



The Tri-Cities Edifier

Volume 11

August 3, 2025

No. 31

You Wouldn't Have Liked John the Baptist if...

by David Diestelkamp

If you struggle to listen to a preacher because of the way he dresses, you wouldn't have liked John the Baptist. His clothing was rough and was neither stylish nor formal (Matt. 3:4; 11:8).

If you don't like a preacher because of his awkward social habits, you wouldn't have liked John the Baptist. He ate an odd diet of locusts and wild honey (Matt. 3:4; Mark 1:6), "neither eating bread nor drinking wine" (Luke 7:33), and his disciples fasted often (Luke 5:33).

If you don't like the inconvenience of traveling to hear preaching, you wouldn't have liked John the Baptist. He preached in the wilderness and not in urban areas (Matt. 3:1).

If you insist that a preacher be from a certain region of the country or have a special education, you wouldn't have liked John the Baptist. He "was in the deserts till the day of his manifestation to Israel" (Luke 1:80).

If you don't like lessons about real repentance that hold people's feet to the fire, you wouldn't have liked John the Baptist. He primarily preached on repentance and even refused to baptize those who had not repented (Mark 1:4; Matt. 3:2-3, 7-9).

If you don't want to study about divorce or have unscripturally married people told they are wrong, you wouldn't have liked John the Baptist. He did exactly that with Herod (Matt. 14:3-4).

If you want preaching to be politically correct and never offend anyone (including the government), you wouldn't have liked John the Baptist. His preaching offended the king (Mark 6:17-18) and addressed social, tax, and military issues (Luke 3:10-14).

If you don't want to hear about caring for the poor, you wouldn't have liked John the Baptist. He taught about giving your second shirt to one who has none and sharing your food with the hungry (Luke 3:11).

If you aren't comfortable with people confessing their sins, you wouldn't have liked John the Baptist. People regularly came to him confessing their sins (Matt. 3:5-6).

If you are resisting being baptized for the forgiveness of your sins, you wouldn't have liked John the Baptist. He preached "a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3).

If you don't want to be baptized by immersion, you wouldn't have liked John the Baptist (literally John the Immerser) because John immersed people (John 3:6, 16; Mark 1:5, 9; John 3:23).

If you don't like to think about God's coming judgment, you wouldn't have liked John the Baptist. He warned of the wrath to come as an ax that is ready to cut down a tree (Matt. 3:7-9).

If you aren't interested in the kingdom of God, you wouldn't have liked John the Baptist's primary kingdom theme (Matt. 3:2).

If you don't want criticism of religious leaders and false teachers, you wouldn't have liked John the Baptist who called them a "Brood of vipers!" (Matt. 3:7-9).

If you insist on miracles in order to believe, you wouldn't have liked John the Baptist who "did no sign" (John 10:41).

If you are impressed with leaders, preachers, or writers because they are popular with other leaders, preachers, or writers, you wouldn't have liked John the Baptist who was rejected by the Pharisees and the experts in the law (Luke 7:30).

We think, "No, no, I would have gone to John and listened to him." But if you let even one of the above things stop you now from listening to the gospel preached, you would have let it stop you when you smelled John, had to walk to hear him, or get wet in the muddy Jordan River.

Jesus said, "...among those born of women there is not risen one greater than John the Baptist" (Matt. 11:11). Jesus said John "...has borne witness to the truth" (John 5:33) and was "...the burning and shining lamp" (John 5:35). How could anyone not have liked this guy? How could anyone not have listened to him? But it is often the same today. People won't look past the man to see the message. Jesus said there was no greater prophet, but I'm not optimistic that we would like him.

Think On These Things, July-Sept. 2025

Lessons About Pride and Humility

by David A. Cox

"Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector." — (Luke 18:10)

Jesus teaches a parable in Luke 18:9–14 that serves as a powerful and timeless reminder of the heart of the gospel, emphasizing humility before God, sincere repentance, and reliance on His mercy rather than our own merits. Let's consider the key themes from the great message Jesus taught.

Pride vs. Humility: A Matter of the Heart

Jesus didn't condemn the Pharisee because he followed the Law or lived a disciplined life. The issue was his heart, and he didn't really direct his prayer toward God—it was a self-congratulatory speech that elevated himself above others. In contrast, the tax collector, despite his sins and social scorn, approached God with honesty and a broken heart. We see this attitude mirrored by David: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart—these, O God, You will not despise" (Psalm 51:17). It's not our perfection that draws God's favor but our humble recognition of our need for Him.

The Danger of Spiritual Complacency

The Pharisee's attitude reflects what can happen when we become complacent in our faith. He saw no need for change, no room for growth, and no awareness of his spiritual poverty. Jesus rebuked the same spirit in the church of Laodicea (Revelation 3:17), who said, "I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing." Complacency is dangerous because it can blind us to our real need for grace. The tax collector, however, felt his need deeply, which is why he received God's justification.

Justification Comes from God, Not Ourselves

The phrase Jesus uses—"This man went down to his house justified rather than the other"—is central. Justification (being made right with God) is not earned by listing good deeds or comparing ourselves to others. Instead, it comes as our humble faith bears fruit and our life unfolds into what God desires it to be. Paul echoes this as he writes the Ephesians: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast" (Ephesians 2:8–9).

Encouragement for the Broken and Struggling

Perhaps the greatest hope in this parable is for those who feel unworthy, burdened by guilt, or afraid to approach God. Jesus demonstrates that God takes delight in showing mercy to those who genuinely seek Him. No one is beyond the reach of His grace. As the Hebrew writer states, "Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in our time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).

In this parable Jesus calls on us to examine our own hearts. Are we praying like the Pharisee—trusting in

ourselves and our perceived righteousness? Or are we praying like the tax collector—broken, honest, and seeking God’s mercy? May we find ourselves to have the heart of humility, contrition and faith so our prayers will be acceptable to God.