

Morning church. Good morning. Those of you here in the sanctuary those of you over in the Baker Center those of you that are listening somewhere in the world I hear reports of this last week someone was sitting on a beach last Sunday watching King Street service. And my daughter tells me some of her friends will sometimes tune in in their dorm room of her college or somewhere around the world it's just awesome. Where you might be and how God has led you right here right now to be a part of what God is doing here today on this beautiful very bright very snowy white very crisp Palm Sunday. Happy Palm Sunday to all of you life in his name. We are making our way through the Gospel of John. So grab your bibles your handhelds and join me please. In the third chapter of John we're going to be focusing on verses 22 to 36 today and I've entitled today's message and if you haven't caught on yet this whole year we're looking at life in the name of Jesus and how John every passage in John connects to the theme of life living life eternal life abundant life. What does it look like to have the kind of life that God created and designed us to live. And as I thought about our passage today I entitled The Message life's greatest paradox. Now this comes out of the text as we'll see here in a few minutes. But the more I thought about this intersection of paradox on Palm Sunday I thought about what an incredible pair a paradox is. [00:02:09][114.2]

[00:02:10] A seemingly absurd or self-contradictory statements so seemingly absurd to statements that don't seem to go well together. And yet all mentally are proved to be true or well-founded. Oh wow okay that makes sense. I thought about this notion of a paradox. In the light of Palm Sunday and really when you think about what Palm Sunday is it is very much a paradox. When you look at it lined up against good Friday right you've got Palm Sunday Hosanna which literally means Lord save us. That was the cry of the people that was in their heart. Lord save us. Now we can crawl in their minds and know pretty much what they meant. They wanted a political rule. They wanted a king. They wanted to throw off the yoke of the Roman Empire and they wanted a political revolution. So what they wanted and that was their cry. And yet five days later those very same people said what crucify him seems paradoxical doesn't it. And yet when you put them together what do you have. You have the truth because Jesus didn't come to start a revolution in that regard in the moment he came to cleanse our hearts and the only way we are going to be saved is through his death on the cross. It's a great paradox Palm Sunday. Lord save us. Thank you for dying on that cross for me. Well let's look at that John Chapter 3. I'm going to kind of point out the fact that this passage today breaks down very naturally into thirds. There's three paragraphs verses 22 down to 26 27 down to 30 and 31 to 36. [00:04:11][121.7]

[00:04:13] And I'll comment a little bit as we read through it on the first section because it's its background its kind of setting the stage for what John the Baptist then says in the last two paragraphs so we see verse 22 after this Jesus sentence disciples went out into the Judean countryside where he spent some time with them and baptized right after what well after Jesus had this really powerful conversation with a man named Nick Demas. First half of the third chapter where Nikodim is comes to Jesus at night. He was a very prominent religious man didn't want to be seen talking to Jesus and yet had a spiritual interest. I believe in what Jesus had to say who he was and we then had this conversation first when he won verses of the chapter. So after that after this Jesus and His disciples they go out into the Judea and just lock into that I loved geography I love maps I'm not going to put one up but you need to find it in your brain lock into the fact that Judy is the southern area of Israel. Galilee is the northern area of Israel. The Sea of Galilee and Nazareth and that's where Jesus and most of the disciples were from. It's about 75 miles north of Jerusalem which is part of the Judean countryside just up the hill from the Dead Sea. So they're now down south if you will the Judean area. Jesus had this conversation with Nick Demus in Jerusalem. He then takes his guys out into the Judean countryside where he wants to spend some time with them. There's something else going on. [00:06:04][111.5]

