

One of the humorous phenomenon about our **Entertainment Driven, Celebrity Obsessed Culture**, is that we have all of these reality **shows that feature B-list stars**.

The lineups for shows like **Dancing with the STARS** and **CELEBRITY Apprentice** regularly have featured celebrities that I have **never heard of**.

Now, for all the **critiques we could make** about how this demonstrates the **decay of our culture**, I think we can say one good thing that the phenomenon **demonstrates about human nature**:

We are **wired to be impressed** by something or someone.

**Celebrity based reality shows succeed**, in part at least, because we **love a star**.

Now, you **may not get into B-list** celebrities, but I know **you like a hero tale**. You like the movie theme where life is snatched from the **jaws of death by a sacrificial hero**. You love that. You **pay your \$10.50** to watch that.

In the **text before us** this morning the issue of **stardom is front and center**. And the question that is being asked by those in the narrative is, **"Who is the Star of this Show?"** And what our author—the **apostle John** is doing is trying to **demonstrate that Jesus is the true star**. He is the hero that **every other hero tale whispers of**. The star that every B-list celebrity **aspires to be** (even if they do not realize it).

Look and see, **if you sense this** as we read our text this morning.

**John 1.19-28**

The question of the Text is also the Title of the Sermon: **"who is the star of this show?"**

Our two points today answer that question: first, negatively, and then positively:

1. John is not the Star; I am not the Star; You are not the Star; He/She/It is not the Star
2. Jesus is the Star

Let's begin....

**1. John is not the Star; I am not the Star; You are not the Star; He/She/It is not the Star**

The first thing I **want you to see** here is how **emphatically John the Baptist** (our main character) works to say, "I am not the star," and how **emphatically the Apostle John** (our author) seeks to underscore this testimony.

The **simplest way** for our author to write verse 20 would be: "He said, 'I am not the Christ.'" **Why did he instead used this complicated expression**: 'and he confessed, and denied not, and he confessed....'

Because: he was **that vigorous in his denial** that he might be the star of this show.

And notice in the **surrounding text** how strongly John hits on this theme:

- **Verse 27**—I am **not even worthy to stoop down** and untie his sandal. It was a common Jewish expression that the student should be willing to serve his teacher in any way except to untie his sandal. But John goes further—I am not worthy to do the **lowliest task of all**.
- **verse 15**—he ranks before me

Now, what he says here is, "I am not the Christ." **Let's camp for a moment on what "Christ" means**.

I grew up thinking that it was **Jesus' last name**. Corey Shepherd....Jesus Christ. But it is not a name; **it is a title**. It's **OT counterpart is Messiah**, and it means "anointed one". It was regularly **applied in the OT to kings or priests**....they were sometimes referred to as **"the Lord's anointed"**.

**\*ill.\* Billy the Kid; Conan the Barbarian; The Hulk**

Leon Morris, “In due course [among the nation of Israel] the expectation grew up that one day God would send into the world an especially great person, a Mighty Deliver, One who would represent Him in a very special sense, this coming great One was thought of not as “an anointed”, but as “*the* anointed One,” “*the* Messiah.””

And you see this **borne out in the text**. For example, **Luke 2.38**, many faithful Jews, “were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.”

And then **Luke 3.15**: “As the people were in *expectation*, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Christ.”

So John finds himself in a **culture and climate of expectancy**. **Expectancy that the Messiah** was on the verge of coming to **rescue**.

**Less than 100 years before John** the land of Israel had been **incorporated into the Roman Empire**. God’s nation had **lost her independence** from the pagan nations. This loss brought about a **revival of the ancient hope** that God would **send the Messiah**—the promised, anointed one from the line of David.

**DA Carson**, “first-century Palestine was rife with messianic expectations”

So, its no surprise what **Matthew 3.5** says: “Jerusalem and *all* Judea and *all* the region about the Jordan were going out to him.”

So, here is John the Baptist. He arrives in a time when **people were feeling defeated**, and when they were **looking for someone to come and rescue them** from **political tyranny**. They found warrant for such a rescuer when they read their Bibles (the OT).

