

I Must Decrease

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Setting: Sidewalk vendor closing shop and packing away merchandise in obvious disgust

(Person enters, and approaches the vendor, who is muttering to himself.)

Person: (Excitedly) Did you see him!?!... Did you see what happened!?!.....Was it as everyone says!?

Vendor: (Still disgusted) See it? Oh, yeah, I saw it all right. I saw the whole thing.

Person: (Enviously) Wow! You must have had a great view! The river is right over there where the baptism took place. Tell me, was there really a heavenly voice? a heavenly light? Was there really a dove!?

Vendor: Voice, dove, light..... Who knows? I was real busy at the time. The only thing I know for sure is that I had a good thing going, a really lucrative business that went under at the same time this Jesus character did.

Person: (Looking curiously at the vendor's wares) Oh, so your selling something?

Vendor: I *was* selling something. (Holds up tunic) Why, a week ago I was selling over 100 of these "John The Baptist" tunics everyday. Now I'll be lucky if I can *give* them away! This is quality merchandise too. Here, read the label.

Person: (Reading) "Genuine imitation camel hair"....very impressive!

Vendor: Impressive maybe, Marketable?..... No! And that's not all I'm stuck with. Look at this....(Pulling items out of bags as he speaks) 200 jars of pickled locusts, 150 jars of wild honey, and my newest item, these chariot stickers. See?

Person: (Reading) "I went under the Jordan with John" very nice.... But why can't you sell them?

Vendor: Are you kidding? Nobody cares about John since *Jesus* came along!

Person: OK, so why don't you just sell "*Jesus* tunics"?

Vendor: Oh, I've already thought about that. It might work, too, if anyone could *find* Jesus! The word is, right after this "spectacular" baptism, he disappeared into the wilderness. He'll probably *starve* out there! There's no way I'll *ever* make money off him!

Person: You may not realize it, but there's a lot of talk about this Jesus being the Messiah.

Vendor: Messiah?! Listen buddy. You can't tell me anything about religion. Why I've kept the commandments since I was young. I hang around the temple all the time. I even have a booth there to sell sheep for sacrifices.

Person: You know, maybe you *could* give these away. You know what John said, "He who has two tunics should share with him who has none."

Vendor: Yeah, that sounds like John. I tried to talk some sense into him. I arranged a meeting with him and even offered him some of my best wine. He wouldn't drink it, you know how those Baptists are.

Anyway, I said to him, "John, John, what are you doing to me? You've got great thing going, but you've got to stop talking about your ministry ending. Surely we can work out a deal. Why with my ingenuity and you sincerity we can take this show to every stream and pond in Palestine." But nooooo, he wouldn't listen. He kept saying things like "Repent and be baptized for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

He kept talking about some "lamb" of God who was going to take away the sins of the world. I said, "Listen if its sheep you want, I've got plenty. Some are slightly blemished, but I've got plenty."

Person: Look, I think it's time for me to be moving on. I'll find someone else to ask about the baptism, but let me just tell you, I don't think he was talking about that kind of lamb. I think he was talking about Jesus. (Walking away.) Jesus might even be able to offer something better than anything money can buy.

Vendor: (To himself.) Something better than money can buy?... Hmm... I'll have to think about that later. Right after I find some unsuspecting merchant to unload this junk on.

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