[00:06:04] They are baptizing and by they just look at chapter four briefly and Verse 2 we're told although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized but his disciples and think Jesus was just being very careful not to give anyone this sense that you know my baptism is better than yours if you will. I was baptized by Jesus because it had nothing to do with that it was their heart. And interestingly his disciples were put to work baptizing now verse 23. John the Baptist also was baptizing at a place called Ain on near Saleen because there was plenty of water and people were coming and being baptized by him. So we now have this scenario probably within let's say a 30 mile radius we're not exactly sure where Jesus was. We pretty much know where Anan is it's down in an area along the Jordan River. So maybe 20 30 miles from each other close enough that people could go to see both of them. This is going on. Another interesting fact there. People were going to John or John was baptizing in this spot. Why. Because there was plenty of water. I know that's a small little detail but this seems to indicate to me just even that allusion to the fact that he was baptizing where there was a lot of water would indicate that he was probably immersing them. There was

enough water for them to go down in the water so I don't know that for sure but that's probably most commentaries some surmise that. But also interesting parent medically Verse 24. This was before John was put into prison. Now there's no more reference here to that to John's imprisonment. [00:07:59][114.2]

[00:08:00] But what again most commentaries find interesting about that is that John is probably assuming that his readers would have also read Mark Matthew and Luke or at least one of those other three. They're called the Synoptic Gospels because they're very similar and you can view them together. In fact if you look at any of them but I'll pick on John or Mark Chapter One if you look back at Mark Chapter One it's Jesus being baptized by John the Baptist Jesus going out into the wilderness to be tempted. And then in Mark One verse 14 it says John the Baptist is put in prison. So if you look at the other gospels and that's true in Matthew and Luke as well John gets put in prison right out of the gate and yet John the Apostle is pointing out that that these things happened before then. So in other words there was some ministry and things that happened in the life of Jesus that John is inserting and he wanted you to have that contrast or to know when it happened. Verse 25 An argument developed between some of John the Baptist's disciples and a certain Jew. We don't know who over the matter of ceremonial washing. They came to John and they said to him Rabbi that man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan the one you testified about love. They said he is baptizing and everyone is going to him. What I think is happening here what by the way are they kind of trying to bait John the Baptist into. What sense do you have of what they're saying to him. Are you jealous. Are you jealous. [00:09:49][109.8]

[00:09:50] People are going over to Jesus and and they ask this question about ceremonial washing. What I really think they're saying is OK which baptism I mean we've we've got two options we can either go out to Ainan or go out to where Jesus is. Both of you are washing people in water if you will dipping them down which one is better. Pretty much what I hear them saying. This then sets up John's response 27 to this John replied. A person can receive only what is given them from heaven. You yourselves can testify that I said I am not the Messiah but I am sent ahead of him. The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens. This is the best man waits and listens for him and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice. That joy is mine. I am the best man. Jesus is the groom and my joy is now complete. He must become greater. I must become less than one who is calm who comes from above is above all the one who is from the earth belongs to the earth and speaks as one from the earth. The one who comes from heaven is above all he testifies to what he has seen and heard but no one accepts his testimony. Whoever is accepted it has certified that God is truthful for the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God for God gives the spirit without limit. The father loves the son and has placed everything in his hands. Whoever believes in the son has eternal life. [00:11:45][114.7]

[00:11:46] But whoever rejects the son will not see life for God's wrath remains on him. No relief as I back away from what John says here what I hear him saying in essence is this my purpose for being on this earth is to point you to Jesus to bring glory to God and to point you to Jesus as I thought about that this idea of John's reason for being. I know this may seem obscure but I thought of a blue Cecils slug. You didn't see that coming did you. No. No. I was a field curve ball. Let me tell you why I thought of a blue sea slug for exeunt fur. Let me just say for starters. I don't know but slug's seems like a demeaning way to refer to this creature. Isn't that a beautiful creature. Look at this. It's like are you kidding me right now. That's a slog. Poor guy. I think you're more than a slug but I guess you're not. Or I thought about a harp. Check this out a harp sponge. This is a sponge. Harp's Sponge's you see this. They only discovered this thing in 2012 6 years ago. And you know where they found this off the coast of California. Out off of Monterey where the or the shelf dips down and they found this to over two miles down. Let me ask you how much light exists 2 miles down in the ocean like zero. This thing was found by some submarine. Sort of an exploratory thing six years ago. A harp sponge. [00:13:37][111.9]

