

Introduction: Pg. ____

October 31st . . . Halloween . . . Reformation Day . . . Luther . . . Calvin . . .

Calvin's most well known work is his theological tome known as the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. With the opening words to this classic of Christian literature, Calvin penned this: "... **true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves.**"

What is Calvin saying? True knowledge, the knowledge that will propel you to a life of consistent flourishing, a life lived according to God's design, is found in these two parts: the knowledge of God and the knowledge of ourselves.

He argues that we cannot see God rightly until we see ourselves rightly; AND
We cannot see ourselves rightly until we see God for who he is.

There is something of a continual dance, that produces an exchange of clarity as we dive deeper into the knowledge of God and deeper into the knowledge of ourselves.

So perhaps, the most helpful questions I could pose to you today are: how well do you know God? AND how well do you know you? :)

We are going to look at someone who possessed this two-part knowledge very, very well. His name was John, not the John who wrote this gospel (that was John, one of Jesus' closest followers). This is John the Baptist (or as we saw last week, John the Witness). This John [was an ordinary man who was no ordinary man. He] had a task like no other person ever enjoyed. He was the preview to Messiah. His job was to point people to Christ, and he delighted in his work.

FCF: John would have had these songs we just sang together on repeat. . . You know what I'm sayin'? . . . "Christ Be All Around me . . . Every moment . . . For me to live is Christ . . . Jesus, . . . Your name be louder than any other song." Hey, run that back. Let me get that one again, man. No commercials. Let that bizness roll.

But our mentality often falls well short of what we see in John . . . rather than pointing to and lifting up the name of Jesus as higher than all others, we lift up 1,000 other loves - 1,000 other names higher than him. John's reason for being was to point people to Christ. I want us to consider what it looks like to live lives consistently . . .

"Pointing to Christ" **John 1:19-34**

As we work our way through this text, we will discover a simple pattern that will equip us to point to Christ in a reflexive manner.

The Point: Point others to Jesus by knowing yourself & knowing him.

Though simple enough for my four year old to remember, it is deep enough to never hit the bottom both rationally & experientially. Here we go . . . #1

I. Point others to Jesus by knowing who you are (1:19-28).

Read 19-20

- The central question driving this passage is found in verse 19: "Who are you?"

- The religious leaders of the Jews, Priests and levites, were sent to check John out. They were investigators. Fact-finders. Curious souls sent to get the story, and bring it back to others in Jerusalem.
- Now John the Baptist could have been a Bostonian. No beating around the bush, no room for doubt; it's just straight up, in your face: I am NOT the Christ.
- John emphatically denies he is the one Jews were anticipating who would deliver them out their plight under Roman tyranny and bring the great day of renewal as God had promised.
- Look at how forceful verse 20 states it: To say "He confessed" would have been sufficient. But it's "He confessed, and did not deny" (certainly stronger), but it doesn't stop there. It's He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed." I AM NOT the Christ.
- Now, why is John so emphatic?
 - Well, for one, these days were marked by high messianic expectation.
 - History tells us that "would be messiahs" were popping up around Israel with increasing frequency.
 - There is no doubt John had a following. People flocked to him hear his authoritative teaching.
 - That second and major reason was John's reverence for the true Messiah. He knew Jesus alone was the Promised One and worthy of our complete devotion.

T: So they followed up with more questions. *Verse 21*

21 *And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not."*

- Based on Malachi 4:5, many thought the great prophet Elijah would return to precede Messiah.
- John's appearance and approach with his message made this a natural question. AND
- Others thought he would be the hoped for prophet:
- Deuteronomy 18:15: "The Lord will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen."
- "Are you the Prophet?"
- I am not the Christ, I am not Elijah, I am not the prophet . . .

This was not working out very well for the Jewish leaders. They could not piece together the puzzle that was John the Baptist.

- The Christ? No. Elijah? no. The prophet? No.
- *Verse 22.* Well, then who are you? *We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?"* The guessing game almost gets comical if the stakes were not so high.

You want to know who I am? This is who I am: "*I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness . . . 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said.*"

- This was a momentous statement.

A voice cries:

**"In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord;
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.**

**Every valley shall be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level,
and the rough places a plain. (Isaiah 40:3-4)**

- Consider this: What drives a person crazier than a traffic jam? A traffic jam with a couple of detours added on top, for the fun of it. Thank you Medford Square (I mean I know the Craddock Bridge needs some love, but who's loving the jam or the detour. Just sayin' :) P
- John's mission was to prepare a way to Jesus that was straight and smooth! No curves, no riding up dangerous cliff without shoulders on the road.
- The point is this: GET TO HIM as quickly and cleanly as possible.

