

# All Puffed Up



**Theme:** Don't Think Too Highly Of Yourself

**Object:** A balloon with a face drawn on it.

(Tape a thumb tack on the inside of your finger to burst the balloon at the right time)

**Scripture:** "Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted." (Matthew 23:12 NASB)

This morning I have a balloon with me. A balloon is a simple toy, but it brings a lot of pleasure to people of all ages. There are so many things you can do with a balloon. You can use balloons for decorations at a party or you can bat them around in the air like a ball. If you have a long, skinny balloon, you can even make it into the shape of different animals. Yes, a balloon can bring a lot of happiness, but it can bring sadness and disappointment too. Haven't you ever seen a small child cry when his balloon bursts?

You and I are sometimes like a balloon. We sometimes get all puffed up with our own importance. We think we are great and we expect everyone else to think so too. Maybe it because we are so good looking, or maybe it is because we are so smart. Maybe we are really good in sports, or perhaps we are the best singer in the choir. Sooner or later, if we keep getting puffed up with our own importance, something will happen to burst our balloon. (*Prick the balloon*)

Jesus warned us that this would happen. The Bible teaches us that if we are too proud and think too highly of ourselves, we are headed for a fall. On the other hand, if we are humble, and realize that it is through God's strength that we are able to do great things, we will be given a place of honor in the kingdom of God.

From now on, when you see a balloon, I hope it will remind you that we should not become too puffed up with our own importance -- or something may come along and burst our balloon!

Jesus, help us to not become too puffed up with our own importance. Remind us that whatever abilities we have are a gift from you and that you are the one who deserves the praise! Amen.

READING – John 3:22-36

John 3:22-30

**Slide** The Witness of a Humble Man

Sermon

#19

Open in Prayer **Blank**

Humility us a virtue all men preach, few practice and yet most desire. We recognize humility is important and desirable. Let me relate a story of humility to you for a truly humble man is hard to find. Yet God delights to honor such selfless people. **Slide** Booker T. Washington, the renowned black educator, was such a man. Shortly after he took over the presidency of the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, he was walking in an exclusive section of town when a wealthy white woman stopped him. Not knowing the famous Mr. Washington by sight, she asked if he would like to earn a little money by chopping wood for her. Because he had no pressing business at the moment, Professor Washington smiled, rolled up his sleeves, and proceeded to do the humble chore she had requested. When he was finished, he carried the firewood into the house and stacked it by the fireplace and quietly left without pay. A neighbor girl recognized Mr. Washington and later that day revealed his identity to the lady.

The next morning the embarrassed woman went to see Mr. Washington in his office at the Institute and apologized profusely. "It's perfectly all right, Madam," he replied. "Occasionally I enjoy a little manual labor. Besides, it's always a delight to do something for a friend." She shook his hand warmly and assured him that his meek and gracious attitude had endeared him and his work to her heart. Not long afterward she showed her admiration by persuading some wealthy acquaintances to join her in donating thousands of dollars to the Tuskegee Institute. **Blank**

It is said humility is one of the great Christian virtues and the opposite of pride. If true humility is so difficult to obtain, then we might ask, “Where does it come from?” And does anyone in truth possess it? The answers to these questions I believe are found in our text of study and demonstrated by the last words recorded of John the Baptist before he was arrested.

As we prepare to delve into our study verses we must first understand that John the Baptist had achieved a great deal of popularity as the result of his preaching. In the gospel of Luke we read that “multitudes” went out to hear John. In Matthew we are told that people came to hear and be baptized by John from **Slide** “... Jerusalem ... and all Judea and all the district around the Jordan; and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins.” (Matthew 3:5 & 6 NASB) **Blank** The multitudes included people from every social stratum: Pharisees, Sadducees, tax collectors, soldiers, the rich and the poor. The Apostle John wrote earlier of an official delegation from Jerusalem who sought out John the Baptist. Some believed, although wrongly, that John was the reincarnation of Elijah. John’s popularity reached the palace of Herod, the tetrarch of Galilee. Herod called for John and then listened to John preach and Herod even considered John righteous. We know this by what we read in the gospel of Mark, **Slide** “Herod was afraid of John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he kept him safe. And when he heard him, he was very perplexed; but he used to enjoy listening to him.” (Mark 6:20 NASB) Herod enjoyed John’s preaching as long as he preached in generalities. When John preached against Herod for living with his brother’s wife, Herodias, well then, Herod seems to have enjoyed John less and Herodias wanted John dead. **Blank** John was well known and respected by many and he convicted many of their need to repent before a holy God.