[00:13:38] Or how about down along with it couple of miles down is a bioluminescent octopus. Now isn't this amazing. These right here those are actually this this creature. This octopus is rimmed with lights. These are like neon light up bottom of the ocean. You're swimming around down there and there is a bioluminescent octopus two miles down in the ocean. When aski isn't that beautiful. Or how about can you put more color on a creature than a mandarin fish. And he's like this. This this creature is decked out with purples and golds and turquoises and yellows and oranges like oh my word or think about a rainbow seahorse around delicate and intricate. These colors are why do I show you these sea creatures. It's because these creatures have existed. Think about this for thousands of years where total darkness and let that sink into your mind a little bit these creatures with the most magnificent colors you can ever imagine have existed for thousands of years in total darkness. We're no I could see them. Why. Why did

God deck these creatures out with such amazing beauty. Here's why I think to give him glory to give him glory. We see we worship a creative God who revels in creating diversity and beauty and color and all that we see and he just does it because he's good like that. Because he can because he does he didn't do it so we could appreciate it although thanks be to God they're going down and finding some of these things. He did it just ultimately I believe to give him glory. [00:15:49][131.0]

[00:15:50] You see our purpose for being on this earth is to point others to Jesus and to bring glory to God. That's why we're here. And that is exactly what John the Baptist says people are trying to goad him into being jealous. He says Oh my goodness. In fact John as we see in the next two paragraphs knows who he is and knows who Jesus is. That's really what he's answering. Who am I. And who is Jesus. Oh and by the way this ought to sound a little familiar because it's the heart of the Gospel the Gospel really is an answer to four questions. Who is God. Holy awesome righteous just your way is his name. Who am I. I am in need of saving. I am needing to be rescued. Who is Jesus. He's the Mighty One from God. The one who laid down his life and how must I respond. So is John the Baptist is answering this question Who am I. I'm going to tell you what he's doing. He's getting at the heart of the Gospel. Look at verse 27. The first thing he says in response to the question really who am I to this John replied. A person can receive only what is given them from heaven. What John is saying there. You want to know who I am. I am content because I am exactly who and where I am supposed to be. Is there any greater joy and contentment in life than knowing who you are and where you're supposed to be. John said I'm content because I know that God is in charge. I'm doing what God has called me to do. [00:17:50][120.0]

[00:17:50] Verse 28 you yourselves can testify that I said I'm not the messiah I am sent I had of him. Second of all he's saying I am second I am only the Messiah's point man I am setting him up i'm not first I'm second. That's who I am I love the latest kind of video. So maybe maybe it maybe you've seen some videos out there they're called I Am second and it's people testifying to the fact that Jesus's first or second and that's what John's saying IMO only the point man. And then he uses this imagery the bride Verse 29 belongs to the bride groom we are the bride the church. Israel the friend who attends the bridegroom. He's saying John is saying I am the I am the friend I am the best man waiting and listening for him full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice dad Joy is mine. And interestingly he says now and is now complete. That's kind of a final statement in a way. My joy is is complete. It's interesting because one of the commentaries I read calls this John the Baptist's valedictory speech. OK what's that. You go to a graduation and you hear the valley the valedictory speech that's the valedictorian of a graduating class that gets up and gives this pronouncement this speech at a graduation Valla victory literally means farewell speech a goodbye speech and that's what John is giving it's the last time we hear from him. He's giving this valedictory speech and he's saying I am content. [00:19:40][110.2]

