
- Malachi 4:5 (prophecy of Elijah's coming)
- Deuteronomy 18:15 (prophecy of the Prophet like Moses)

Stories:

- The miraculous birth announcement of John the Baptist to Zacharias by the angel Gabriel while serving in the temple
- Elizabeth's barrenness and advanced age, paralleling Abraham and Sarah's story
- Zacharias being struck mute for doubting Gabriel's message until John's birth
- Mary's visit to Elizabeth when both were pregnant, and baby John leaping in the womb
- Zacharias' prophetic words upon John's birth, declaring his son would prepare the way for the Lord
- John growing up in the desert until the day of his showing to Israel
- The religious leaders (Pharisees, priests, and Levites) questioning John about his identity
- John's response identifying himself as the voice crying in the wilderness from Isaiah's prophecy
- The wedding illustration from the previous day, connecting to John's description of himself as the friend of the bridegroom
- John calling the Pharisees "generation of vipers" when they came to observe his baptism ministry

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Discipleship Questions

John the Baptist was described as being born to bring God glory - in what specific ways does your life reflect that same purpose, and what might need to change?

The sermon emphasizes that John understood both his privilege and his place, demonstrating profound humility - how do you balance recognizing God's calling on your life without becoming prideful?

Zacharias and Elizabeth were described as 'righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless' - what does blameless living look like in practical terms for believers today?

John the Baptist said 'He must increase, I must decrease' - what areas of your life are you still trying to increase yourself rather than magnifying Christ?

The passage discusses how John leaped in his mother's womb when Mary arrived carrying Jesus - what does this reveal about the sanctity of life and God's work even before birth?

John was raised from childhood knowing his specific purpose and life verse from Isaiah 40 - how might intentionally teaching children their God-given purpose from an early age shape their spiritual development?

The sermon contrasts John the Baptist's humility with Samson's pride, though both had miraculous births and divine callings - what factors contributed to their vastly different outcomes?

Jesus said John was the greatest born of women, yet the least in the kingdom of God is greater than he - how should this truth about our position in Christ affect our daily perspective and gratitude?

John called the Pharisees 'generation of vipers' while in the Spirit - when is confrontational truth-telling appropriate in ministry, and how do we discern between righteous boldness and sinful harshness?

The religious leaders kept asking John who he was, but he only answered their specific questions without elaborating - what does this teach us about engaging with those who ask questions without genuinely seeking truth?

Small Group Guide: A Prophetic Voice

Study of John 1:15-28 - The Life and Ministry of John the Baptist

OPENING PRAYER

Begin your time together by asking God to open hearts and minds to His Word and to help each person see how they can better bring Him glory in their daily lives.

ICEBREAKER QUESTION

If you could have any job or role in preparing for a major event (wedding planner, announcer, stage crew, etc.), what would you choose and why?

This connects to John the Baptist's role as the one preparing the way for Jesus.

SERMON RECAP (5 minutes)

John the Baptist was born with a divine purpose: to prepare the way for the Lord Jesus Christ. As the last prophet of the Old Testament era, John's entire life was dedicated to pointing others to Christ. Despite his significant role, John remained remarkably humble, saying of Jesus, "He must increase, I must decrease." His story challenges us to examine our own lives and ask whether we're living to bring God glory or seeking glory for ourselves.

KEY SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

- **John 1:15-28** - John's witness and testimony
 - **Isaiah 40:3** - The prophecy of the voice in the wilderness
 - **Luke 1:5-80** - The miraculous birth of John the Baptist
 - **John 3:27-30** - John's statement about being the friend of the bridegroom
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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

1. **What stands out to you most about the circumstances surrounding John the Baptist's birth? (Luke 1:5-25, 57-80)**
 - How did Zacharias and Elizabeth respond to God's plan?
 - What does this teach us about God's timing and faithfulness?
2. **John the Baptist is introduced in John 1:6-8 primarily as a "witness." Why is this significant?**
 - What was he witnessing to?
 - How does this differ from how we typically think of John (as "the Baptist")?
3. **The religious leaders asked John seven questions (John 1:19-28). Why do you think they were so concerned about his identity?**
 - What does John's response reveal about his character?
 - Why didn't he elaborate beyond answering their specific questions?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

