

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Epiphany  
January 15, 2023  
Lincoln Heights Lutheran Church  
John 1:29-41

### **Jesus Appears as the Lamb of God**

#### **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! This is the one I was talking about when I said, 'The one coming after me outranks me because he existed before me.' I myself did not know who he was, but I came baptizing with water so that he would be revealed to Israel."*

*John also testified, "I saw the Spirit descend like a dove from heaven and remain on him. 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.' I saw this myself and have testified that this is the Son of God."*

*The next day, John was standing there again with two of his disciples. When John saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look! The Lamb of God!" The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus.*

*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?"*

*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.*

*Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard John and followed Jesus. 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,

Every year. Luke mentions this as the frequency that Mary and Joseph went to Jerusalem for the Passover. Every year. They were not alone. Faithful, observant Jews went to the festival of Passover in Jerusalem every year. Maybe you have a custom of doing something every year as well. It might be a family vacation or Thanksgiving get together. It could also be a religious festival like Passover. Maybe you go every year to the Christmas Eve service and sing Silent Night by candlelight. Maybe you never want to miss Good Friday services, especially the Tenebrae services when the lights are dimmed throughout the service. Maybe it is Easter morning and singing "I Know that My Redeemer Lives." These are all wonderful customs and traditions that point us to the birth, death and resurrection of Christ. Believers will continue to celebrate Christmas, Good Friday and Easter every year until Jesus returns. The songs may change but the Savior whom the songs and liturgies point to will not.

As wonderful as our Christian traditions are, Passover was a step beyond tradition. The Lord God commanded that the people celebrate Passover every year and gave them instructions on what to do. The first Passover was about 1500 years before Christ was born. The people were slaves in Egypt. The Lord told them to slaughter a lamb, put the blood on the door frames of their homes, roast the lamb and eat all of it that night. That night the Lord struck down the firstborn males in Egypt but all who were in the houses with blood on the doorframes were spared. The Lord passed over their homes. The next day the people were free and the exodus from Egypt began. This amazing rescue was to be celebrated every year.

Think of what it would be like to grow up with such a tradition. The family makes the journey to Jerusalem every year. Perhaps they bring along the lamb to be used as the Passover lamb or get one in Jerusalem. The lamb is taken to the temple to be sacrificed. Imagine the sounds in Jerusalem as the head of each household takes the lamb through the streets on the way to the temple. Josephus, a Jewish historian from the 1<sup>st</sup> century, records that 256,500 lambs were sacrificed during one Passover. The father would then bring back the lamb to roast over fire for his household. They would retell the story of the first Passover and praise the Lord for rescuing his people. Every year they would do this. Such a tradition would make a big impression on a child and on the adults in the family. The lamb was sacrificed. The people were saved by the blood of the lamb.

The people who came out to listen to John preach in the wilderness were immersed in the tradition of the Passover. They would have gone almost every year. The epiphany moment is when Jesus is revealed to them as the Lamb of God.

### **Pointed to the Lamb of God**

*The next day, John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look! The Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"*

The people who heard John say these words would have images immediately come into their minds. The Passover lamb would have been only one of the images imprinted on their hearts from the every year celebrations. But there were also the lambs used in the other sacrifices at the temple. One lamb in the morning and one in the evening. Lambs used for burnt offerings, fellowship offerings and sin offerings. God had taught his people through the sacrificial system and the festivals, especially Passover, so that they knew what John meant when he pointed to Jesus as the Lamb of God. Jesus is going to rescue his people by shedding his blood on behalf of his people.

While the Passover celebrated the rescue of the Jewish people from physical slavery, Jesus would rescue all people from slavery to sin. He takes away the sin of the world. How is Jesus able to do this? John explains:

*This is the one I was talking about when I said, 'The one coming after me outranks me because he existed before me.' I myself did not know who he was, but I came baptizing with water so that he would be revealed to Israel."*

John was some kind of cousin to Jesus and was born some number of months before Jesus. John is just a bit older than Jesus according to birth. But Jesus "existed before me," John explains. Jesus is eternal. John continues:

*John also testified, "I saw the Spirit descend like a dove from heaven and remain on him. 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.' I saw this myself and have testified that this is the Son of God."*

John received amazing confirmation at the baptism of Jesus. The Holy Spirit came upon Jesus in the form of a dove. That did not happen with anyone else John baptized! John confidently proclaims the truth that Jesus is the Son of God. No mere human can take away the sin of another person or even their own sin. But Jesus is the eternal Son of God. He does not need to take away his own sin, for he is without sin. And as the eternal Son of God, he has authority to take away sin. But God is just. He does not overlook or ignore sin. He will punish rebellion against him. So, the eternal Son of God is the Lamb

of God whose blood is shed upon the cross to pay the punishment due for the sin of the world. Jesus takes sin away by taking sin upon himself, suffering the full wrath of God, and dying as the innocent Lamb of God.

What great news for all in this world! If you have sinned and if you are part of this world, your sin is taken away by the Lamb of God. The Lord sent someone into your life to point you to Jesus. The Holy Spirit brought you to believe in Christ, the Lamb of God. So, what is next?

*The next day, John was standing there again with two of his disciples. When John saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look! The Lamb of God!" The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus.*

Following Jesus is next. Andrew and other man believed the gospel proclaimed by John and followed the Lamb of God, literally following him for a day. That day would turn into many days and years for Andrew. How are you doing at following Jesus in the days and years since the Holy Spirit brought you to faith?

### **Continue to Look at the Lamb of God**

There are invitations to turn away from Jesus all around us. Some invitations arrive in your email, social media feed, and connected to news articles online. Other invites come from within. Our sinful nature wants to grab the opportunity for retaliation when someone insults us. The temptation to love money and look to riches to rescue your life is powerful when the jackpot goes over \$1 billion. Greed, anger, lust and every sin can turn us away from the Lamb of God. Because we sin, we need to continue to look to Christ daily and he continues to be the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, including ours.

The invitation to turn away from Christ is sometime disguised by knowledge. I already know that Jesus is the Lamb of God. I learned that in Sunday School. I was confirmed. I don't need to keep looking at Christ now that I'm in high school. I've got the basics. I don't need to keep looking at Christ now that I'm starting my career.

I've got the knowledge so I can look to Christ infrequently and still be fine. Such overconfidence in ourselves can lead to the death of faith. John pointed to Jesus two days in a row in the Word of God before us today. Seeing Jesus as the Lamb of God every day is not too often. The devil and the world will always try to put something in our way so we stop looking at Jesus. If you find yourself distracted and drifting away from Christ, repent and believe this good news. Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away your sin.

The Lamb of God has taken away the sin of the world. He has fulfilled the Passover festival. We don't need to celebrate the Passover every year anymore. Instead, we need to be pointed to Jesus often in our lives. Maybe this happens through the wonderful every year celebrations of Christmas, Good Friday and Easter. Maybe it is every week worship services where we receive the forgiveness of sins from the Lamb of God through his Word and Holy Communion. Maybe it is daily as we encounter the Lamb of God in the Bible as we read, listen to, believe and follow our Savior.

Amen.