

Message Transcript

HOW TO BE GREAT IN JESUS' EYES | THE KING'S POWER AND THE PEOPLE'S UNBELIEF | MIKE BREAUX | APRIL 25 & 26, 2026

Alright, man. It is so, so good to be with you all. Welcome to Traders Point. If this is your first time here, super glad that you are here. Welcome all of our campuses, those of you who are joining us online.

My name is Breaux. I get to show up from time to time and teach here. And it's such an honor to get to come back. I love this church and pray for this church all of the time.

I was really excited when Aaron told me that you all have been going through the gospel of Mark since the beginning of the year. Which, by the way is all about the greatest person who ever walked this planet, Jesus Christ.

And looking at the life of Jesus, that's what began to revolutionize my life. You see, Jesus didn't only come to lay down His life so we could be forgiven and free and go to heaven. Don't get me wrong, that's a huge deal. But Jesus also came to show us what God is really like.

I grew up in church but I didn't know God. There is a big difference. When I began to study and read about Jesus, it totally changed my perspective on what God is like. Up until that point I just thought God was ticked at me. I thought He was disappointed in me. I thought He was even disgusted by me.

But when I started to hear the things that Jesus said and I saw the way He engaged with people and unconditionally loved everybody, it revealed to me just how inclusive God really is, that God longs for relationship with people like us.

See, Jesus hung out with all kinds quote/unquote undesirables showing us that there is no such thing as an undesirable in the eyes of God. In fact, the people who were least like Jesus liked Jesus. And Jesus liked them too. And it gave me hope that He might like a guy like me. And I know He likes you.

We're going to eventually get to Mark, chapter 6 today as we are reintroduced to a guy named John, commonly known as John the Baptizer or John the Baptist. And we're going to see that, like Jesus, he spoke truth. And as a result he was cruelly executed when he was around 30 years of age.



And, honestly, there is not a whole lot written about John. So, instead of just focusing on the final chapter of his life, which is recorded in Mark, chapter 6, I want to take some time and honor him for the life that he lived and the amazing person that John was. In fact, I believe this. And I know this is going to sound like a big kind of exaggeration, but I believe that prior to the arrival of Jesus, this dude, John, was the greatest man to ever live.

Now I know that his resume may not be as impressive as others. He never really led anything. He never conquered lands or enemy armies. He never wrote a best seller. He never won an Oscar or an Emmy or a Grammy or a Nobel Peace Prize. And he certainly didn't have the look that typically reflects greatness. But I believe that apart from Jesus this guy John was the greatest man who ever lived.

And maybe some of you all who have read through the Bible might disagree with me and say, "No way, man. You forgetting about Abraham? What about Moses, huh? What about David? What about Daniel? Are you forgetting about Elijah? To say that John is the greatest, that sounds like something a pastor would say because he's getting ready to talk about him."

And I am. But gang, I'm convinced that John is the greatest. In fact, I'm pretty positive about this one. Here's what Jesus had to say about John the Baptist:

"I tell you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John..." Luke 7:28 (NIV)

Told you so.

We really are going to get to the final chapter of his life in Mark, chapter 6. But as we work our way there I just want ask the question: What was there about John that would elicit that kind of praise from Jesus? Who or what measures success in this life. I mean, how do you become great in Jesus' eyes. That's the question that we are asking today.

Be God's Limited Edition

And looking at John's life, I think one of the things that starts you and me on that path to greatness is when you and I are just content to be God's limited edition. One of the qualities that Jesus loved about John the Baptist is that he just tried to be who God made him to be. He embraced his originality. He was comfortable in his own skin. He saw himself, not in a prideful or rebellious or egotistical kind of way, he saw himself as a one of a kind. John had a very unique character—unique in a whole lot of ways, starting with his birth.



You all thought about how many significant Bible characters had unusual births? Of course Jesus has the most unusual, most unique—born of a virgin, delivered in a smelly barn, stable/cave thing.