4. **The sermon emphasized that John the Baptist "was born to bring God glory." In what ways were you born again to bring God glory?**
 - How does this perspective change the way you view your daily life?
 - What specific areas of your life might God be calling you to surrender for His glory?
5. **John said of Jesus, "He must increase, I must decrease" (John 3:30). What does this look like practically in your life?**
 - In what areas are you tempted to seek your own glory rather than God's?
 - Can you share an example of when you had to "decrease" so Christ could "increase"?
6. **The pastor said, "John the Baptist didn't rob God of the glory that He deserved." How do we sometimes rob God of glory?**
 - What are some subtle ways we take credit for what God has done?
 - How can we cultivate a heart of humility like John's?

GOING DEEPER

7. **Zacharias and Elizabeth raised John with a clear understanding of his purpose from an early age. How can parents and spiritual mentors today help the next generation understand their God-given purpose?**
 - What practical steps can we take?
 - How is this different from simply teaching religious behavior?
8. **John called the Pharisees "generation of vipers" (Matthew 3:7). How do we balance speaking truth boldly while remaining humble?**
 - When is confrontation appropriate?
 - How did John model both boldness and humility?

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9. **Jesus said that "among those born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist, but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he" (Luke 7:28). What does this mean for us today?**
- How should this truth affect our self-perception?
 - Why does our position in Christ make us "greater" than John?

APPLICATION

10. **John's entire life pointed people to Jesus. If someone observed your life for a week, what would they conclude you're pointing people toward?**
- Your career? Your family? Your hobbies? Jesus?
 - What needs to change?
11. **The sermon mentioned that "everything matters" in how we live and disciple others. What "small" things in your life might have bigger spiritual implications than you've considered?**
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KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ **John the Baptist was born with a divine purpose** - to prepare the way for the Lord Jesus Christ
 - ✓ **True greatness is found in humility** - John understood his privilege but never let it go to his head
 - ✓ **Our role is to be witnesses** - pointing others to Jesus, not to ourselves
 - ✓ **Faithful parenting and mentoring matter** - Zacharias and Elizabeth prepared John for his calling from childhood
 - ✓ **We are called to decrease so Christ can increase** - our lives should magnify Jesus, not ourselves
 - ✓ **Every believer has a purpose** - we are born again to bring God glory
 - ✓ **Grace and humility go together** - receiving unmerited favor should make us humble, not proud
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PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

THIS WEEK:

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PERSONAL CHALLENGE: Choose one area where you need to "decrease" so Christ can "increase." Write down specific steps you'll take this week to shift focus from yourself to Jesus in this area.

FAMILY/RELATIONSHIPS: Have a conversation with your children or someone you're mentoring about God's purpose for their life. If you're a parent, begin praying specifically that your children would understand their calling to bring God glory.

WITNESS: Identify one person in your life who needs to hear about Jesus. Pray for an opportunity this week to be a "voice" pointing them to Christ. Remember: you're a witness, not the Savior.

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE: Memorize John 3:30 - "He must increase, but I must decrease." Reflect on this verse daily and ask God to reveal areas where you're seeking your own glory instead of His.

ACCOUNTABILITY QUESTIONS

- What is one way you sensed God speaking to you through this study?
- What specific action will you take this week in response?
- Who will you share this with to help keep you accountable?

CLOSING REFLECTION

Read together: John 1:23 *"I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Make straight the way of the Lord."*

John the Baptist knew exactly who he was and what his purpose was. He didn't need titles, recognition, or glory. He simply needed to point people to Jesus.

