

The Lamb of God Who Takes Away Your Sins, and Yours, and Yours!

“The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! This is the one I meant when I said, ‘A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.’ I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel.” Then John gave this testimony: “I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’ I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God.” The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, “Look, the Lamb of God!” When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, “What do you want?” They said, “Rabbi” (which means Teacher), “where are you staying?” “Come,” he replied, “and you will see.” So they went and saw where he was staying, and spent that day with him. It was about the tenth hour. Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, “We have found the Messiah” (that is, the Christ).”

Sometimes we like to use animals to describe people. You say someone is like a bull in a china shop to describe how that person is not very delicate or gentle. We like to compare the eating habits of kids to that of animals. She eats like a bird means she doesn’t eat much. If your son eats like a horse, that means he has a large appetite. However, if your son eats like a pig, that means he is a messy eater. We may say someone is as stubborn as a mule. What kind of animal describes you? A mild mannered Labrador? A fidgety Chihuahua? Fast as a rabbit?

John has the calling from God to prepare the way for Jesus. So, John sees Jesus coming. He wants people to know who he is so he uses an animal to explain Jesus to them. And what animal is that? “Look, the Lamb of God!” Let’s see Jesus as that Lamb of God who takes away your sins and the sins of others.

I. Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away your sins.

How did John know who Jesus was? *““The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! This is the one I meant when I said, ‘A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.’ I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel.” Then John gave this testimony: “I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’ I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God.”*

John knew Jesus. They were cousins. But when was John sure that his cousin Jesus was that Messiah? We heard about it last week, the day Jesus came to be baptized by John. God told John that he would identify the Messiah by sending his Holy Spirit on him. Before, John was preaching some generic sermons. The Messiah is coming. Period. But now his sermons are very specific. He can tell people that Jesus is the Messiah. But what does that mean? Well, John uses a picture to explain.

“Look, the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” Ok. Jesus is like a lamb. What does that mean to you? When I was a small child, I associated lambs as nice, warm and cuddly. I had toy, stuffed lamb and I loved it dearly. I named it “Lamby.” Is that what John meant?

But lambs meant something else to John’s congregation. Lambs meant you are saved. Imagine Old Testament parents teaching their kids about the Bible. Every year Old Testament families celebrated Passover. A meal is served with bitter herbs, flat or unleavened bread and roasted lamb. Kids asked why bitter herbs? Why did we roast Lamby? Parents could then explain. A long time ago, while the Israelites were slaves in Egypt, God freed them, but he did it in a special way. The angel of death was to go throughout the land and kill every firstborn male, animal and human. But God told his people to take a lamb and butcher it. While the meat roasted over the fire, they painted the blood on their doorposts. When the angel of death came to a house with that blood, it skipped it or passed over it. The firstborn males in those homes did not die. The blood of the lamb saved them.

On another special day, the Day of Atonement, the high priest was seen sprinkling blood as he crossed the curtain into the Most Holy Place of the Temple. Kids would tug on the robes of their parents and ask, “Why is he doing that?” Well, God is in the Most Holy Place. If anyone went behind the curtain, they will die. No sinful human can stand in the presence of God. But on this day, the High Priest can, and it is the blood that protects him.” The blood of those animals saved his life.

Imagine all those sacrifices God demanded in the Old Testament. Literally thousands of animals, mostly lambs, died each year. If you or your family sinned, you took a lamb to the temple and it was sacrificed for your sins. So the blood of an innocent lamb must be spilled to save you. Then Isaiah makes an interesting connection. God moved him to write in 53:7, *“He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.”* The Messiah, the Savior, is like a lamb who will die to save us.

So you go to church and Pastor John the Baptist stops in the middle of his sermon and points to a man standing over there and says, ***“Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”*** You got it. The lamb died and the firstborn in Egypt lived. A lamb died and the High Priest lived. You got it.

You know what this means? When you say your prayers at night and ask God to forgive the sins committed that day, he will because Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away your sins. When a person is on hospice care, you or the pastor can tell them that they may die, but they will awaken from death and be carried into heaven because Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

Your sins have to be some place. Either they can be on you or on Christ. The word translated as “takes” means to pick something up, hoist it on your shoulders and carry it away. It is like garbage. You can let it pile it up in your house, or you can put it on the curb and let the garbage men take it away. Jesus has come to pick up your sins, hoist them on his shoulders and carry them far away from you. Listen to John. Look at the Lamb of God who takes away your sins. But don’t just look.

II. Jesus is the Lamb who takes away all sins.

“When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, “What do you want?” They said, “Rabbi” (which means Teacher), “where are you staying?” “Come,” he replied, “and you will see.” So they went and saw where he was staying, and spent that day with him. It was about the tenth hour. Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, “We have found the Messiah” (that is, the Christ).”

What are some of your fondest memories? I remember the day I got married. I remember the day each child was born. I sometimes struggle with the theme of the sermon I preached last week, but I can remember these events in great detail. John wrote this gospel some fifty or sixty years after Christ, when he was close to 100 years in age. Yet, he remembers the day he met Jesus vividly. He even remembers the exact hour, the tenth hour. What a day for John.

And what a day for you. No, I am not trying to turn our church into one of those decision churches where we ask everyone when they found Christ. We don’t find him. He finds us. But how important it is that you know and believe in Jesus. We promoted it a year ago. We handed out little business cards where you can write your name and baptism date. We encouraged you to put it right there in your wallet so every time you reached for your debit card, you remember the day you first met Jesus. The cards are still in the narthex. Take one if you hadn’t already.

How important is that? When John and Andrew approached Jesus, he baited them with the question, “What do you want?” They simply asked where he was staying. Jesus told them, ***“Come, and you will see.”*** But they saw more than his hotel room. Starting that day and for the next three years they saw his miracles, listened to his sermons, and saw him as their Savior. Why do we come to church? Bible Class? So we may see Jesus as the Lamb who takes away our sins. So we may see that God is protecting us with angels and working things out for our good. So we may see graves opening and believers rising to heaven.

And not just us. It is significant that Andrew first went to get his brother, Peter. I never crunched the numbers, but I figure that 80-90% of those people who want to join church are friends or family of members. In other words, someone here talked with them or somehow had an influence on them. In about three weeks we will be having our Friendship Sunday. We have printed out those “FRAN” sheets again. Maybe you still have your old one. Maybe not. Take one home. Put your name in the middle and fill in each blank the name of someone you know who doesn’t see Jesus as you do. Put the sheet on your refrigerator door so every time you go there, you see their names. Maybe all you have to say to them is what Jesus said: Come, and you will see.

What would have happened if God never used the Holy Spirit to show John who the Messiah is? What if he didn’t nudge John and Andrew to follow him? Who then would have told Peter? But it did happen. Yes, thousands upon thousands of lambs died. But they did so you and I and everyone can see Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away all of our sins. Amen.