Also keep in mind that God had not spoken to his people since the prophet **Malachi some 400 years earlier**. John was the **first to speak with the authority** of “thus says the LORD....”

And **so they wandered**—his he ***the* anointed one**? Is he the Messiah? The Christ? Is he **the star of this show**?

If John had **any selfish ambition** to be the star, he had found himself in the **right place at the right time**.

But at least **6 times in the first 3 chapters** of John, you find the Baptist saying something like, “**its not me—its Him!** He’s the star!”

So, the crowds and leaders reasoned.....

If he is not *the* Christ, **maybe he is Elijah**. Notice verse 21. After all, God had promised through the **prophet Malachi** (4.5), “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.”

But John is **emphatic**—I am not Elijah.

Now, a **side note**. Its interesting that **Jesus actually did identify John the Baptist** with the prophet Elijah, saying, for example in **Matthew 11.14**, “he is Elijah who is to come,” and in **Matthew 17**, “But I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him....” Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist.”

Now, it’s a **very interesting question** to take up--“**Why did John not identify himself** as the promised prophet who would come in the spirit and power of Elijah, and yet Jesus did? How do you **explain John’s lack of self awareness**?”

My assessment of that question is that he **did not detect as much significance in his own ministry as Jesus did**.

That’s a **good word for those among us** who have an inflated sense of self-importance.

John thought of himself (verse 23) merely as a **VOICE** pointing men and women to the **WORD**.

So, continuing on in verse 21, **they ask**, “well, are you **the prophet?**”

This harkens back to the hope from **Deuteronomy 18.15**. There Moses said, “The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen—”

Indeed **some Jews actually believed** that this Moses-like deliverer **would be the Messiah**.

But again John is **emphatic**—no. I am not the Messiah. I am not the hoped-for One.

Again, if John were an opportunistic shooting star, this was his **“right place, right time” moment**.

Now, you are not suffering under the tyranny of the Roman Empire. And you are not scouring the OT looking for a political, military hero to come and save your small Near Eastern nation.

But, for many of you at least—you are under some difficulty; there is some trial or pain. And in all likelihood you are in search of rescue from that thing.

You are **wired for this**. We **live in a broken world**. We **know its broken**. We **long for something better** (that is eternity in your hearts). And you are **wired to look for rescue**.

We are **wired to be impressed by someone or something**. We are **wired to look for rescue** from our difficulties.

We **see this wiring in the crowds that are flocking** to John.

Its **why the religious leaders come bubbling** with anticipation to John—are you the One who has been promised???

The **reason that the Jews were rife with messianic expectations** had just as much to do with how they were wired, as it did with their reading of the OT.

And the **same is true of you**. You **long to be blown away by something**; to **be rescued**.

Here’s the trouble. And you know this. Rather than letting great things remind us of *the* Great One. We make pseudo, partial, half-baked great things our all in all. We obsess over the reflection, rather than pushing through to the True Light.

Maybe it’s the **teenager suffering through insecurity and incompleteness** who looks to some “cool” kid to bring them into “the” group.

Maybe it’s the **single person waiting for a spouse** to come and change everything for them.

Maybe it’s the **parents looking for just the right mix of activities**, and **classes**, and friend groups to set their kids on the straight and narrow.

**None of those are bad desires**. But we **look for ultimate rescue in the wrong place**.

But John got it. He **knew he was not the star**. And he knew that the **happiest thing in the world** for him to do was let **the Star, be the Star**.

Turn over to **John 3. 25-30**

*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, Jesus is trying to take your spot as the star! What are you going to do?] 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)

Now, **notice a couple things** there really quickly:

--it would be **foolish for the friend of the groom to act like** the wedding is about the groomsmen. On the contrary—he **rejoices at the sight and entrance and sound** of the bride and groom. He knows that the wedding is their show, and not his.

--and then he **boils that metaphor down into a beautiful principle**—he must increase, but I must decrease.