Moses was almost murdered at birth and was found floating in a basket by Pharaoh's daughter. Issac, Samuel, Sampson all born to women who had struggled with infertility for decades. And that was John's story. Born to parents way too old to be having kids. I mean this couple was buying pampers with their Social Security check. I'm just saying. Zechariah and Elizabeth had given up all hope until the day they got this message from God. Luke, chapter 1:

"But the angel said, 'Don't be afraid, Zechariah! God has heard your prayer. Your wife, Elizabeth, will give you a son, and you are to name him John.'" Luke 1:13 (NLT)

To which Zechariah responds, "Yeah, right. I'll tell you right now that ain't going to happen." To which the angel, Gabriel, comes back, "This message is from God." He responds to him:

"But now, since you didn't believe what I said, you will be silent and unable to speak until the child is born. For my words will certainly be fulfilled at the proper time." Luke 1:20 (NLT)

"I'm just telling you Z, this is going to happen. But you're going to have to shut up for nine months and wait for it to happen." And that's the way it was. Elizabeth and Zechariah finally get pregnant. And he can't talk to anybody about it.

And when the baby is born, friends and family members are all gathered around and they asked Elizabeth, "Hey, what are you going to name your little boy?" Because naming him after the father was the traditional, expected thing to do.

And she comes back with, "We're going to name him John." And they go, "What? There is nobody in your entire family named John. We better go ask Zechariah because he's not going to be happy about this." Luke, chapter 1:

"So they used gestures to ask the baby's father what he wanted to name him. He motioned for a writing tablet, and to everyone's surprise he wrote, 'His name is John.' Instantly Zechariah could speak again, and he began praising God. Awe fell upon the whole neighborhood, and the news of what had happened spread throughout the Judean hills." Luke 1:62-65 (NLT)



So, John had a pretty unique birth. But then again, so was yours. I don't whether you were born in a hospital or at home or maybe you were born in a bathtub or a boat or the back of an Uber. I don't know. But I do know this. Your birth was unlike anybody else's because you are unlike anybody else.

David, I love how he marveled with this in Psalm 139. It's kind of a familiar passage where he said:

"You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous—how well I know it." Psalm 139:13-14 (NLT)

Here's the deal. I am a one of a kind, limited edition and so are you. It says in Ephesians 2:10 that we are God's masterpiece created in Christ Jesus to do the good works He planned for us all along.

Do you know that God takes great delight in watching you be you? He loves your nose, your lips, your hair or lack thereof, your eyes. He loves your acne. He loves your wrinkles. He loves your bulging biceps. He loves your love handles, your voice, your walk, your laugh, your intellect, your talents. He just loves you, the unique, limited edition you. His workmanship is marvelous. There is nobody quite like you.

Now, we are all in the process of becoming more and more like Jesus from the inside out. But even that flows out of God, who designed you and me uniquely. I love the way my buddy, John Ortberg, puts it:

"When you allow the Holy Spirit to work inside of you, you don't just become holier, you become youier."

What he is saying is you become God's best version of you. The fruit of the Spirit originates from the same source but the way that love and joy and peace and patience and kindness and goodness, and gentleness, and self-control flows through you is a little bit different than the way it uniquely flows through me.

Now, they certainly, uniquely flowed through John. I mean, Jesus talking about John's uniqueness said this:

"What kind of man did you go into the wilderness to see? Was he a weak reed, swayed by every breath of wind? Or were you expecting to see a man dressed in expensive clothes? No, people who wear beautiful clothes and live in luxury are found in palaces." Luke 7:24-25 (NLT)



"His clothes were woven from coarse camel hair, and he wore a leather belt around his waist. For food he ate locusts and wild honey." Mark 1:6 (NLT)

John was a different dude. A nonconformist and a huge contrast to all of the religious leaders of the day. They were dressed in their absolute finest and John shows up dressed in simple thrift store clothes. He was strong. He was weathered. He was an outdoor guy. He ate a low carb, high protein diet. Probably had crazy long hair. Was definitely counter-cultural and unique in just about every single way.

And this one of a kind, limited edition also had a very unique calling on his life. You might remember how Mark's gospel begins. Aaron talked about this all the way back to January 10. And it starts like this:

"This is the Good News..." that's what gospel means, "This is the Good News about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God. It began just as the prophet Isaiah had written: 'Look, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, and he will prepare your way. He is a voice shouting in the wilderness, "Prepare the way for the Lord's coming! Clear the road for him!"'

