



Province Of
RECONCILIATION

Commission on
WORLD MISSIONS

COMMUNION OF
EVANGELICAL
EPISCOPAL
CHURCHES

**The Most Reverend
Charles T. Travis**

Provincial Archbishop

**The Most Reverend
Robert J. Gosselin**

Bishop Coadjutor

5353 Arlington Expy
Floor 2
Jacksonville FL
32211

Email:
info@ceec.church

Phone:
904-613-8469

Lent 2019

“I am not the Christ He must increase, but I must decrease.”

Now a discussion arose between some of John’s disciples and a Jew over purification. And they came to John and said to him, “Rabbi, He who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you bore witness—look, He is baptizing, and all are going to Him.” John answered, “A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven. You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, ‘I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him.’ The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom’s voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete. He must increase, but I must decrease. John 3:25-30 ESV

“Decrease is a spiritual necessity. John the Baptist was the first among Jesus’ followers to grasp its counter-cultural power. John’s understanding of “less is more” was spiritually profound. For John it was less about assets and more about attention. His longing was to draw his generation’s attention and allegiance to the Messiah. From John’s perspective, the true value of people seeing him was that people would then be positioned to see through him and gaze at Jesus. By willingly decreasing, John increased others’ view of the Savior.” Excerpted from *40 Days of Decrease: A Different Kind of Hunger. A Different Kind of Fast.* by Dr. Alicia Britt Chole

As Lent approaches, it offers us yet another opportunity to see the blending of the three streams in a more effective manner. The season of simplicity, self-denial and careful introspection that has been such a large part of the historical Church has not been widely embraced by the more evangelical and charismatic elements of the Body. Yet in recent years that has been changing, and a broader interest in preparing well for the time of celebrating the resurrection of Christ is being seen.

One of the great benefits of Lent can be seeing in the lessons we learn from this passage of scripture.

We adapt many of these next thoughts from Warren Weirsbe’s notes in the Bible Exposition Commentary, as his insights into these verses is quite cogent and apropos. Though it was not their intent, John’s disciples were putting him into a situation of competing against the Lord Jesus! Their complaint that, “All men come to Him!” sounds like a wail of despair. While they were concerned with the growth of John’s ministry, He was concerned with the core of the ministry. John knew that “his ministry” could not be about him and still fulfill the mission that he had been given. For “his ministry” to succeed, it **had to** be about Jesus.

Lent provides us a good opportunity to examine ourselves in a time of deliberate self-denial. Lent invites us to strip away some of the things that distract us, and to deliberately deny our flesh in order to gain a clearer view of our soul. Lent invites us to simplicity.

It is interesting to note that four of the greatest men in the Bible faced this problem of comparison and competition: Moses (Num. 11:26–30), John the Baptist (John 3:26–30), Jesus (Luke 9:46–50), and Paul (Phil. 1:15–18). It is a battle we will each face. How did John the Baptist handle this controversy? To begin with, he stated and blessing come from God, so there can be no competition (John 3:27). Paul would have agreed with this (1 Cor. 3:1–9; 4:1–7). Our gifts and opportunities come from God, and He alone must get the glory. He alone must be and remain the exclusive focus of “our ministry.”

Then John used a beautiful illustration. He compared Jesus to the bridegroom and himself only to the best man (John 3:29). Once the bridegroom and bride had been brought together, the work of the best man was completed. What a foolish thing it would be for the best man to try to “upstage” the bridegroom and take his place. John’s joy was to hear the voice of the Bridegroom and know that He had claimed His bride.

Jesus was the Light, and John the Baptist was the witness – one who was pointing to the Light (John 1:6–8).

We must be careful not to believe our own press releases. In this we are often as guilty as the others. When we prepare a bio to present our ministry and our history as an introduction for others, we tend to pack the presentation with superlatives. When we write a press release for our new book or teaching series, all too often we fall into the same trap. Have you noticed that very few speakers and writers are ordinary people? They are “noted lecturers” who have addressed “huge audiences.” They are always in “great demand,” and their ministries are described in such ways that they make the Apostle Paul a midget by comparison.

We have much we could learn from the response of John the Baptist.
John shows no jealousy, only a heart of servitude.

From Christ’s perspective, it is all about us ---
God Himself provided our way of escape: “But God commends his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).

But from our perspective, it is all about Him ---
He must increase. This shows the true balance of agape love, never being centered upon yourself.

A Presbyterian pastor in Melbourne, Australia once introduced Hudson Taylor by using many superlatives, especially the word great. Taylor stepped to the pulpit and quietly said, “Dear friends, I am the little servant of an illustrious Master.” If John the Baptist in heaven heard that statement, he must have shouted “Hallelujah!”

As we enter the season of Lent, I encourage us all to allow the Lord to lead us into more than just fasting of food. Let us also consider how we may fast from seeking our own glory, from building up ourselves and the importance of our ministries. Let’s fast a desire for personal praise and acclaim.

Today, God is calling out a people for His name, the Church, the bride of Christ (2 Cor. 11:1–3; Eph. 5:22–33). One day the Bridegroom will come to claim His bride and take her to her home in heaven (Rev. 19:6–9; 21:9ff).

Let us recognize our place. We are only the friends of the bridegroom. And so, we ought to remind ourselves often that --

“I am not the Christ He must increase, but I must decrease.”

Blessings from two little servants of our illustrious Master,



Abp Charles Travis, Provincial Archbishop
PROVINCE OF RECONCILIATION



Abp Robert Gosselin, Bishop Coadjutor
PROVINCE OF RECONCILIATION