

**Confessions of a Proud Second Fiddler**  
*The I Am and the Logos: The Gospel of John #3*  
*John 1:19-34 (3:26, 30)*

*And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High. You will go before the Lord to prepare a way for Him. You will give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of sins because of the tender mercies of our God.*

My career as a fiddler lasted just one afternoon. There were only two living organisms in the audience: my sister and our dog. “Marcie,” I said, “listen to this here tune I worked up on this here fiddle.” I cracked my knuckles and rosined up my bow. Then I proceeded to scrape back and forth across the strings and produce some of the worst sounds from a musical instrument that you’ve ever heard in your life. I produced no compliments from my sister. But it sure did produce howling and wailing from our dog.

We seldom dream of being second fiddle. We want to be the first. We seldom dream of being the vice-president of a company. We want to be the president. We seldom dream of being the back-up quarterback. We want to be the starting quarterback. We seldom dream of being the understudy. We want to be the star of the show.

In the Gospel of John, every person who comes along and responds positively to Jesus, bears witness to what John writes in the prologue: that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. And the first witness is the greatest one of them all. He was famous and known throughout all of Israel. He was, at one time, the best preacher in the land. Multitudes came to hear him preach. But when it came to his first cousin, who also happened to be the Incarnate Word and the I Am of the Old Testament, this individual was proud to be a second fiddler. He was John the Baptist.

I believe with all my heart that those who are not happy, or content, or satisfied or comfortable in their own skin, are such because they desire to be the first fiddler of everything in their lives, not the second. Those who continuously find fault in others, or who feel like the world, or even you, owes them something, behave as such because they desire to be the first fiddler of everything in life, not the second. Consequently, in our desire to be the first fiddler of our lives, we leave our post as understudies of Jesus and begin a quest for happiness, contentment, and joy in life that only having Jesus as our first fiddler can provide. But both Johns, the Writer and the Baptizer, want you to know, that true life, joy, contentment and satisfaction is found when you willingly make Jesus the first fiddler of your life and you willingly make yourself His understudy.

In order to do that, John the Baptist’s confessions must become your confessions every day; in the morning when you rise, in the afternoon as you accomplish what you need to do, and in the evening when you lay your head on the pillow. They are these: (1) I am not the Christ; (2) Behold, the Lamb of God; and (3) I Must Decrease. He Must Increase. We see those confessions in John 1:19-34 and 3:26 and 30. John the Baptist wasn’t a proud man. He was humble. But he was proud to play second fiddle to Jesus. Are you?

*<sup>19</sup> Now this was John’s testimony when the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. <sup>20</sup> He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, “I am not the Messiah.” <sup>21</sup> They asked him, “Then who are you? Are you Elijah?” He said, “I am not.” “Are you the Prophet?” He answered, “No.” <sup>22</sup> Finally they said, “Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?” <sup>23</sup> John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, “I am the voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way for the Lord.’” <sup>24</sup> Now the Pharisees who had been sent <sup>25</sup> questioned him, “Why then do you baptize if you are not the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?” <sup>26</sup> “I baptize with water,” John replied, “but among you stands one you do not know. <sup>27</sup> He is the one who comes after me, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.” <sup>28</sup> This all happened at Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptizing. <sup>29</sup> The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! <sup>30</sup> This is the one I meant when I said, ‘A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.’” <sup>31</sup> I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel.” <sup>32</sup> Then John gave this testimony: “I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. <sup>33</sup> And I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’” <sup>34</sup> I have seen and I testify that this is God’s Chosen One.”*

**1. I am not the Christ (20-23)**

- **Horn Tooting:** (1) In medieval times, trumpets were used to let people know that someone important has arrived in the vicinity. (2) Trumpetists, in fact, often traveled with the king’s court just for this reason. (3) But apparently, King Louis XIV of France didn’t get the memo. At a lavish party in the Palace of Versailles, he decided it would be a good idea to play the trumpet himself to announce his reign as the “Sun King.” (4) King Louis XIV tooted his own horn. John the Baptist said: “I don’t have my own horn to toot.”
- **If Any Man Could Have Tooted His Own Horn, It Was John the Baptist:** (1) A priest — John was from the tribe of Levi, the priestly tribe of Israel. But he was not just a priest, he was (2) A Nazarite — while in the womb, their life was dedicated to the Lord in ways other priests were not: (a) they abstained from the fruit of the vine; (b) didn’t cut their hair; and (c) didn’t go near anything dead. Why? They represented life! (3) A Chip Off the Old Block — His dad, Zechariah, was also a Nazarite and a priest. (4) The Subject of a Special Prophecy Before Birth — The angel Gabriel came to his dad and told him his son would bring back many Israelites to the Lord their God and operate in the spirit and power of Elijah. (5) A Special Compliment by Jesus — “Among those born of women, there has not been anyone greater than John the Baptist.”