"This messenger was John the Baptist. He was in the wilderness and preached that people should be baptized to show that they had repented of their sins and turned to God to be forgiven. All of Judea, including all the people of Jerusalem, went out to see and hear John. And when they confessed their sins, he baptized them in the Jordan River." Mark 1:1-5 (NLT)

He had a specific calling on his life to prepare the way of the Lord. To prepare the way of the Messiah, the Savior, the promised Savior. To get things ready. To get people's hearts ready. To point people to Jesus. That was his unique calling.

And you have a unique calling too. Now, we all have different gifts. We all have different personality profiles. We have different stories. We have different backgrounds. All of us are in different seasons and we have different doors of opportunity right before us.

I don't know maybe your specific calling, your unique calling is just to be a great mom, be a great dad, to prepare the way of the Lord in your kids' hearts, to see them as God's unique calling on your life right now.

When my kids were growing up I felt so strongly called by God to do that with my life. I would get asked to come do speaking engagements and stuff. And I would just turn them down because my rational was, "There are a lot of guys who could go do that. But there is only one guy who is uniquely called to be their dad."



Some of you have a call on your life right now to make a difference in the school you go to or the summer job that you're going to be working. Some of you are living out your calling right now at a bank, in a factory, in a studio, a grocery store, a job site—maybe on a practice field or in an ER or an office somewhere. Some of you have your unique calling right now by caring for your elderly parents. Or maybe you're caring for a sick loved one or a neighbor or a friend.

Some of you right now have the unique calling on your life to sponsor and mentor somebody else on their recovery journey because you've been there too. Some of you are sensing a calling with your life right now to go to some underdeveloped part of the world and bring hope and help and a cup of cold water in the name of Jesus.

Whatever your calling is, it's unlike anybody else's. And like John, it's always an opportunity to use your uniqueness to point people to Jesus.

John's unique calling centered around a unique message. He was calling people to repentance, which means to do a 180 with your life and turn back toward God. And people were flocking to hear what this radical dude from the desert was saying because he was saying all kinds of fresh things, startling things, eye opening things, challenging things, hopeful things that no other religious type was saying. Plus, He was not only unique, he was real. And people were, people are, drawn to that.

You know sometimes greatness demands that you have to go courageously against the flow and just be a truth teller. Now, you and I always have to do that with wisdom and love, but sometimes you might have to speak up and say some things that are just unpopular to say. Things that might invoke some pretty harsh criticism, even unfounded accusations, slander. Sometimes it can land you up against some dangerous opposition.

And that happened to John. Not only did he expose the religious leaders for the phonies that they were, but he also, as we're going to see in just a moment, weighs in with God's truth with a scandalous situation that involved a very high ranking political figure. And it would end up costing him his life.

Now, really quickly, I've got to give a disclaimer about this whole speaking truth thing. Jesus one time, talking about His own words says, "You will know the truth and the truth will," what? "Set you free." The truth will set you free. So, according to Jesus, truth is a key, truth is a key that unlocks prison cells and sets people free.



Listen to me. Truth is not a hammer. When you see truth as a hammer, you'll only begin to see people as nails that need to be pounded. And so many people desperately need to know the truth but we always have to wrap truth with grace and kindness. Our tone really matters. And sarcasm is not a gift from the Holy Spirit.

But, to run from a difficult conversation that could really help somebody, to stay silent when injustice abuses the innocent, that's not the way of love, that's not the way of greatness.

And you know what? Being a truth teller is not easy. It wasn't easy for John, but he had to deliver a unique message in his unique way because he was a unique, one of a kind, limited edition created by God for His good purpose. And so are you. And when you are fully alive in God's truth and God's grace, God smiles because He sees His masterpiece on the path to greatness.

Something else that made John great in Jesus' eyes—and this is huge—is that he didn't see himself as great in his own eyes. You see, there is a tendency to take this whole you be uniquely you deal and turn it into a self-centered life saying, "Hey, you heard what the man just said. Gotta be me. That's just the way I am. So, deal with it." There is no humility in that. There is no greatness in that. I love what C.S. Lewis famously said. He said, "Humility is not thinking less of yourself, it's thinking of yourself less."

