***Decreasing for Jesus***

***22****After this Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean countryside, and he remained there with them and was baptizing.****23****John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because water was plentiful there, and people were coming and being baptized****24****(for John had not yet been put in prison).*

***25****Now a discussion arose between some of John's disciples and a Jew over purification.****26****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.”****27****John answered, “A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven.****28****You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, ‘I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him.’****29****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.****30****He must increase, but I must decrease.” (John 3:22-30, ESV)*

 May Jesus increase, and we decrease.

 Greetings to you all dear brothers and sisters as we talk today about “decreasing”. Many speak about humility, but often when the time comes to be humble, the Tempter comes and makes those that are not grounded on this principle. The latter is that Jesus should be apparent, while we followers should step aside and give Him a path to work among us. Therefore, today’s sermon topic is about “decreasing” – it is about how we can advance the work of the Lord while disappearing (in comparison to Him). Again, may Jesus increase in our lives, and may we decrease. Let’s see how we can do that…

 When our “I” decreases, the Holy Spirit who lives within us advances the image and work of Jesus both within our lives and in our circles of influence. Let’s look for a moment at the details of our passage for today: John was continuing his ministry, but he also knew that his time was winding down. We find the proof of this in the conversation between him and the Jewish religious leaders. It was almost as if John was being interrogated by them, because of their clear expectation that John keep his followers to himself, just as they kept the masses under their control and bondage with their extra-biblical traditions.

Despite that, we see that John the Baptist was solid in his convictions. He said that he would have nothing if it was not given by God – in other words, the followers and his mission were not his own. Second, it was very clear that the main mission was given to Another since John had already declared that he himself was not Messiah. Third, it was very clear to John that he was not the “bridegroom”, but rather the friend who rejoiced at the His voice. In other words, John was not the star of the show, so to speak. Furthermore, since the “bridegroom” had arrived on the scene, John the Baptist’s joy was complete, and his own mission and person, all that he was and had needed to bow and give way to Christ’s Person and ministry.

John’s ministry was like the first part of a modern-day concert where you have announcements, and sometimes a smaller group performs or sings, to prepare the crowd for the main event. Once it is time for the main event, the smaller group steps off stage and the true concert begins.

Today, we all find ourselves in John the Baptist’s position – let me explain: Since we have turned from our ways thru Jesus and become co-workers in God’s plan of salvation for humanity, our calling has become one of facilitating the work of the Lord’s Gospel. As Evangelicals, our main work of faith is to invite people to Christ and the foot of the Cross. Primarily, ours is a work of inviting and giving way before the power of God. Our mission is to help those who listen to us to see Jesus both within us and our lives, so that they do not become attached to us, but rather follow Jesus Himself. Today, if our testimonies are inviting people to the Lord Jesus, then we are decreasing properly just as John the Baptist did, and Jesus is being glorified. However, if our testimonies are bringing people’s attention onto us, then let us clarify our message and make our Lord’s name even greater. May God be glorified through us and may Jesus increase and we decrease.

When our “I” decreases, the Holy Spirit who lives within us advances the image and work of Jesus both within our lives and in our circles of influence. The Lord bless you all. Amen.