- **But Instead:** John gives three denials (representing completion) and follows those denials with a staggering statement: (1) Are you the Messiah (nope) (2) Are you Elijah? (nope); (3) Are you the prophet who Moses said was greater than he was: (nope); (4) “I’m not worthy to untie the sandals of the One coming after me!” Untying sandals was a task for slaves. He makes himself lower than slaves when it comes to Jesus.
- **So What Was He:** I am the voice! I’m not the contents. I am the cup.
- **How to Walk in the Truth of John’s Confession:** (1) In Successes – When things are going well and you are the center of attention, you must remind yourself: “I am not the Christ. I am a voice.” (2) In Efforts – When you want to solve things, when you want to fix things, when you want to change things, when you want things to go your way, you must remind yourself: “I am not the Christ. I am a voice.” (3) In Attitudes – When you feel confident, capable, and competent, you must remind yourself: “I am not the Christ. I am a voice.”
- **App:** The surest way to go through life lacking joy is to think more about the cup than you do the contents it holds. But when you confess to yourself everyday: “I am not the Christ. You are Lord Jesus” you put the emphasis on the right fiddler.

## 2. Behold the Lamb of God (29-34)

- **The Great Wallenda** – (1) Many times during the week, I get insomnia and watch a documentary in the middle of the night. This past Thursday was one of those times. (2) It was a documentary about Karl Wallenda, the great tight rope walker. In 1970, he figured it would be a good idea to walk across Tallulah Gorge in North-East Georgia on a tight rope. (3) But what struck me was how the Great Wallenda was introduced: “Behold the Great Wallenda.”
- **Behold Meaning:** to see and observe a thing/person that’s especially remarkable and impressive. For John the person especially remarkable and impressive was Jesus, not himself.
- **Behold the Lamb for John:** Tells us (1) Who Jesus is – “the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world” (v29) and “God’s Chosen One [Son of God]” (v34). (2) Why He’s Qualified – “he was before me” [In the beginning was the Word] (v30). (3) How He Knew – Though he was Jesus’ 1<sup>st</sup> cousin, he didn’t know Jesus was the Messiah. He learned that by revelation: “the one you see the Spirit come down and remain is the One” (v33). (4) What that Meant for John and Us: (a) John’s baptism was symbolic – It was a water baptism that represented repentance and internal cleansing. (b) Jesus’ baptism was of the Holy Spirit – (i) a metaphor for a divine creation – The Spirit hovered over the waters at creation. Now the Spirit indwells with the Son at the beginning of his public ministry. All three persons of the Trinity are represented in this event. (ii) a metaphor for a permanent resident – at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit comes to indwell permanently upon belief. (c) Our baptism is a combination of both. It is a symbol of an inner work of God of a new creation and a permanent resident (the HS) that came to dwell within at the moment of our repentance and belief, just like at Pentecost. A baptism of the HS is not something that happens sometime later. It happens at salvation and is symbolized in baptism by immersion.
- **Behold the Lamb is the Contents in our Cups and the Message for Our Voices:** (1) Those in need of divine guidance (like the disciples in Jn 1): Come, see, and behold the lamb. (2) Those who need to be born again (like Nicodemus in Jn 3): Behold the lamb. (3) Those in who never have their thirst quenched in life from vain pursuits (like the Woman at the Well in Jn 4): Behold the lamb. (4) Those who walk in darkness (like all the blind people in John): Behold the lamb. (5) Those who are dead in their transgressions and in need of resurrection (like Lazarus in Jn 11): Behold the Lamb.
- **App:** In a world that is all about “me.” Our responsibility as second fiddlers is to point people to “thee.” When I pray every day for opportunities to speak: “Behold the Lamb” in the lives of others, I’ll know what it’s like on a small scale to walk in the Baptizer’s shoes. You will also.

## 3. I must decrease. He must increase (3:26, 30)

- **Advertising Campaigns:** (1) Are often geared towards your increase at their decrease. That’s how they get you to buy their product and/or use their services: (2) WGU – The University of You. Go Greyhound and leave the driving to us. UPS – What can brown do for you? Kodak – You press the button. We do the rest. Burger King – Have it your way. (3) The Baptizer was the opposite: I must decrease. He must increase.
- **In the minds of John’s Disciples, He Had a Ministry Problem:** (1) 3:26 tells us John’s disciples came to him and said: “Rabbi, that man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan – the one you testified about – he is baptizing, and everyone is going to him.” (2) Translation: Your ministry isn’t what it used to be when Jesus wasn’t on the scene. This Jesus is putting you out to pasture. You are past your prime now.
- **But John Thought Differently:** (1) I must decrease – I must become less. He must increase – He must become more. (2) Meaning – It’s not a desire for God to do away with you. It’s how to really find fulfillment, both as a human and a Christian. Think about this like a wedding reception. John is the best man. He’s got the third biggest grin on his face in the whole joint. He’s joyful. He gives a toast, a speech, and sits back down with a big grin on his face. Why? Because it’s the groom who gets the attention. He gets the gifts, and he gets the bride.
- **How We Can Decrease and Christ Can Increase in Our Lives:** (1) Swim against the cultural current – In our world, the self is to be celebrated above all else. John says “no!” You are the happiest in life when Jesus is celebrated above all else and is out in front. (2) Who exists for whom? – We tend to believe that Jesus exists for us. That’s not true. We exist for Him: “in him was life.” Life was “through Him.” Life is “for him.” (3). Who gets the glory? – I must decrease, and He must increase is a call for a conscious effort every day to let our own ego be second so that God’s will and His glory can be more prominent in our lives.
- **App:** Ronald Reagan once said: “there is no limit to the amount of good you can do if you don’t care who gets the credit.” John the Baptist would agree with one caveat. You must be willing every say: “Lord, I will decrease so that you can increase!” Confess to the Lord every day that today, on this day, I will be proud to be a second fiddler.