

Second Sunday After Epiphany – January 19, 2020
Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church

Pastor Charles Heup

John 1:29-41 (EHV)

The next day, John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look! The Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! 30) This is the one I was talking about when I said, ‘The one coming after me outranks me because he existed before me.’ 31) I myself did not know who he was, but I came baptizing with water so that he would be revealed to Israel.” 32) John also testified, “I saw the Spirit descend like a dove from heaven and remain on him. 33) I myself did not recognize him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘The one on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, he is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’ 34) I saw this myself and have testified that this is the Son of God.” 35) The next day, John was standing there again with two of his disciples. 36) When John saw Jesus passing by, he said, “Look! The Lamb of God!” 37) The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. 38) When Jesus turned around and saw them following him, he asked, “What are you looking for?” They said to him, “Rabbi” (which means “Teacher”), “where are you staying?” 39) He told them, “Come, and you will see.” So they came and saw where he was staying. They stayed with him that day. It was about the tenth hour. 40) Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of the two who heard John and followed Jesus. 41) The first thing Andrew did was to find his own brother Simon and say to him, “We have found the Messiah!” (which is translated “the Christ”)

Dear Friends in Christ:

It’s Championship Sunday and NFL fans are eagerly waiting to see which teams will advance to the Super Bowl. It’s been hard to escape the pre-game hype about all of the match-ups and the rivalries since the Green Bay Packers are one of the teams hoping to emerge victorious later today. Predictions have been made. I’m sure there will be plenty more pre-game hype today. Various sports commentators will continue to point out the strengths and weakness of both teams. They will highlight the key match-ups and share their opinions about what each team must do to be successful. The viewers will be able to learn all about the two teams and the various players. No doubt those who have already read some of these kinds of stories or heard these kinds of reports have been eager to share what they have learned with others. The analysis will continue during the games with instant replays and after the games with fan comments. There has been and there will be lots of talk about the games. Fans will share what they know with others – telling and retelling their favorite stories about the games – especially if their team wins.

At the time of the events in our text there had been lots of talk about the Messiah – a lot of predictions had been made – we call them divine prophecies which would not fail. These prophecies were intended to help the people learn more about their Savior and to enable them to tell others about him. But lately attention had been shifted to a voice of one calling in the wilderness – the voice of John the Baptist. Indeed there were those who were wondering whether he might have been the Messiah. When asked who he was he confessed freely, "I am not the Christ." John introduced himself as one sent to prepare the way for the coming of the Lord’s Messiah.

The next day, John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look! The Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” Then John continued to tell all who were there what he knew about Jesus so that they could learn about him and so that they could tell others about him.

The Holy Spirit has preserved the words of our text for us – and so today

Theme: John Points Us to the Lamb of God

1. So we can learn about him
2. So we can tell others about him

So what can we learn of Jesus, the Lamb of God from John? Let's take a closer look at our text. John pointed to Jesus and called him the Lamb of God. There was a religious connotation associated with lambs for the Jewish people. They associated lambs with sacrifices for sin, with being made right with God in the Atonement celebration and with the Passover deliverance from death. The word also called to mind the prophecies of Isaiah who spoke of the Lord's Suffering servant and proclaimed, "He was led like a lamb to the slaughter."

From John we learn first of all that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament sacrifices and the Old Testament prophecies. He is the Savior promised and sent by God – the perfect sacrifice who would take away the sin of the world.

In 2 Corinthians 5:21 the apostle Paul explained how Jesus took up the sins of the world and carried them away by taking the sinners place and experiencing God's punishment for sin. (2 Corinthians 5:21 EHV) **God made him, who did not know sin, to become sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in him.** In his second epistle John speaks of Jesus' carrying off our sin by removing it's guilt and punishment with his perfect sacrifice. (1 John 2:2) **He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the whole world.**

Martin Luther once said, "There are only two places sin can be on the sinner or on Christ." The law places that sin on you and me. The Gospel proclaimed here by John proclaims that Christ has graciously taken my sin, your sin and the sin of the world upon himself and taken it away.

Jesus could do that because he is not simply another human being he is also true God. We can learn that from John too. After John had pointed to Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world he said, **This is the one I was talking about when I said, 'The one coming after me outranks me because he existed before me.'** 31) **I myself did not know who he was, but I came baptizing with water so that he would be revealed to Israel.** 32) **John also testified, "I saw the Spirit descend like a dove from heaven and remain on him. 33) I myself did not recognize him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'The one on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, he is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.'** 34) **I saw this myself and have testified that this is the Son of God."**

John clearly understood his ministry and his mission. He was not to draw attention to himself. His focus was on pointing people to one greater than himself. John the Baptist explained that Jesus would be greater than he because he existed before him. Indeed Jesus was there at the beginning of time as the inspired Gospel writer John has explained: (John 1:3) **Through him everything was made, and without him not one thing was made that has been made.** No wonder John the Baptist spoke of Jesus as being before him.