Our passage begins in verse 22 reading, “After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there He was spending time with them and baptizing. <sup>23</sup> John also was baptizing in Aenon (**Αἰνών** [*Ainon* /ahee·nohn/] meaning “springs” and is believed to be about 30 miles north of the Dead Sea.) near Salim, (on the west side of the Jordan River and known for it’s many springs, also.) because there was much water there; and *people* were coming and were being baptized—

At the time of these two paragraphs written by Apostle John here in chapter three from verses 22 to 30 John the Baptist had not yet been arrested for verse 24 tells us, “for John had not yet been thrown into prison.” We know then that John was still preaching and baptizing. At the same time Jesus’ ministry was growing and many who had been following John now left him and followed Jesus. It appears that John’s disciples were worried about this change from John being the prominent one preaching salvation and repentance of sins and that he was now fading into second place behind Jesus. In verse 26 John the Baptist’s disciples approach him and make this statement, “Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified, behold, He is baptizing and all are coming to Him.” It was as if they were saying, John you are no longer number one, what are we to do so you will remain number one? John’s disciples thought his recognition of Jesus, as the new comer, was generous, but now they were not happy that Jesus was distracting people from John’s ministry. They wanted John to say or do something to slow Jesus down and that would bring John back into the light. John’s immediate reply showed he was not sorry for himself and he rejoiced in the popularity of the newcomer Jesus. John is the last Old Testament prophet. John preached that the “old” covenant was ending and the “new” and better covenant was now here in Jesus.

John knew that for thousands of years the children of Israel lived under the burdensome covenant God had made with their forefathers on Mount Sinai. This covenant contained God's absolute law of righteousness and it reflected God's very nature. This covenant and laws contained the elements that gave Israel its national identity as God's chosen people. **Slide** "For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth." (Deuteronomy 7:6 NASB) God had set Israel apart from their neighbors and other people groups by the detailed social and ceremonial regulations. However, almost immediately they misunderstood and abused the moral and spiritual elements of the covenant. The covenant was meant to reveal their sin and inability to save themselves, for no man is able to keep the Law and it was meant to drive them towards God. The Apostle Mark makes this clear in his gospel record of our Lord Jesus' very words in chapter 12:30 and 31, which is the heart verses of Canyon Bible Church and quotes Deuteronomy as I now do, **Slide** "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart." (Deuteronomy 6:4-6 NASB) God did not write them on stone tablets, but on their hearts of flesh. **Blank** The problem by Jesus' day was that Israel's commitment to the covenant God had made to their forefathers had degenerated into superficial ritual, morality, legalism and tradition. Israel also was wrong in thinking that the old covenant was their means to salvation, when this clearly was never God's intent. Remember God's intent for the covenant was to confront people's sin and for them to reflect on His holiness and by demanding that they keep the law perfectly it left them facing their inability to keep it and their need for salvation given by God and not earned by man. God wanted mankind to trust in

