

Lent Day 6

Tuesday February 20, 2018

Reading: John 3:22-36

²⁸ You yourselves can testify that I said, ‘I am not the Messiah but am sent ahead of him.’

Reflection

I remember back to when I was a brand new Christian and am surprised at how much expectation I had for myself. This great event had happened in my life, I had received Christ, and now I was going to be the holy of the holiest! All the old bad habits and traits were done and I was going to live a monk-like existence. Then I went to Bible college and the vision shifted a bit. I was going to be monk-like still, but also fluent in Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic so I could be a master of the Bible and German so I could read the great theologians. Of course, this was all going to lead to not only my being great for the kingdom, but people were going to be saved by me. I would be able to mentally and verbally tear down any argument and people would have no choice but to believe. In short, I struggled with pride and had no real clue as to my role in the kingdom.

John’s disciples are struggling with some of the same ideas. John came first and he gripped the attention of the nation. Finally, after all these years a prophet has come to Israel — meaning God was speaking to his people once more. The longing for so long had been for God to send his anointed one (Messiah in Hebrew, Christ in Greek, King in English) that the natural question was if John was the long awaited Messiah. John was clear and upfront; I’m not him, I’m simply preparing the way for him. Then, remember, he pointed out Jesus as the Messiah, but now Jesus is doing what John did — baptizing. Worse, more and more people are going to Jesus than John, so John’s disciples are offended but John reminds them he’s not the Messiah. The kingdom ministry belongs to the king.

My problem wasn’t pursuing holiness or taking study seriously. The issue was my motives — it was, again, all about me. I was going to make myself holy or useful. The truth is I had and have very limited capacity to alter myself. Rather, it is Jesus’s job to make me holy and gift me as he wills for his glory, not mine. I am not the Messiah he is and just as John pointed forward toward Jesus I point back to Jesus or, better, to Jesus present today. He is the Messiah and comes from heaven so only he can reveal and speak the words of God. I am only a witness to the Messiah and point to him. He must become greater; I must become less and the more he does and I do them more my joy becomes complete.

Prayer

Heavenly One, thank you for coming from heaven and revealing the Father to us. Your testimony is true and you have given us the gift of your Spirit. Forgive us for those times we forget we are not the Messiah, trying to usurp your place. Restore us to a humble attitude which seeks your glory over our own and your prescription over our own. Amen.