[00:19:41] I am exactly where I'm supposed to be I am second I'm no Messiah's point man I am the best man available to serve the groom unversed 30. He says I am disappearing. Look at verse 30. He must become greater I must become less. I am happy to decrease. He must increase church. When I thought about the great paradox that's what I thought of. I thought of what John said here. He must become greater I must become less. Some of you know I've actually preached a sermon a couple years ago on a group of men that back in the 50s. January 8 1956 to be exact. These five men Roger Darrion pleat Pete Fleming Jim Elliott Nate St. and Ed McCauley. They gave their lives as martyrs. Down in the jungles of the Amazon jungles of Ecuador trying to reach out in the name of Jesus to bring the gospel to a very remote tribe. They were known then as the owl because we now know of them as a wild Doney. That's that was their own given name and how they named themselves. These five men were swor speared to death late 20s early 30s speared to death on the rivers on the banks of a river called the curé River in obscurity in the middle of nowhere. And these men gave their lives. But we have record of their lives leading up to that event in January of 56 in fact let me single out Jim Elliott. Maybe you've heard the bird heard the bird heard the book through gates of splendor and Jim Elliott on October 28. This is his own handwriting from his own journal. [00:21:33][112.2]

[00:21:34] He was sitting in his dorm room in Wheaton College 22 years old and on October 28 1949 he said he wrote he is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose. You can hear what's going on in the wheels of Jim Elliott's mind. He must increase I must decrease. He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose. When I think of Roger Darrion one of the other five we see in his journals at the same time early 50s as a mid 20 something he was actually going to law school at I think Loyola. Now that I say this. They're in the news these days in Chicago. He said this I will be led and taught of the Holy See. I want you to

listen to what Roger thought when he was writing what was going on in his heart. I will be led and taught of the Holy Spirit God desires full deployment use and activity of our faculties the Holy Spirit can and will guide me in direct proportion to the time and effort. I will expand to know and do the will of God. I must read the Bible to know god's will at every point. I will obey and do I will die to myself I will begin to ask God to put me in a service of constant circumstances where to live for Christ I must die to myself. I will be alive under God that I may learn to love him with my heart with my mind with my soul and with my body. That is awesome. [00:23:16][101.8]

[00:23:17] This is going on in the heart and the mind of a 23 24 25 year old man that is saying God I want to be everything you've called me to be. I am content. I am the best man to the groom. Nate Saint said this he was the pilot of the group he was the older one he was in his early 30s he said and people who do not know the Lord and ask why in the world we waste our lives as missionaries. This is in Nate's own words. They forget that they too are expending their lives and when the bubble has burst they will have nothing of eternal significance to show for the years they have wasted these men were content they were second. They understood that life was fleeting and that heaven was their home and they lived for the glory of God. I don't want to get into it right now but in the message that I preached a couple of years ago I actually indicated and showed you from other writings that God gave these five men a funeral out on that river in Ecuador. Angels literally showed up and sang the praises of God. As these men were being speared the deaf on that obscure river. No kidding. Who am I. John was clear I am second. I'm disappearing. I'm content. And who is Jesus. Let's look at verses 31 to 33. The one who comes from above is above all John knew full well and good who Jesus was the son of God and the one who is from the earth himself speaking belongs to the earth. [00:25:10][113.2]

[00:25:11] I speak as one from the earth the one who comes from heaven is above all he testifies to what he has seen and heard but no one accepts his testimony. Man of sorrows what a name. Jesus is above all yet despised and rejected. Well good verse 34 Jesus is deeply assured that he was speaking the words of God by the Spirit of God for the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God for God gives the spirit without limit. The father loves the sun and has placed everything in his hands. Jesus is deeply assured speaking the words of God and Jesus is fully empowered able to judge every heart. Whoever believes in the son has eternal life but whoever rejects the son will not see life for God's wrath remains on them. You see this is not just an encouragement but church. This is a warning sign warning. It's the same warning interestingly that Jesus gave Nikodim us look back at Chapter 3 Verse 18 whoever believes in him is not condemn the son of God Jesus but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only son. This is the verdict. Light has come into the world. People love darkness instead of light because their deeds are evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God Jesus is fully empowered and able to judge every heart. Why is Xion writing this. John the Apostle. Why is John the Baptist saying this. [00:27:22][131.1]