His grace and receive forgiveness that only He could offer and which was found in the “new” or better covenant – the life, death and resurrection of Jesus – who was fully God and fully sinless man. **Slide**<sup>31</sup> “ ‘Behold, days are coming,’ declares the LORD, ‘when I will make a **new covenant** with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,<sup>32</sup> not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,’ declares the LORD.<sup>33</sup> ‘But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,’ declares the LORD, ‘I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.<sup>34</sup> They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,’ declares the LORD, ‘for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.’ ” (Jeremiah 31:30-34 NASB) Here we see in the Old Testament that God promised salvation by a new covenant. The old covenant was never meant to be the final hope for mankind. The author of Hebrews explains it this way, **Slide** “When He (God) said, ‘A new covenant,’ He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear.” (Hebrews 8:13 NASB) The old covenant’s glory had passed. This is why I do not understand those wanting to return to the old covenant by being Messianic Congregations. The Apostle Paul dealt the old covenant a death blow in his writing to the Corinthians, **Slide**<sup>7</sup> “But if the ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones, came with glory, so that the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading as it was,<sup>8</sup> how will the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more with glory?<sup>9</sup> For if the ministry of condemnation has glory, much more does the ministry of righteousness abound in glory.<sup>10</sup> For indeed what had glory, in this case has no

glory because of the glory that surpasses it. <sup>11</sup> For if that which fades away *was with glory, much more that which remains is in glory.*" (2 Corinthians 3:7-11 NASB)

Paul notes in both verses 7 and 11 that the glory of the old covenant was fading and God intended for it to give way to the new and better covenant. **Blank**

The words of John the Baptist are important; otherwise they would not be recorded in the scriptures. John the Baptist speaks of God's sovereignty. When John answered his disciples who wanted to know how they could slow down Jesus from taking the attention away from him, John said in verse 27, "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given him from heaven." We see in these words the first of several things that kept John humble. John knew that if the newcomer, Jesus, was attracting and winning more converts than he, it was **not** because Jesus was stealing them away; it was because God was giving them to Christ.

Do we have this same humility as John? God's sovereignty does not mean that we are free to be lazy in our Christian life and then blame our lack of achievement on God. John did not do this, for we read that even after Jesus came he kept right on preaching repentance and baptizing. He continued doing what God had given him to do. Believing in the sovereignty of God means we do what God has called us to do with excellence and know that whatever the results of our efforts, we see God's hand in it and we are not jealous of others, even though God achieves more through them. We are not proud of our spiritual insight or achievements or jealous of the achievements of others for we understand that these come from above.

When Peter realized that Jesus was the Messiah, Jesus responded to Peter saying,

**Slide** "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal *this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.*" (Matthew 16:17 NASB) The Apostle Paul

wrote to the Corinthians in his first letter and addressed their arrogance when he

said, **Slide** “For who regards you as superior? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?” (1 Corinthians 4:7 NASB) God freely gives to us gifts of talent and ability – do you claim these as your own? Do we **boast as if we had not received** them from above?

**Blank** To recognize that all spiritual insight and achievements come from God is to free one from jealousy of the effort of others. It recognizes that all, all Christ-centered and totally committed service, whatever the results, ranks equally with God. Let me repeat that, all Christ-centered and totally committed service, no matter what your station in society is – is equal with God for God has called you to service by His will.

A second factor in John’s humility was his own self-awareness. John knew whom he was and what it was that God had called him to be and do. We see this in verse 28, “**You yourselves are my witnesses that I said, ‘I am not the Christ,’ but, ‘I have been sent ahead of Him.’**” My beloved, do you and I have this same self-awareness? If we do, then it will mean on one level we recognize ourselves to be nothing. This is God’s own appraisal of us as spoken by Jesus, **Slide** “**apart from Me you can do nothing.**” (John 15:5 NASB) On the other hand, it will also mean that we recognize the importance of what we are given to do by God. We realize that we become something because of God and it is for God’s glory. We then have faith in Christ and become a follower of Christ; serving Christ by serving those he places in our lives and by being an example of excellence in all we do as a witness of Christ’s work in our lives. Paul says in the twelfth chapter of Romans that humility is knowing who you are in Christ, **Slide** “**For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.**” (Romans 12:3 NASB) In this verse, although hidden in the English



translation, is a Greek word used four times. This word, “*phroneo*” describes a person who is in their right mind. It is a word that a person would use when making their “Last Will and Testament”. They would begin by stating themselves to “Be sane and in their right mind.” With this in mind let me translate this verse with the idea of being sane. *“For I say, through the grace given to me, to every Christian among you, do not indulge in an insane estimate of yourself, but rather be sane about it so that your estimate of yourself is sound.”* John the Baptist understood this and his mind was fixed on the fact that God had called him to be the forerunner of the Lord Jesus Christ and a witness to Christ. **Blank**