But don't miss the **glory of the sentence right before that**: *his completes my joy*. **What John, what completes your joy?** *To draw attention to and behold the star of the show. To fade into the back, and simply admire.*

**Friends, John got it.** His **repeated testimony** was—I **have come** to point to another; one **so worthy of tribute**, and **loyalty** and **adoration** that I am not even worthy of untying his sandals.

And John knew that the pointing, and the admiring that came from the pointing—is what made him happy. He was wired to enjoy greatness; not be the greatness. Seeing true Greatness satisfied his soul at the deepest level.

We all love the story of the long lost hero who returns to his conquered homeland, gathers the faithful few, and leads them to freedom and victory, just before giving his own life in the cause.

How many times has some version of that story been told?

We **love that story because** we are **made to get caught up** in this Jesus who came **to rescue**; who came **to save**; who is *the Christ*.

So, I just want to ask you—are you **looking for a rescuer other than Jesus?** I'm **not saying you are not saved**. I'm asking—have you **pinned your hopes on some person** to come and fix everything for you?

**Only Jesus** completes joy. He **alone can save**. He **alone is the hoped for one**. Everything else points to this Christ.

Therefore....

- Beware of **Preachers** who subtly make themselves **seem indispensable**.
- **Girls**, beware of thinking that a **boy will fix everything**.
- **Women, that a godly husband** will set everything right.
- Hurting parents, that you just have to **get your kid to just that right person**, who can fix them.
- **Business men**, that there is **one contact** who will change everything for your career trajectory.
- Those working a job that there is **just the right position** that will make everything complete for you.

**Latch onto the Baptist's short sentence** in John 3.29, and cling tightly to it—**now is my joy complete**. Joy comes when we fix our eyes on the groom; the Messiah; Jesus the Christ.

Now, we have **one more task** before us this morning. The **text is going to give us a few glimpse's** of:

- the superior beauty of Jesus the Christ
- It's going to whisper to why he is above all other rescuers,
- more heroic than all other champions.
- **Why he is the true Star**.

## **2. Jesus is the Star**

Now, we have already made the point, at some length, that Jesus is the long awaited one—the Messiah, the Christ.

There are 3 other witnesses to Jesus' stardom in our text today.

### **a. He Wins**

Notice verse 22-23. The Jewish leaders eventually begin to **get frustrated**. You are not the Christ; not Elijah; not the Prophet. Who are you.

And so verse 23—I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, ‘make straight the way of the Lord.’

John quotes from Isaiah 40.3, and he **identifies himself as that voice** in the wilderness. Each of the other gospel writers give the Baptist this **same designation**. But when he quotes from Isaiah 40 he **not only says something about his place** in God’s plan. He also shows us **all what God intends to accomplish through Jesus**. He shows us where Jesus fits into God’s one history-long, Bible-long plan of redemption.

Turn with me to Isaiah 40.

You **need to know a little** bit about what is happening in Isaiah to see the **full significance here**. Isaiah writes his book to a people that are **rebelling against their God**. In chapters 1-39 he **predicts that God will judge his people** by bringing Babylonian armies against them who will carry them away into exile. This happens about **200 years after Isaiah dies**.

But then in chapters 40-66 Isaiah brings a **message of hope**, promising that one day God will bring his exiled people back to their land.

Now—Isaiah 40 is the turning point in the book. Let’s read verses 1-5.

**What is the scene there?** That is **God, leading his people out of their captivity** and back into their land. How does that happen? He **rescues them from their oppressors**; cleanses their land; and establishes himself in Zion as their King. It’s a **victory march**.

Isaiah 40 **finds one fulfillment in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC** when the Jewish people do leave their exile and return to their land.

But John is here, some **600 years later, saying that he is the voice of verse 3** announcing the Lords coming. And all 3 gospels writers agree saying that John is the voice of Isaiah 40.3.

What does that mean?