- God sent John to be the setup man. If they heeded John's message, their hearts would be ready to receive Jesus.

Now, we have to understand: John could prepare the way by pointing to Christ because he knew who he was.

- Is there a more important question we could be asked than our own identity: "Who are you?"
- You can't operate in the fullness of who God has made you to be until you know who you before God.

Let me give you 2 reasons this is so pivotal.

Knowing our true identity, frees us from idolatry.

*Idolatry is seeking to elevate anything above God's rightful place.

Idolizing self

- From the very beginning of our existence, people have tried to swap positions with God.
- The original deception in the Garden (recording in the opening pages of the Bible) struck at this chord. Just go read Genesis 1-3.
- God is really good at being God.
 - We were made to reflect him, honor him, point to him, but not be him
 - When I get stressed, when I get down, when I lose focus ... It's usually tethered to the fact that somewhere in my heart: I am trying to be I AM.
 - You're saying: what do you mean? Exodus 3
 - Then Moses said to God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" God said to Moses, "I am who I am." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I am has sent me to you.'" (Exodus 3:13-14)
- THERE IS ONLY ONE . . . I. AM. (AND I AIN'T HIM)
 - These three words: "I am not!!!" rock me.
 - And there are seven statements that equally rock me in John's gospel:
 - "I am the bread of life. 6.45
 - "I am the light of the world. 8.12
 - "I am the gate. 10.9 I am the good shepherd. 10.11
 - "I am the resurrection and life. 11.25 I am the way and the truth and the life 14.6
 - "I am the vine 15.5"
 - And there is an 8th statement: "Before Abraham was, I am..." He is not simply saying he predates Abraham. He is saying you can't put a date on me. *Verse 30...*
 - Here is time. Here is Jesus.
 - Here is creation. Here is Jesus.
 - Here is dependent existence. Here is Jesus in all of his independence & self-existence.
 - Here is our knowledge and power. Here is the one who knows it all and can do all things.
 - Christ, because he is God, is unboxable.

He is the I AM; We are not him; There's no need to apply for his job.

And as a quick aside . . .when we understand who he is - it frees us from expecting others to be him.

Idolizing others

- There are no messiahs in the house today!

- When we put our hope in people, holding them on a pedestal higher than they should be, there is only one thing keep that view from being crushed.
 - You know what it is, right? Time.
- There is not a person on the planet who can provide what is to be found in God alone.

Knowing who we are, frees us up to worship.

- We were made to give God our highest allegiance & affection. But this is how it works: until we see we are not the Christ (not I AM), we will never be ready to embrace who he is.
- If you're saying: "I got this," which is the essence of unbelief (trusting in your own ingenuity, rather than the gracious gift of God), you will never be free to worship.
- We have to see our need. Calvin, in the *Institutes*, said: "**We cannot seriously aspire to him before we begin to become displeased with ourselves. . . . Accordingly, the knowledge of ourselves not only arouses us to seek God, but also, as it were, leads us by the hand to find him.**" - Calvin
- This is why Jesus' first words in his most famous sermon are what? "Blessed are the poor in spirit. . ." Matthew 5:3
 - You won't go for water, until you see your drinking from puddles in the desert.
- John is so sober-minded about who he is, he not only says "I am not the Christ," when he starts talking about Jesus he says, "I am not even worthy to take off the sandals from his feet."
- *Read 24-28*
- Now, that is STRONG.

T: John knew who he was, which most certainly helped him

II. Point others to Jesus by knowing who he is (1:29-34).

Some of you are thinking, well, how can I know him? God has released his full self-disclosure in Jesus: Look back at verse 18: "No one has ever seen God; the only God who is at the Father's side, [i.e., JESUS] he has made him known." We can know God because God has revealed himself to us.

That is foundational. That makes it possible. But that doesn't make it happen. God has revealed himself to us, and now we grow to know him by beholding him. It is knowing by beholding. . .

This is what we find beginning in *verse 29-34*.

- What does it mean to **BEHOLD**?
- To behold is not a glance, it is a gaze. To behold is to lock in, to look with a kind of fixation that provokes interest, pleasure, and wonder.
- We are a culture of quick takes, snapshots, 2 minute videos. It is very difficult for us to pause. To Stop. P P
- We are a hurried people. Hurry up and get this sermon going man. Stop trying to make your points with the dramatic pauses. I gotta get to lunch.
- Lunch is more important than lingering.
- We like to behold screens, but even those screens are ever changing. We glance, scroll, glance, scroll, glance, turn the channel.