The third factor in John’s humility was that he had his eyes and mind fixed on Christ and Christ alone. John was the friend of the bridegroom - he himself was not the bridegroom. It was not John’s wedding, but Jesus’. As we read in verse 29, *“He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice. So this joy of mine has been made full.”* As the friend of the bridegroom it was his job to serve the groom. If we, you and I, look to other people we will always find room for pride. For no matter how mediocre we do things we will always be able to find those we are better than and envy those who are better than we. On the other hand, if we keep our gaze firmly focused on Christ then we will consider ourselves as we truly are – unworthy servants of the most High, whom He has graced with more than we could ever hope for. This will give us hearts of joy and a strong desire to be faithful and bring glory to the only one that deserves glory – God! It is the Lord through both the scriptures and the Holy Spirit that removes the veil of this earth and allows us to begin to see who God is and who we are in God. Paul wrote, **Slide** *“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as*

from the Lord, the Spirit.” (2 Corinthians 3:18 NASB) Is this the way we live? Do we look upon Jesus, as our Lord and Savior, caring only about what He thinks and what will please Him? Not concerned with what the world does or thinks. Do we allow the world to creep into our thoughts and lives and throw us off balance by its false thinking? **Blank** As Christians we can have differences that we can live with as long as we keep our focus first and foremost on Jesus and the scriptures. This happened with two famous Christian leaders, who saw things differently than the other. **Slide** George Whitefield disagreed with **Slide** John Wesley on some theological matters, he was careful not to create problems in public that could be used to hinder the preaching of the gospel. When someone asked Whitefield if he thought he would see Wesley in heaven, Whitefield replied, **Slide** "I fear not, for he will be so near the eternal throne and we at such a distance, we shall hardly get sight of him." George's focus was on Christ not the differences between he and Wesley. It was not about him, but it was all about Jesus. **Blank**

Another reason for John the Baptist to be truly a man of humility was that he had joy for others whom God was using. John found joy leading others to Jesus. As the friend of the bridegroom he found joy in serving the groom. In serving Jesus, John said, "this joy of mine has been made full." Some people find their joy in material possessions, but they confuse fleeting happiness with joy. Others think that their careers, fame and advancement are the goals worth living for, but they satisfy, but for a short period of time. True joy comes from knowing and living for Christ – true lasting joy comes from being able to say to Jesus Christ, **Slide** "Here am I. Send me!" You are thinking these are the words of the prophet Isaiah and you are right. The scriptures records these very words used by those who may not have gone looking to serve the Lord, but they did not shrink back when the Lord called: Abraham and Jacob said these very words in Genesis, Moses said these words in

Exodus, Samuel spoke them as did Isaiah and Ananias in Acts. We have a multitude of examples of men and women who since the close of the scriptures have said these same words and served the Lord for His glory. This is what John the Baptist was saying, “Here am I. Send me!”, use me Lord however You desire for my life is yours and my desire is to be a faithful servant.

This brings us to the final factor of who John was that showed his humility. In verse 30 John says, “He must increase, but I must decrease.” John knew that no matter what happened in this world, whatever glory the world might or might not give him, the ultimate outcome would be to increase the glory given to Jesus Christ and in the end **Slide** “EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW TO ME (CHRIST), AND EVERY TONGUE SHALL GIVE PRAISE TO GOD.” (Romans 14:11 NASB) Here Paul quotes Isaiah and John the Baptist already understood these words that Paul would later write to the Christians in Rome and this is why John finished by saying, “He must increase, but I must decrease.” John believed this with his whole heart, this is why he could go to his death in peace, a peace that Jesus freely gives to all who believe, **Slide** “Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.” (John 14:27 NASB)

Know the peace of Christ and serve Him with joy; that you may decrease, so that He will increase.

Amen