And it's no wonder that John would have declared, "I myself did not know who he was." No one can know God and no one can understand the significance of his saving work unless God reveals that information to him. And that's exactly what God did for John. God called John to baptize people for the forgiveness of sins in anticipation of the fact that Jesus would take away the sins of the world.

In some way God had given John the Baptist a sign which would enable him to identify the promised Savior. That sign involved the fact that Jesus would be anointed with the Holy Spirit and that he would baptize with the spirit. In the Old Testament reading for last week we heard the Lord proclaim through Isaiah, (Isaiah 42:1 EHV) **Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight. I am placing my Spirit on him. He will announce a just verdict for the nations.** The prophet Joel spoke of the Lord pouring out his Spirit on the people. (Joel 2:28 EHV) **After this, I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh. Your sons and your daughters will prophesy. Your old men will dream dreams. Your young men will see visions.**

John identifies Jesus as the one who fulfill this prophecy. And Jesus himself recalled these words of John after and resurrection from the dead just prior to his ascension into heaven when he told his disciples: (Acts 1:5 EHV) **"John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days**

from now.” The ultimate fulfillment of the passage and Joel’s prophecy occurred on Pentecost – 50 days after Jesus resurrection when the Holy Spirit was poured out on the Lord’s apostles enabling them to proclaim the wonderful acts of God so that people from all nations of the earth could hear and learn that Jesus was the one who takes away the sin of the world so that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. 3000 people accepted that message and were baptized on that. They were born again of water and the Spirit and enjoy new life as members of Christ’s family. Still today, Jesus is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit as he uses baptism to create and strengthen faith in him.

John concluded his testimony about Jesus by saying: **“I saw this myself and have testified that this is the Son of God.”** When Jesus was baptized by John in the Jordan River the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus in the form of a Dove and the God proclaimed this is my Son with whom I am well pleased. John had seen, he had heard and learned about the Christ from God himself and now he was pointing to Jesus as the Lamb of God so that others could learn about him and so that others could tell about him.

During the football games today there will be more than one opportunity to enjoy an instant replay. In fact we’ll be able to view some of those plays over and over again thanks to modern technology. The modern technology of the instant replay wasn’t available at the time of John the Baptist but non-the-less God provided an instant replay of the events that we’ve just been talking about. The second half of our text begins this way: **The next day, John was standing there again with two of his disciples. 36) When John saw Jesus passing by, he said, “Look! The Lamb of God!”**

We don’t know if those two disciples had been with John the day before. If so this must have been one of those deja-vu type experiences – the kind where we say, “Ah now I get it.” When John had pointed his disciples to Jesus as the Lamb of God he was inviting them to follow him, to learn from him, to believe in him and to confess him. If they had been present the previous day they could have followed Jesus then. Well this time they did follow Jesus.

The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. 38) When Jesus turned around and saw them following him, he asked, “What are you looking for?” They said to him, “Rabbi” (which means “Teacher”), “where are you staying?”

Jesus took notice of the two disciples of John who were following him. (One of them was named Andrew and the other was John the inspired author of this Gospel.) He turned and asked them what it is that they wanted. They answered with a question of their own which indicated their desire to spend time with Jesus and to learn from him so they could more completely understand what John had taught them.

[Jesus] told them, “Come, and you will see.” So they came and saw where he was staying. They stayed with him that day. It was about the tenth hour.

Jesus was most happy as usual to give them the time, the attention, the instruction they desired. It was late afternoon, 4:00 PM and they spent the rest of that day with Jesus. But that was just the beginning. The next day Jesus would invite them and others to spend even more time with him as he traveled to the region of Galilee. But before that happened, Andrew went to find his brother, Simon Peter and told him what he had heard from John. **Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of the two who heard John and followed Jesus. 41) The first thing Andrew did was to find his own brother Simon and say to him, “We have found the Messiah!” (which is translated “the Christ”).**

The natural reaction to good news is to share it with others. When the shepherds heard the announcement of Jesus birth they went to see their Savior and then they told everyone about what they had heard and seen. When the widow Anna met Mary and Joseph in the temple when they went to present Jesus in the temple she rejoiced to see her Savior and spoke about the child to **all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.** (cf. Luke 2:38)

John has pointed us to the Lamb of God so we can learn of him and so we can tell others about him. Like Andrew we can tell the members of our family about Jesus – if they already believe in him they will be encouraged to continue to put their faith in him. If they have questions, God may use your testimony to answer their questions. If they do not believe God may use you to bring them to faith. So talk about Jesus with your siblings, your parents, your spouses and your children – tell them what you have learned from John – that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Tell it to your neighbors, your friends, your co-workers, tell it to your fellow members at Good Shepherd as you join with them in supporting the work of our congregation – which is in a nut shell – telling others about the Lamb of God and the victory over sin, death and the devil that he won for all people. Tell it throughout our community and the world as you support the work of Christian missions. And don't wait – do it today.

Amen.