And that was John. John starts to build a crowd. He's gaining popularity. He's gaining a huge following. He was baptizing more and more people. And some began to refer to themselves as disciples of John. He had certainly stirred up some dormant expectations and caused hope to rise in the hearts of people. It says this in Luke, chapter 3:

"Everyone was expecting the Messiah to come soon, and they were eager to know whether John might be the Messiah. John answered their questions by saying, 'I baptize you with water; but someone is coming soon who is greater than I am—so much greater that I'm not even worthy to be his slave and untie the straps of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.'" Luke 3:15-16 (NLT)

Go Low and Lift High

Here's the second thing about people who are great in Jesus' eyes, they go low and they lift high. You see truly great people are lousy self-promoters. Like John, they don't see themselves as a big deal.



I've got to tell you a story. I don't have to but I'm going to. I reluctantly will tell you this story. I was invited years ago to speak at a church in a pretty affluent part of southern California. It was a great church. I was living in Chicago at the time. So, I flew there and preached and they told me, "Hey, tomorrow morning someone will pick you up at your hotel and take you to the airport."

So, at 5:30 in the morning I'm standing out front of this hotel and I'm waiting for the youth pastor to show up in a Honda Civic and take me to LAX. I'm standing there for a while and this big stretch limo pulls up. And I'm thinking, "Man. Somebody important has been staying at this hotel. I don't know who it is, but man, that's quite the ride right there. Might be a celebrity from out here in Hollywood or something. Maybe they are here to pick them up."

The guy gets out of the limo and walks around and says, "Are you Mister Breeaux?" I went, "Well it's Breaux [Bro] actually." And he goes, "I'm your ride to the airport." "Me, you're my ride to the airport?" I'd never been in a limo in my life. Especially a stretch limo.

And he opens the back door for me and I climb in. So, I've got my backpack and I get in the back of this limo. I feel so stupid sitting in the back of this huge limo riding through Hollywood. And I began to say, "This is ridiculous."

But, then I got thinking, "This feels pretty nice. I bet people are wondering who is in this limo. They can't see through the dark windows, but they are wondering. Some big shot, some big deal is riding in the back of that limo." I thought, "Yeah, I am a big deal."

Until smoke started to fill the back cabin of that limo. And I was looking around and there is smoke coming in everywhere. So, I yell up to the guy who is like a football field in front of me. I yell up to him, "Hey, we're on fire or something."

And he pulls over. He's in the fast lane on the 405. If you've ever been to California you know it's a crazy road. He goes through five lanes of traffic all of the way to the side of the road. I jump out the back door of that limo and the tire is blown out. He didn't know it. The tire is blown out and he'd been riding on the rim for a long time at 70 miles an hour and the rim caught on fire right next to the gas tank.

So, I jump out of this limo and I take my jacket and I try to throw it on the fire to put this fire out. It burnt a hole in my jacket. I'm kicking dirt. I'm throwing gravel from the side of the road, whatever I could throw on this. He comes running around the limo with two little bottles of Aquafina and he's throwing them on there. Now it's mud. I'm trying to throw mud on the fire and put this thing out.



We finally get the thing out and I'm standing there with a hole burned in my jacket. I've got mud and dirt from head to toe. I had a pen in my pocket that exploded. Now I've got ink all over my pants.

I'm standing there on the side of the 405, took my phone out trying to hitchhike a ride from a taxi to get to the airport. And I felt like God said to me, "Breaux, you might be a lot of things, but a big deal ain't one of them." I mean, God can take you down in a heartbeat. You know?

And people wanted to raise John the Baptist up, "Hey, man. You are a pretty big deal." They tried to promote him. They tried to market him. They tried to tweak his profile to make him seem like he was a really big deal. When they tried to throw a spotlight on him, tried to get him to buy into his own self-importance, he would say something like this:

"You yourselves know how plainly I told you, 'I am not the Messiah. I am only here to prepare the way for him.' It is the bridegroom who marries the bride, and the bridegroom's friend is simply glad to stand with him and hear his vows. Therefore, I am filled with joy at his success. He must become greater and greater, and I must become less and less. He has come from above and is greater than anyone else. We are of the earth and we speak of earthly things, but he has come from heaven and he is greater than anyone else." John 3:28-31 (NLT)

And then one day, the day that John had been waiting for a long time happened. He's standing out in the Jordan River, probably waist deep baptizing people. And he looks and sees the Lord coming, Jesus coming, and he says, "Look, there He is. That's Him, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. He's the One I've been talking about when I said, 'A man is coming after me who is far greater than I am, for He existed long before me.' That's Him right there. I told you it wasn't me.

