Introduction:
A. Our Lord’s great tribute to John the Baptist.
B. John was the “Baptist” by occupation not affiliation.
   1. Like “Simon the tanner” or “Alexander the coppersmith”
   2. Simply means “the baptizer” — distinguishes him for other Johns.
C. John was not great for reasons that some may think.
   1. Not because he was great miracle worker — do none (John 10:41)
   2. Not because he founded the church — did not, not even member
      Note: He died before church established (Matt. 14 w/ Mt. 16:18).
D. However, there are factors that did contribute to his greatest, from which we can learn.

Discussion:
I. His Great Parents.
   A. Provided him with greatest potential for spiritual greatness.
      1. “They we both righteous before God” (Lk. 1:5, 6)
      2. As righteous Jews:
         a. They would have taught him as law commanded (Deut. 11:18-21).
         b. Would have disciplined him as needed (Prov. 23:13).
   B. Did not guarantee his spiritual success.
      1. Godly parents had wayward children (Eli and Samuel).
      2. Parents can greatly increase or decrease the odds.

II. His Great Principles.
   A. Would not be governed by expediency.
      1. To gain popularity (Matt. 3:7).
      2. To gain security (Matt. 14:1-12)
   B. Would not be governed by pride or selfish ambition.
      1. Would not allow himself be jealous of Jesus’ success (John 3:28-4:1)
      2. Would baptize Jesus only after prevailed upon (Mt. 3:14, 15)
   C. Would not be deterred from duty.
      1. Once Jesus ordered, “permit to be so now”, he did it
      2. Once convinced the course was right, nothing could stop him.

III. His Great Preaching.
   A. Authorized by heaven (Luke 3:3; 20:4)
   B. Turned people from sin to God.
      1. Repentance and remission of sins (Luke 3:3)
   C. Preparatory rather than permanent (cf. Acts 19:1-5)
      1. Preaching and baptizing under Great Commission is unto end of world (Matt. 28:18-20)

Conclusion:
A. As great as John was, least in kingdom is greater.
B. Are you in the kingdom — the church?