

GracePoint: A Weekly Sermon Discussion

43 – Jesus and John

Announcements:

9/26 @6:30 -

Men's Discipleship

- *Chapter 22*

9/28 @7:00 -

Prayer

9/29 @6:30 -

Grace Group

10/2 @8:30 -

Sunday School

ICE BREAKER: Did you have a best friend growing up? Are you still in contact?

READ: Matthew 14:1-12

There are few Bible characters more important than John the Baptist, and yet we don't often hear much about him. I am of the opinion that, if he lived at any other time in the entire history of the world, John would be better remembered as (in the words of Jesus) the greatest man ever born of woman. But because of who Jesus is, John is most often remembered as the guy who baptized Jesus. It is possible we have a slightly more robust theology of his role, and in that case he is "only" the guy who had the responsibility to prepare the world(!) for the arrival of Christ. But today I would like to look a little closer at John. On Sunday we approached his life in how we should imitate him, today we will be comparing his life to the life of Christ.

First we can start with some similarities between the lives of Jesus and John. It is fairly clear that they were similar, Herod even thought that Jesus was John reincarnated (which given that they are the same age is just a little weird!), but what things made this an appropriate comparison?. The first similarity looks back to last week. They are both prophets. Both men were given an essential task, and more importantly an important message from God. In this another important similarity. Both men spoke the truth, period. In both Jesus and John they were willing to (and even eager to) speak the truth no matter what the cost. They both stood for truth and righteousness and had no patience for those who would lead the people of God astray. Moreover we can see similarities in undertaking the heart of their messages. Both called for repentance and service to God, which was the outpouring of their prophetic role. Finally, This leads us to the next important similarity, their service cost them their lives. Here is an important lesson for us. The only perfect man to ever live, the only truly innocent man in history AND one of the most righteous and powerful men of God to ever live BOTH died at the hands of evil men. Suffering for the sake of righteousness is not an unfortunate accident, but in many ways par for the course. Instead of running from pain and discomfort we should be willing to count the cost and follow the call of Christ!

DISCUSS: Can you think of any other similarities that may be important? How else can seeing the similarities between Jesus and John show us how we ought to live?

But knowing that they had some similarities only serves to make the difference more important. Today I would like to focus on just one, found in verse 12. "And [John's] disciples came and took the body and buried it, and they went and told Jesus." To sort of paraphrase the sermon of Peter, "I can say this with confidence about John, he is both dead and buried. His bones lie in the ground even to this day!" (see Acts 2:29) what is incredible is that we cannot say this about Jesus. For unlike John, Jesus is God, therefore death could not hold him. Though he did suffer and die a brutal death on the cross, that is not the end of the story. For three days later he rose in power and victory. While Matthew is careful to paint the lives of Jesus close together (like all the gospel writers were, we should add!), here he highlights an important difference. In fact, I would argue this is the most important difference in the universe!

DISCUSS: Read Colossians 1:18. Why does Paul here say Jesus' resurrection is so important? What does this mean?