"I've been trying to tell you, I'm just a warmup act. I'm not a big deal. He's the main event. He's the real headliner. He is the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End. He's the Messiah, the Lamb of God who takes away all of our sin." And then John famously says this:

"He must increase, but I must decrease." John 3:30 (KJV)

And gang, I'm telling you, if you want to live a great life, He must increase and we must decrease. We've got to lay our ego on the altar every single day. Saying again, "God I surrender to Your better leadership. I want You to increase and I want me to decrease. God, please don't let me make this day about myself. I don't want the spotlight. Keep me humble. Keep me looking for ways to serve other people, to go low and lift high, and thus throw a floodlight on You."



See, Jesus talked about this. Demonstrated this at times. He said things like, "The first shall be last and the last shall be first." "More is less and less is more." And, "The greatest among you must become servants of all." And then He goes to a cross to show us how all of that works, saying, "That's the path to a great life." You descend into greatness. You go low and you lift high. "He must increase. I must decrease." That was John.

As I was looking at John's life, there is a third thing I kind of noticed that really pleases God or makes God say, "That's a great life right there."

Be Honest With God

Truly great people live in such intimate, authentic community with God that they know that they can always be totally honest with God about everything. John was a transparent and honest guy. He was comfortable in his own skin. He did whatever God asked him to do. He recognized the Lamb of God when he saw Him coming. He even heard the voice of God upon Jesus at His baptism say, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."

And yet, sitting in a dark, cold prison cell he began to wrestle with doubt. He knew that preparing the way for the Lord wouldn't be easy, but I'm guessing he never dreamt that it would land him in prison. And so from prison he just gets totally honest with Jesus. John calls two of his disciples in Luke, chapter 7:

"...and he sent them to the Lord to ask him, 'Are you the Messiah we've been expecting, or should we keep looking for someone else? John's two disciples found Jesus and said to him, 'John the Baptist sent us to ask, "Are you the Messiah we've been expecting, or should we keep looking for someone else?'"

"At that very time, Jesus cured many people of their diseases, illnesses, and evil spirits, and he restored sight to many who were blind. Then he told John's disciples, 'Go back to John and tell him what you have seen and heard—the blind see, the lame walk, those with leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life, and the Good News is being preached to the poor.'"

And you tell him this. Make sure you tell him this.

"God blesses those who do not fall away because of me." Luke 7:19-23 (NLT)
You see, if we have an ongoing, authentic relationship with God, we can ask Him or tell Him anything. You can bring your doubts, your fears, your anxieties, your anger, your pain. You can bring your frustrations, your confusion, your disappointment, your disillusionment—just be honest with Him. He expects us to.



Now, doubt is not the same thing as distrust. It's saying, "God, You know what? I totally trust You. But I could use a little reassurance right now. I mean, You are the right one, right? 'Cause even though I do have faith in You, I need You to help my unbelief because right now I just don't get it.

"I know You have a plan for me. I know You have a plan to give me a future and a hope. But from my limited vantage point, God, I just can't see it right now. I know. I know. I'm standing on Your promises that You work all things together for good for those who love You. But, honestly, God. I'm just scared right now.

"I will unconditionally trust You. But, I've just got to say this cancer really, really sucks. My heart is broken. This life is just so unfair. I totally believe in You as my Father, as my Daddy, as my Abba. I will always know that Your love is unfailing for me. I just need You to reassure me right now. That You are with me."

You see, when life gets tough as it does and will for all of us, like John you just get honest with God. And you maintain a grateful heart.

Stand Strong, knowing eternity is theirs

Because, here's the deal. Truly great people, people like John, they stand strong, knowing eternity is theirs. They already know eternity is theirs so they stand strong.