[00:27:22] It is for us to bring us to a point of decision Frederick Bruner in his gray commentary on John said this. The decision to live a life trusting Jesus is a decision initiating a life of depth and length triggering this decision is the major purpose of John's gospel to trigger our faith in Jesus to be triggered right here right now to say yes yes I believe this yes I believe that this is why I'm on this earth it is who I am and who Jesus is. I believe it yes. Nothing less than life or death depends on this decision. I don't know of a story in this gospel that is not seeking this life giving decision I want you to know right now that for the last 60 years Nate Saint and Jim Elliott and Roger your Darrion and Ed McColley and Pete Fleming they're doing just fine. They're doing just fine. In fact they have done nothing but worship Jesus for the last 60 years. But while under the 1 who dies apart from Christ John has written this gospel to trigger our faith that we would put our hope in Jesus that we would receive the Holy Spirit into our hearts. That's the great paradise. He must become greater I must become less. So what does this look like in our lives. How do we do this every day. Because that's really where this German kind of the rubber hits the road. How do we live a life that increases the glory of Jesus and decreases my own ego and my own self. How do I live that way. [00:29:29][127.1]

[00:29:31] As I was preparing this message this last week my wife was telling me about a couple in their upper middle upper 40s that now that 13 years ago were with us in China when we were adopting our daughter jamai and it was a couple that had three biological kids and were adopting a little girl and we got to know them. Karen became Facebook friends and kind of has kept up with them that way. They've gone back and adopted another child and they

are actually in China right now. Adopting Little Noah and this is the picture that they put up on Facebook just a couple of days ago. Not sure how old Noah is. Looks to be about 3 or 4. Noah is a little down. He's a Down's syndrome child. And here is this family. I was just so blessed by this. Here here is this family. Call by God. It's a really cool story one of their older daughters worked served in an orphanage in China. She's a college age maybe early 20s. And she connected with Noah and she came home and she said Mom Dad I don't know what she said but it resulted in them going and they're there right now. And yet as I say all this I mean are or is this family and for some great joy to adopt a little know into their lives. Oh yeah. But it's not going to be easy. This to me is just an amazing picture. Going over to adopt Noah of of saying he must increase I must decrease he must increase I must decrease. I am second I'm content. *[00:31:24][113.3]*

*[00:31:26]* And I want to I want to I want to ask you three questions really to me get to the heart of it. Who are you worshipping. Who are you encouraging. Who are you serving. Who are you worshipping. That's that's the heart beat question of life and by nature folks wherever you are when we worship ourselves we want what's best for us. Every day we have to choose to put Jesus first first in our heart first in our lives. Who are you encouraging. God has created you for our reason for a purpose. You are beautiful precious. Isn't it awesome to have the choir sing. I know that they sang over and Baker well and they sang Jesus Loves Me I love you. Who are you encouraging. Who are you serving. Who are you coming underneath to serve. That is why we have been put on this earth to bring glory to God. To encourage others and to serve Jesus we thank you today for the Gospel the Gospel to know Lord Jesus that you came to rescue us that you died on that cross for my sin to wash me of my sin. Lord Jesus you bore my sin upon yourself upon your very body. To know today Jesus that I am cleansed not because of my works but Jesus because of your blood and you give me you clothed me in your righteousness. You put your righteousness upon me when by faith I say yes Lord I believe I receive you. I ask you to forgive me cleanse me fill me. Lord I am empty. I need you. I need help. Or save me. *[00:33:37][130.5]*

*[00:33:38]* Thank you Lord for loving me and for creating me uniquely and specially to be used by you. Lord I believe that we believe that we are created for a purpose that our lives are no accident and God you have. You have given us your very great and precious promises and gifts and you've given us your son and your spirit. Father we worship you now we thank you and your name. *[00:34:12][33.1]*

[2021.5]