It means that **Isaiah 40 has 2 fulfillments**: first in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC, but in a **fuller sense by Jesus** who is that **returning king**, come to conquer. **And the victory he wins is not military or political, and the foe that he defeats is not made of chariots and horses.**

**The victory he wins is over death; the foe he defeats his sin.**

He **strides onto the pages of history** to gather for himself a people. **His people.** **He comes to take back the world that fell into sin and destruction. He comes to crush every evil. End every conflict. Right every wrong. And establish himself for ever on the throne that only ever rightly belonged to him.**

**This is the Jesus that comes out of the wilderness into the city of our God; a city no longer forsaken.**

Now, there’s **one more thing we need to see** here. **Almost all of God’s people** alive in Jesus’ day believed that when the Messiah came, he **would strike an immediate victory** over all their oppressors. But they misunderstood Jesus’ mission. His victory was over sin and death; not Rome and her legions.

And **the victory he wins comes in two acts**—act 1 has already occurred in the death and resurrection of Jesus. It was decisive, but not final. **We await Act 2.** And **its coming**. And it will **include a returning warrior king**. And when he returns a second time, it will be to put a **final end to every evil**; every conflict; every foe, and to establish a New **Heavens and New Earth** where he and his people live together in peace and prosperity.

And John’s **witness to his stardom begins with this**: Jesus Wins!!

### **b. Jesus is Superior**

**Veteran readers** come to verses 26-27 and get a **surprise**. Because you read, “I baptize with water, but among you stands one ....” And what do you expect to hear? **You expect**, “who will baptize you with the **Holy Spirit.**”

Now that **will come in the next paragraph**, and Rod will look at that next week, but for now John says something different. He says, he who comes after me, the **strap of whose sandal** I am not worthy to untie."

**Jesus is so infinite in his value** that the **greatest man who ever lived** is not even worthy of doing the **lowliest task** imaginable for him.

**Yes, John is the greatest man**, apart from Jesus, who ever lived.

**Matthew 11.11**, "Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist." Those are Jesus words. I don't think anyone has supplanted his position since.

And **that great man is not even worthy** to untie Jesus' sandals.

Even **in comparison to the greatness and worth** of John the Baptist....Jesus' value and greatness is **so superior that it cannot be quantified**. There is an **infinite degree of difference** between Jesus Christ and John the Baptist.

Now.... please **compare the greatness and wonder of this Christ** to the **thing or situation or person** that you have set your hope on in order **to deliver you** from any **trouble** you are facing or could face?

How does Jesus compare to **that man?** That **business contact?** That **kid at the "cool kid" table?**

No comparison. An **infinite degree of difference**.

Ok, so hear me.

**That Jesus**—that one of **infinite value**—invites you into **relationship and friendship with himself**.

- **Come to me** all who labor and are heavy laden and I WILL GIVE YOU REST.
- **I am the friend who sticks closer than a brother**
- **Though the fig tree should not blossom nor fruit be on the vine....lo, I am with you, even to the end of the age.**

The Word has **not just come into the world**. He has come **to you in this world**.

Nothing compares to him. And your joy will be full at the sound of his voice.

### **c. Jesus is the Lamb of God**

Now, **I'm cherry-picking** just a bit from next week's text, but I'll only do it briefly, and I think it's **important to end here**.

Why is Jesus the Star?

**John's testimony** is that Jesus is the "Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world."

You want to know **why Jesus is great?** Because he **takes away your sin**.

**\*ill.\*** Keller at HGAY (the red head)

....at first, he and his family is laughing about all the commands of God that he has broken....

....Just....ha, ever done that....when did I not do that?

But then I read the word of God to him about how there is a **punishment for the wrong things we have done**. And you can **see how serious he gets**. You can see it start to **dawn on him**. You can **sense the conviction**.

But then I get to tell him....but there is **hope for you.....Jesus takes away sin**.

You see for Jesus to seem precious to you.....for his stardom to capture you, you must first see all of your sin mounting up before you....you have to see how you are storing up for yourself wrath, on the day of wrath, when God's righteous judgment is revealed. (Romans 2.5)

And then you see Jesus come, bearing shame, suffering anguish.....and by laying his own life down.....taking away your sin.

Just think of that—he takes it away.....

So see the Lamb of God....on that cross, taking your sin....so that you could be forgiven.....

**Conclusion**