**“All In” – Week 7 (John The Baptist)**

**July 16-17, 2022**

We are coming to the end of our summer series “All In” and it’s pretty crazy to think this is Week 7. However, I also know that means it’s almost the end of summer vacation. Sorry to be the bearer of bad news! Make sure to enjoy the time you have left!

Just by a show of hands, how many of you have ever been watching TV early in the morning when you wake up or late at night before you go to bed and you see one of those really cheesy infomercials? You know what I’m talking about? Those products that seem too-good-to-be-true. Like, “Buy this sit-up machine, do it for 15 seconds a day, and in 30 days, you’ll lose 100 pounds!” Those kinds of things.

**(Teacher’s Note: Share a silly example you’ve seen of one of those infomercial products.)**

I know it’s a silly example, but those infomercial people do a really good job of convincing people to buy their product. Sometimes they look kind of funny, talk loudly, and can even come across as a little bit annoying. However, they all have one thing in common: they’re all good speakers and communicators in front of a camera. Not everyone can do that! They are using what they’re good at naturally for their jobs.

Hundreds of years before the New Testament of the Bible was written, there were two prophets, Isaiah and Malachi, who talked about a “messenger”…someone who would be born and whose sole purpose was to tell others about Jesus and his message. Here’s what they said about him in the New Testament in Mark 1:1-3 – *“The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God, as it is written in Isaiah the prophet: “I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way—a voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.”*

We soon find out his name was John…more specifically, John The Baptist. Before John was even born, God gave him the gift of communication so that he could use those gifts to help others love and worship God.

Did you know that you have been created with special gifts just like John The Baptist? Maybe you are a great student; you do well academically in school. Maybe you’re really passionate about music or art or science or sports. Maybe you are a very encouraging person and it’s really easy for you and important to you to encourage other people. Others of you are great listeners; you’re really easy to talk to and you give great advice.

No matter what your gifts are, God wants to use them! That’s what our **THP (Take Home Point)** is all about today.

**Use the unique gifts God has given you!**

As I mentioned earlier, John The Baptist had a very important role so let’s read about him a little bit more in the New Testament in Mark 1:4-8: *“And so John The Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. John wore clothing made of camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. And this was his message: “After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”*

First of all, did you catch the part about John wearing camel hair and eating locusts and wild honey?! That probably sounds pretty strange to most, if not all of you! However, here’s the reason Mark includes that detail – John’s clothing and diet indicate that John was a poor man. He didn’t have many nice possessions. However, that didn’t stop him from using his gift of communication. He never stopped preaching the good news about Jesus. He continued to baptize more and more people, and just like he said about Jesus baptizing people in the Holy Spirit, he was telling them that Jesus would give anyone who believed in Him the “Helper” (or the Holy Spirit) to guide them in making decisions that obeyed God!

In fact, John was so committed to using his gifts that he was eventually thrown into prison and put to death because he wouldn’t stop telling others about Jesus. He was so willing to use the unique gifts God gave Him – even if it costed him his life (and it did)! Listen, it’s because of the hundreds and thousands of people like John The Baptist that you and I even know about Jesus and what he did. It was because John and so many others were trying their best to use the gifts and talents God had given him.

I want to go back to something I said earlier – did you know that ALL of you have God-given gifts and talents? Some of you might be here and you have a good idea of what those gifts may be. Others of you might struggle to figure out what you’re good at. You might be sitting here today thinking, “I don’t have any gifts” or “I don’t know if God can use the gifts I have.” That’s not true! The Bible says that each of us are uniquely gifted and using those gifts is an act of worship to him! God wouldn’t give you a gift or a talent that He couldn’t use!

**(Teacher’s Note: Give an example of how you are using one of your gifts to serve God, serve His people, and serve Northview. Share how it has helped you grow!)**

One of the New Testament writers, Paul, talks about this in Romans 12:6-8. It says this: *“We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.*

Ask yourself this question: would you like God to use you and your gifts to make a difference in people’s lives? Your family and friends’ lives? The world? I think we would all say yes! However, the real question is this – are we willing to live like that? Are we willing to make decisions that honor that? Are we willing to say “no” to our own way of doing things, and instead use our gifts for God instead of ourselves?

I believe God doesn’t want us to keep our gifts to ourselves; we need to USE them. When we use our gifts, that’s an act of worship! In our group discussion today, I want each of you to think about what gifts and talents God has given you and to think about how you can use them to serve Him and serve others.

Let’s pray that He would help us live out our **THP (Take Home Point)** – **Use the unique gifts God has given you.** Would you pray with me?