

All Are Going to Him!

Hosea 2:14-20, John 3:22-36 (ESV)

January 7, 2007

“Rabbi, he who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you bore witness—look, he is baptizing, and all are going to him.” “Look...all are going to him!” Thank God that it was true, at least then, that all were going to Jesus! Would that it were true today that all were going to him! Have you gone to him? Are you going to him? And consider that the ancient complaint might even be an unknowing prophecy, a promise for the future: “Look...all *are* going to him,” one way or the other, willingly or unwillingly, to glory or to shame, in this life or the next, “all *are* going to him,” to Jesus Christ.

This John the Baptist knew very well, long before his own disciples pointed it out him. “You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, ‘I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him.’” “I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him.” It is important to know who you are, to know who Christ is, and to know the difference between the two. Some know neither the first nor the second and therefore do not and cannot know the third. But John knew who Jesus Christ was, so he know who he was in relation to Christ, and he knew better than to confuse the two. John was not jealous of the ministry of Jesus Christ. He was not concerned that Jesus would out do him. He was not distressed about Christ’s success. He was, instead, grateful that God had come in his promised Christ. He was glad that God had come in his promised Christ. His life was made complete when God came in his promised Christ. It is as if he prayed, “*May* all go to him!” That was what John lived for. That was what he worked for. That is who he was and what he was about. You could do a lot worse.

Today’s reading from the Gospel according to John asks and answers at least three questions. First, who is Jesus Christ? Jesus Christ is the one to whom John the Baptist bore witness. He is the one before whom John was sent. He is the one to whom John pointed. And it is the content of that witness that whatever Jesus received was given to him from heaven, which is to say not only that God was blessing his work and ministry but also that his work and ministry were none other than the work of God himself. We would do well not to ignore him. It is the content of that witness that Jesus is the Christ, the Anointed One of God, sent by and from God to carry out God’s purpose in the world, equipped by God to perform the will of God, come to save us from our sin, come to save us for himself. We would do well to seek no other.

It is the content of that witness that Jesus is the bridegroom to the people of God, that Jesus is God himself with us and among us, come in fulfilment of ancient prophecy, come to woo us back to himself, come to establish peace on earth, come to betroth us to himself forever, that we may know the Lord. Thanks be to God! It is the content of that witness that in Jesus Christ alone is John's joy made complete, which suggests that John intends "to enjoy him forever." In Jesus Christ alone is John's life fulfilled and is the purpose of John's life satisfied. Could it be that our joy, life, and purpose might be found in him? It is the content of that witness that Jesus Christ is the one who must necessarily increase and before whom John must necessarily decrease, that Jesus must be glorified and that John knew that it was his own good not only to realize that but also to rejoice in it. In this way, John is a model for Christian faith and life. It is the content of that witness that this is who Jesus is.

Second, how shall we respond to Jesus Christ? We shall be the disciples of Jesus Christ or we shall follow another. There is no other choice. Will it be Jesus, or will it be Moses, Mohammed, Buddha, Freud, Nietzsche, Darwin, Marx, Hitler, Sagan, or Dawkins? Whom shall we follow? We shall receive the baptism of Jesus Christ or we shall refuse it. There is no half-way. We shall go to Jesus Christ or we shall run away and go to another. No one remains unaffiliated.

We shall respond to Jesus Christ in faith or in faithlessness, which is simply faith in another, an alien, an imposter, an unknown. Which shall it be? We shall respond to Jesus Christ in love or we shall reject him. There is no in between. We shall respond to Jesus Christ in joy and with rejoicing, or we shall spurn him with disgust and contempt, for that is what anything less than joy and rejoicing is. We shall honor the increase of Jesus Christ with our self-abasing decrease, which is our only increase, or we shall vainly seek our own increase, which surely leads to death. How we shall respond to Jesus Christ?

And third, what difference does it make how we respond to Jesus Christ? All who come to Christ are given to him by God. To refuse to come to Christ is to reject both him and God and to set ourselves over against them both. Is that a place we want to be? All who come to Christ acknowledge that he comes from above, from heaven, and that he is exalted above all. To refuse to come to Christ is to refuse to acknowledge his divinity and is necessarily to place our lives in the service of another. Is that what we want to do? All who come to Christ receive his testimony from and about God and commit themselves to the truthfulness of God who made us and who sends his Son to and for us. To refuse to come to Christ is to reject his testimony and to call God a liar. Is that what we want to do?

All who come to Christ hear in him the very word of God. To refuse to come to Christ is to set aside that word in order to hear and to obey some other word,

some alien word, some word of death. To refuse to come to Christ is to refuse the gracious Holy Spirit which has been poured out upon him without measure. Is that what we want to do? All who come to Christ by believing in him, him whom the Father loves and to whom the Father has given all things, have eternal life. To refuse to come to Christ is to run to eternal death and to seek and to find the eternal wrath of God. Surely that is not what we want to do. It makes a difference how we respond to Christ. It makes a difference here and now. It makes an eternal difference. How shall we respond?

Today Jesus Christ is offered to us in the word read and preached, in the gospel proclaimed. Today Jesus Christ is also offered to us in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, in the bread and the wine, the body and blood of Christ. In both cases, he is received by faith alone. Do you believe in him whom God has sent to us and for us? The ancient complaint about his success might be an unknowing prophecy, a promise for the future: "All *are* going to him," one way or the other, willingly or unwillingly, to glory or to shame, in this life or the next.

"Rabbi, he who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you bore witness—look, he is baptizing, and all are going to him." "Look...all are going to him!" Thank God that it was true then that all were going to Jesus! Would that it were true today that all were going to him! Have you gone to him? Are you going to him?

To God be the glory forever and ever! Amen.

© Dr. James C. Goodloe IV, Pastor
Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church
1627 Monument Avenue
Richmond, Virginia 23220
www.grace-covenant.org