I was on a college campus one time where I was speaking. And I see this student walking toward me with—I remember it was a yellow t-shirt and it had big, black bold letters on the front that said: Live. And then fine print underneath of it. And I walked past and the back of this t-shirt said: Die, with fine print underneath of it. What in the heck is that t-shirt about? So, I get around back, behind him to see what it is. He walked by me again. It says:

Live like you'll die tomorrow, Die knowing you'll live forever

Man, that is a great way to live your life. And John was willing to live a life so full of purpose and passion that if he had to die for the Kingdom of God, he was okay with that because he knew eternity was already his. He reasoned, "If Jesus, the Lamb of God, was going to die for him, make a way to heaven for him, then there was no holding back in the intensity of his love and gratitude.

I'm just confident that if we could interview John in heaven right now he would assure us that following Jesus with whole-hearted devotion is absolutely worth it. He would do it all again in a heartbeat.

Remember what Jesus told him? Don't forget this John:



“God blesses those who do not turn away because of me.”

And John would have to hold onto those words more than he ever knew. The final chapter of his life in Mark, chapter 6, man it plays out like a lured soap-opera or an R rated episode of Dateline, complete with tangled relationships and lustful passions and political intrigue and drunken decisions and approval seeking and violent murder and unresolved guilt.

Herod was a Jewish politician, a puppet king for Rome, who oversaw that particular geographic region of the empire. And this Herod is Herod Antipas the son of Herod the Great. You might remember him. He’s the one who had all of the baby boys under two killed when Jesus was born.

He’s the guy who killed his wife—his, by the way, favorite wife. He had her killed. He killed his two sons on suspicion of conspiracy against him. He also killed his brother-in-law, his mother-in-law, and his wife’s grandfather—all out of paranoia that they were coming for his throne.

And so now his son Antipas is simply carrying on the family tradition of ego, narcissistic power, and depravity. And the Herod here in Mark 6 had dumped his own wife and stolen his brother’s wife.

Historian Josephus said the marriage of Herod and his new wife Herodias happened when he was on a journey to Rome. On the way the dude stays at his brother Philip’s house, sleeps with his brother’s wife, agrees to dump his wife and Herodias dumps his brother. And they live sinfully ever after.

And John, the truth teller, speaks into the moral corruption and calls him out as a so-called leader of God’s people, the king of the Jews, so to speak. He tells them that what the two of them had done to his wife and her husband (his brother) was so wrong. So, to shut him up for a while Herod throws him into prison.

And while Herod didn’t appreciate the hard truth that John spoke to him about his depravity, it says that he was intrigued by John’s deep character and courage. There was just something about this simple, but bold desert dude that Herod admired and respected. It says he even liked to listen to John speak. He could sense that there was a godliness about this guy.

On the other hand, Herodias, his new wife can’t stand John. Her attitude was, “Who does this long-haired, locus eating, camel skin wearing, desert rat think he is, telling royalty how to live their lives?” So, she wants to kill him. But she can’t pull it off without Herod’s approval.



Well, her chance comes at Herod's birthday. They hold this big bash. Everybody is invited there. The wine is flowing. And Herodias' daughter comes in and does some kind of seductive dance in front of Herod that gets him and all of his buddies excited. So, when he is turned on and tanked up, this creepy man says to her, says to his step-daughter:

"Ask me for anything you like,' the king said to the girl, 'and I will give it to you.' He even vowed, 'I will give you whatever you ask, up to half my kingdom!" Mark 6:22-23 (NLT)

Isn't it crazy how our out-of-control appetites make us forsake all good reason? They just do. I heard a comedian say onetime, "You ever watch those commercials where they start by saying, 'Are you a man over 40? Do you struggle with low T?'" He said, "Like having low T is a bad thing. Every horrible decision I've made in my life was when I had high T."

So, here the combination of wine and high T and lustful desires makes this guy throw out all reason and promise in front of everybody, "Whatever you want, it's yours."

So, she goes and asks her mom,

"What should I ask for?"

Should I ask for a pony? A shopping spree at the mall? A trip to Disney World? A new Play Station?" And her mom tells her:

"Ask for the head of John the Baptist!"

What?

