

40th Anniversary Sermon

JUNE 12, 2022

TEXT: JOHN 3: 30

THEME: IT'S ALL ABOUT JESUS

He must increase and I must decrease.

In the name of Jesus:

You honor me today, and I am very much humbled and appreciative of your love, support, and kindness shown to me not just today, but for the past 40 years! I am reminded of that day 40 years ago, June 20, 1982, when Pastor Arnold Schneider ordained and installed me in what was then sanctuary and is now our Fellowship Hall. Pastor Schneider was my supervisor in my vicarage, a year of training at St. John Lutheran Church in Red Bud, Illinois. Pastor Schneider was really instrumental in training me to be a pastor, and so I asked him to be here to ordain and install me here at Redeemer. His sermon was, at least for me, memorable, and served as a starting point for my ministry here. He chose as his text the same passage that I chose today, from John 3: 30, "He, Jesus, must increase, and I must decrease."

The one who spoke these words was John the Baptist. John was speaking to his disciples concerning Jesus. Jesus' disciples were baptizing people as did John. As they were talking about this, a discussion arose about how one could be purified, or forgiven. John's followers thought that the

competition was getting to be a little too much, for now many were leaving John and going over to follow Jesus. That is why the Apostle John records in his Gospel that John the Baptist's followers came to the Baptizer and said, "the One you bore witness about, look, He is baptizing and all are going to Him."

John the Baptist wasn't the least bit concerned about the competition, actually it was no competition at all, for John repeatedly said that he, John was not the Christ, but that Jesus was and is the Christ, the Promised Lamb of God who came to take away the sins of the world. John was acting as the best man at a wedding, Jesus was the groom and He came to save His people from their sins. John wasn't put out by Jesus, he rejoiced, he was happy, he was glad that Jesus was here and had begun His earthly ministry. That is why John was able to say: "Therefore this joy of mine is now complete, for He, Jesus must increase, but I must decrease."

Pastor Schneider hammered home, pastorally and lovingly of course, that the pastoral ministry isn't about the pastor or the individual, it is all about Jesus. And that is what this day is all about, it is what I have tried to make my ministry here all about, it is all about Jesus!

On this Trinity Sunday, where we worship the mystery and unity of the Trinity, our God who is three in one, we hear from all three persons that our life is really all about Jesus.

The Father is the One who created us. As we learn in the Small Catechism, the Father has made me and you and all creatures, He has given us all that we have and all that we need to support this body and life that we live. All of this isn't ours by right, it is a gift, given by God the Father who loves us with an everlasting love. For all that the Father has done for us we should be thankful, eternally grateful, for His mercy and love. But in reality we each know that this isn't the case.

Instead of thanking the good Lord for what we have we look at what we have and we shake our heads wondering why we don't have more! We don't stop to count our blessings, we remember, though, the things that have gone wrong for us, and where we have been wronged. The little voice within us, the Old Adam as Luther calls it, reminds us of our failures and our failings. Satan picks up the ball and runs with it, reminding us of our sins, accusing us and telling us of how we are no good rubbing our nose in our sins. He tells us that we are no good, we are failures, why should we even expect God to love us and bless us?

But our heavenly Father doesn't want us to wallow in our sins, instead He wants us to swim in His grace and favor. That is why He so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, so that whoever would believe in Jesus would not perish but have everlasting life. The Father points us to Jesus,

placing a star above the manger where Jesus was born, sending an angelic choir to sing of His birth. At Jesus' baptism, the Father spoke and said, "this is My Son, Listen to Him!" On the Mount of Transfiguration, the Father left no doubt by proclaiming once again, "This is My Son, Listen to Him." The Father points us to Jesus.

So does the Holy Spirit. Jesus foretold of the coming of the Spirit when He said, "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things... When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. He will glorify me (Jesus) for he will take what is mine and declare it to you." The Holy Spirit leads you to Jesus, gives you faith in Jesus, points you to Jesus.. The Holy Spirit testifies that it is all about Jesus.

And why is our life, and this ministry all about Jesus? It is because there is no other name under heaven where we can be saved! Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life. God sent His Son to be born of a virgin, to live His life in keeping the Commandments that none of us can keep, and then sent His Son to die the death we all deserve on the cross of Calvary. Jesus lived for you, He suffered Hell on the cross for you, He died for you, He rose for you, He ascended into heaven and now sits at the right hand of the Father. For you, for your forgiveness, for your eternal life and salvation.

This congregation, this ministry, our life together is not about me, it is about Jesus. Now, this message and news about Jesus is utter foolishness to the world around us. Today people want to make life all about them. But our ministry together is not about us, it is about Jesus, and Him crucified and risen from the grave. It is just as the Apostle Paul wrote: “The word of the cross is folly for those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”

The world thinks that believing in Jesus and doing His work and living your life to His glory is plain and utter nonsense. That is why the Apostle Paul goes on to say: “But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; **28** God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, **29** so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. **30** And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, **31** so that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.”

That is what Pastor Schneider proclaimed in his sermon 40 years ago when I was ordained and installed to be your pastor. This ministry and our life together is about Jesus. And that is why we are here today! To give praise and honor and glory to God, the Father who created us, the Son who by His

shed blood has forgiven us and made us friends with the Father, and all glory and honor is given to the Holy Spirit who has given us faith in Jesus and keeps us in the one, true faith. So let this celebration be about our great God who loves us! And let each of us going forward be empowered by the Spirit to continue to live for Jesus and to share the Good News of God's love for sinners through His Son Jesus. For in Jesus we live, move, and have our being. Thanks be to God, it is all about Jesus!

Amen