Closing Question: *If you could summarize your life's purpose in one sentence like John did, what would it be?*

PRAYER FOCUS

- **Praise God** for His perfect plan and purpose for each of our lives
- **Confess** areas where we've sought our own glory instead of God's
- **Ask God** to give us humble hearts like John the Baptist
- **Pray** for opportunities to be faithful witnesses pointing others to Jesus

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- **Intercede** for the next generation to be raised with a clear understanding of their purpose in Christ
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PREPARATION FOR NEXT WEEK

Read **John 1:29-34** in preparation for the next study. Pay special attention to John's declaration: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Read the full account of John's birth in Luke 1
 - Study the prophecy about John in Isaiah 40:1-5
 - Reflect on other "voices" in Scripture who pointed people to God (prophets, apostles, etc.)
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"Grace and humility go together. If you're the recipient of grace, unmerited favor, blessings, it's supposed to bring you low." - From the sermon

5-Day Devotional: A Voice That Prepares the Way

Day 1: Born with Purpose

Reading: Luke 1:5-25, 57-80

Devotional: Zacharias and Elizabeth were faithful servants who walked blamelessly before God, yet they faced the heartache of childlessness. When God finally answered their prayers, it wasn't just with any child—John was born with a divine purpose. Like John, you were not an accident. God has intentionally placed you in this moment of history for His glory. Before you were born, He had plans for your life. Today, reflect on this truth: your existence matters to God. He didn't save you randomly; He saved you purposefully. Ask yourself: Am I living out the purpose God designed for me, or am I robbing Him of the glory He deserves? Let John's story remind you that faithfulness in raising the next generation and living for God's purposes brings eternal significance.

Day 2: Humility Over Self-Promotion

Reading: John 1:19-28; John 3:22-30

Devotional: When questioned about his identity, John the Baptist could have seized the spotlight. Instead, he repeatedly declared what he was not—not the Christ, not Elijah, not that prophet. His famous words, "He must increase, I must decrease," reveal the heart of true ministry. In our culture of personal branding and self-promotion, John's humility stands as a convicting example. He understood his role: to point others to Jesus, not to build his own platform. Consider your life today. When people encounter you, do they see you or Jesus? Are you the best man trying to steal attention from the Groom, or are you faithfully directing all eyes to Christ? True greatness in God's kingdom comes through humble service that exalts Jesus above all else.

Day 3: The Voice in Your Wilderness

Reading: Isaiah 40:1-11; Matthew 3:1-12

Devotional: John identified himself as "the voice of one crying in the wilderness." He wasn't the message—he was simply the messenger. His entire life prepared him for this singular purpose: to announce the coming King. You too are called to be a voice in your wilderness—your workplace, neighborhood, family, and community. The world around you needs to hear that Jesus is coming again. But here's the challenge: John's message wasn't comfortable or popular. He called people to repentance, even confronting religious leaders as a "generation of vipers." Being God's voice sometimes means speaking difficult truth in love. Are you willing to be that

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voice? Your faithfulness in declaring Christ's return matters more than popularity or acceptance. Make straight the way of the Lord in your sphere of influence.

Day 4: Grace Upon Grace

Reading: John 1:14-18; Colossians 1:15-20

Devotional: "Of His fullness have all we received, and grace for grace." The law came through Moses—glorious, yes, but incomplete. Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ, revealing God in ways humanity had never comprehended. When the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, we witnessed God's glory in tangible form. This is astounding: Jesus didn't just bring grace; He is grace personified. Every blessing you've received flows from His fullness. Every moment of unmerited favor reflects His character. Today, pause and count the graces in your life—salvation, forgiveness, purpose, hope, daily provision. Each one is grace upon grace upon grace. And remember, Jesus came to declare God fully. Through Him, we understand the Father's heart. Respond with gratitude and worship for this incomprehensible gift of grace.

Day 5: Greater Than John

Reading: Luke 7:24-35; Ephesians 2:1-10

Devotional: Jesus made a startling declaration: "Among those born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist; but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he." Let that sink in. You—if you've trusted Christ—are considered greater than John the Baptist, not because of your merit, but because of Jesus' finished work. You live on this side of the cross, filled with the Holy Spirit, adopted into God's family. This isn't about pride; it's about recognizing the incredible privilege and responsibility you carry. John leaped in the womb at Jesus' presence. You have Christ living in you! The same mission that drove John—preparing people for the Lord—is now yours. Will you live like someone who understands this privilege? Will you bring God glory with the life He's given you?