"So the girl hurried back to the king and told him, 'I want the head of John the Baptist, right now, on a tray!' Then the king deeply regretted what he had said; but because of the vows he had made in front of his guests, he couldn't refuse her."

In other words, to save face he takes John's head.

"So he immediately sent an executioner to the prison to cut off John's head and bring it to him. The soldier beheaded John in the prison, brought his head on a tray, and gave it to the girl, who took it to her mother. When John's disciples heard what had happened, they came to get his body and buried it in a tomb." Mark 6:24-29 (NLT)



How evil is that? How demonic is that? How vile is that? You might say, "Man, what a tragic end to a great man." And to be sure, it appears to be. But you see, when John's disciples came to get his body, John wasn't there. He'd already slipped into eternal life.

We lived in southern California for eight years to help plant a church and teach in some churches out there. But we moved back to Kentucky, where I grew up, three years ago to take care of my wife's mom.

And Debbie's mom, what a joy. What a joy she was. Just an awesome lady. I was closer to her than I was my own mom. I'd known her for a long, long time. She was just an awesome lady. And it was a thrill, an honor, to take care of her for two-and-a-half years out of that three.

It finally got to the point, because of dementia and Alzheimer's, we had to put her in a memory care unit. And that was hard to do. Hard for everybody because she loved being at home with her family. But it got to the point where she didn't really know where she was. And to protect her we had to put her in a more secure environment.

It was 10 minutes from the house and we went every single day to hang with her like she was still living with us and stuff. And she was thriving at this memory care unit. One day they showed us a video of Karaoke night where she was dancing up a storm and singing every song. And she had a boyfriend who thought that she was his ex-wife. And she was thriving in that place. But then she fell and broke her shoulder, broke her hip. Two breaks on an Alzheimer's patient is impossible to recover from. She passed away and Debbie and I were reflecting on that right after, "You know what? She didn't leave home. She went home. She went home."

And gang, John, he got to leave that prison and go home.

You see, when you unconditionally trust God, when you know that the cross and the empty tomb has made a way for you to live forever, then guess what? You'll live like you'll die tomorrow, and die knowing you'll live forever.

You know, what we celebrated just a few weeks ago on Easter makes apparent that we no longer fear death. We no longer fear death. And when you are not afraid to die, man you are not afraid to live. You are free to take bold, faith-filled risks and step out courageously and live your life with passion and purpose—just to live a great life.



Now, John, he might not have had all of the notoriety, all the acclaim, all of the applause, all of the magazine covers, the social media followers, the riches and all of the clout, but he was truly great—the greatest man who ever lived apart from Jesus, because he humbly lived beyond himself dependent upon his Father and pointing people to Jesus Christ.

And I want to be great. Not in my eyes so that I can boast, but in the eyes of the One who matters the most. To be content in the marvelous way that I was made and not be afraid or hide in the shade of some phony image that with time only fades. To celebrate my gifts that come from above and point people to Jesus so they can feel loved and cherished and treasured and worthy and free to be all their Creator had dreamed they could be.

To go low and lift high so that others can soar. To speak loving truth that can open the door to their freedom, their sobriety, their sanity, their hope and bring joy to the ones at the end of their rope.

To lay my wants, my needs, my ego on the altar and put my trust in the God who will never, ever falter but is always at work even when I can't see. His eyes are on the sparrow. His eyes are on me. So, I'll trust Him with my life wherever I roam. And when death tries to stop me, I'll just get to go home.

Father, thank You so much for the story of John. Thank You that he prepared the way for You, Jesus, to show up and change our lives. We want to be great in Your eyes. And to do that we need to go low and let You increase and put our ego on the altar every day and decrease, to not hog the spotlight but to throw a flood light on You, because You told us we are the light of the world, and let people see our goodness and praise our Father in heaven.

We want to live life like that. We want to be a people who are just content with the way that You've made us, the things You've given us. To live with gratitude. To not fall in that stupid comparison trap, "I wish I was like her." "I wish I was like him." "I wish I had this or that." But to be content to be Your limited edition and to be content with our unique calling in life.

Father, thank You so much for speaking to our hearts today. And I pray all of this in Jesus' name. Amen.