John says BEHOLD. Why?

Jesus is the LAMB who takes away the sin of the world.

Lamb of God who takes away sin.

- Jewish hearers would not have missed the overtones of sacrifice. God always dealt with sin by substitution.

John 1.19-34. Knowing Who I Am

- People provided their own lambs to sacrifice as a sign of sorrow for their sin. Because sin costs a price and the price is death, something or someone had to die. So the sacrificial lamb in the OT system were a temporary means of provided temporary atonement.
- BUT they could never provide lasting freedom from the consequences of guilt, judgment & death.
- But in Christ, who is the true & greater Sacrifice, God, not people, provides the perfect Lamb who deals with our sin forever.
- Now, for all who behold him find death defeated and life given; guilt removed and freedom restored. The gospel is simply amazing. And I'm going to be straight up John the Baptist style right now: some of you know you need the sacrifice of Christ. Look to him, turn from your old life apart from his love, and receive the gift!

Takes away the sin of the WORLD . .

- Jesus' death is not for a few. It is for everyone who beholds & believes.
- No one is off limits . . . No one is beyond God's love and grace.
- Jesus welcomed in prostitutes and thieves, the outcast and despised.
- He died for every kind of person and for every group of people among the nations.
- God is *not* an American God. We need to hear this. Every culture is prone to ethnocentricity (centered on themselves)
 - In 1900, Africa had 10 million Christians. Today, over 360 million.
 - Today, there are nearly as many Christians in China than the U.S.
 - Today, Brazil sends more missionaries than Britain and Canada combined.
- So let our church be filled with the despised and rejected.
- Let our church be filled with people who are not like us, whoever us is (you feel me?).

T: Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, AND

Jesus is the LAMB who reveals the glory of God.

- When John saw Jesus, he knew his identity...
 - Better existence - Verse 30. Before John.
 - Better power for ministry - The Spirit remained on him in unlimited degree. He did everything in the power of the Spirit.
 - Better gifts - Spirit (baptism)
 - Better identity - Son of God
- Is all of that glorious? Oh there is no doubt that is all glorious, but when we go back to Isaiah 40, we find that John was making the way, so that his glory might be revealed.
- **Isaiah 40:5: "And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken."**

Christ is brilliant light. We're not walking into a room lit up with a few 60w bulbs. We're staring at a million suns ablaze!

And as one of my friends says, we have to "**Linger long enough to let your adjust eyes.**" - Matt Papa

Witness...

If Jesus is this glorious, this breathtakingly bright, so radiant that our eyes have to adjust to see him with greater clarity and delight, then HOW could we not seek to bring others into this delight? I'm just curious about that.

- Because when we see a beautiful sunset, or taste a unbelievable meal, or hear a new song, we're talking about that.

John 1.19-34. Knowing Who I Am

- That's what it's like to point people to Christ. Because we know who he is, the most kind thing we could ever do for someone is to say, "There! See who I'm beholding. He is where the treasure is found. He is the treasure."
- Generally speaking: you don't have to talk people into talking about what they love.
- Like John, we are lesser lights, pointing to the greatest light, the true light.
- I know it's awkward. I know it takes a measure of courage (that God will give us), but LOVE moves past awkward.

Listen: All we do is point. We can't make people behold. That's God's job, so don't confuse the job descriptions.

- Parents are pointers!
- Friends are pointers...
- Neighbors are pointers...
- Spouses are pointers...
- Co-Workers are pointers...
- We point with our words and we point with our lives.

Now here's the good news. You are what you behold. You become like what you worship... (Psalm 115)

- Jesus, full of Life? Ok.
- Jesus, full of Light? I'll take it.
- Jesus, full of grace and truth? Can it be?

God will not relent until he makes us like the one we behold.

Conclusion:

WITNESS - SLACK Bloopers . . . Slack is a program designed to help teams communicate. You can send direct messages for sidebar convos or you can setup "channels" where people can have group conversations. . . "Sunday worship" channel, a "pastoral care" channel, an "admin" channel. Well a couple of months ago, I created a celebrate channel and a prayer channel. I would post something, then a week or two later, make another post, which was great, except no one on the team responded . . . Do they not care? Do they not want to get hype???

Then, this week, I discovered the critical issue. I was the only one on the channel. I created something but invited no one into the channel to join with me.

This often our reality as Christians, but this is not the reality for Christ!

Behold his glory. Enjoy his glory. Point others to his glory until you stand in the fullness of it, forever. . .