

The Second Sunday after Epiphany
January 19, 2014
Amazing Grace Lutheran Church - Pastor Chip Wilke

John 1:29-41

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). (NIV)

Imagine growing up in a faithful Israelite family. You have quite a family history. You are a descendant of Abraham. You heard all the stories about the Lord's gracious promises and the great faith of your forefather. The account that really sticks in your memory is the time when Abraham was tested by God asking for him to give up his son. How can you forget a single detail of a story like that? Some words stay with you like Isaac asking: **"Father...where is the lamb for the sacrifice?"** And then there is the unforgettable happy ending when God spared Isaac at the last moment and provided the sacrifice.

Imagine growing up in a faithful Israelite family. Think about all the ceremonies and special days of worship God had set up for you. Of all those ceremonies the celebration of Passover was especially memorable. Every year you heard again the story about how your descendants had death pass over them and how they were miraculously rescued from slavery. Every year you watched as your family took a one year old lamb without any blemishes and slaughtered it. Every year you spread the blood of that lamb on your door and then ate that lamb until it was finished. And then there was the great Day of Atonement. On that one day blood was actually sprinkled not just on the altar but on all of you. That was the day the high priest took that scapegoat and laid his hands on it saying all your sins were now on it before they took it and lead it out into the desert to die.

Imagine growing up in a faithful Israelite family. Think of all the prophets God sent to your people with God's Word now put into writing for you. You have words from Moses, Jeremiah, and Daniel, and Ezekiel and so many more have pointed you to a coming Messiah. You also have words of Isaiah who prophesied about someone who will be pierced for your transgressions and crushed for your iniquity. The Lord will lay the sin of us all on Him. He will go like a lamb silently to the slaughter.

Imagine growing up in a faithful Israelite family. Now one day you hear another prophet proclaim, ***“Look, the Lamb of God!”*** He has come – behold He is here! All those stories, all those ceremonies, and all those words of all those prophets start flooding your thoughts. What would you do if you were an Israelite and now you hear the news, ***“Look, the Lamb of God?”*** I would look! I think you would look too, don’t you? Even though we did not grow up in faithful Israelite families, even though we were not there when the Baptist boldly proclaimed Jesus to be the Lamb of God, I pray we still look. For after all God has promised and taught us how can we not open our eyes to see and open our mouths to say: ***“Look, the Lamb of God!”***

The day before some Pharisees had come out to question John about whom he was and why he was doing what he was doing. When John clearly confessed he was not the Christ they asked who gave him the authority to baptize. John made it clear God sent him with the purpose of preparing the way for One much more powerful. John’s work was to point people to the One who was coming. This is exactly what we find the Baptist doing here. We read: ***“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.’ Jesus arrives and John points the people to Jesus and says: ‘Look! Behold! Pay attention!’”***

Why does John want us to look? Many sermons could be preached on what John says next. Here is the Gospel in fullest and richest measure. Here is the Lamb of God. Again here is what all those stories, and those ceremonies, and those prophesies were all about – they were pointing to Jesus. Here is the Lamb of God – the perfect Lamb without any defect or blemish – the Lamb of Sacrifice. Jesus is someone who came after John both in time of birth and in ministry, but at the same time Jesus surpasses John and was before John as God from eternity. John wants everyone to look and see that Jesus is the Lamb of God.

Why did the Lamb of God come? He comes to take ***“away the sin of the world!”*** The Greek verb used here for ***“takes away”*** is an interesting one in that it has several meanings. It can mean ***“to take up and carry.”*** In that sense this Lamb would be taking upon Himself the sins of the whole world and carrying them on His shoulders. The heavy weight of every sin of every person would be put on Him and this Lamb would carry the whole dreadful load. I would say that is fitting, wouldn’t you? But this verb can also mean ***“to carry off.”*** In that sense the Lamb would be taking away the guilt and punishment of sin. The Lamb of God would be carrying it away like the scapegoat so that sin and punishment and guilt are all removed and gone for good. That is fitting as well don’t you think! The point is John wants all to look because here is: ***“The Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”*** The awesome things John witnessed at Jesus’ baptism made John sure of this – that Jesus is the Son of God!

That’s why the very next day as John is there with two of his disciples we find John doing the very same thing. ***“When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, ‘Look, the Lamb of God!’”*** The two disciples there were John and Andrew and I think we can pretty safely assume that they were not quite getting what John was telling them. That’s why John the Baptist repeats the message the next day. When John tells them, ***“Look, the Lamb of God,”*** John is saying that this is the Messiah. John is saying that Jesus is the one to trust. Jesus is the one to learn from and listen to each day. Jesus is the one you want to be following. That is exactly what these disciples now do. After Jesus asks them what they want they ask Jesus where He is staying. Then the constantly gracious Teacher, the ever bending and ready to

listen ear, the always faithful and loving Lamb of God invites them to: ***"Come...and you will see."*** Then they go and spend the day with Jesus. And their lives are never the same again. I find it interesting that John even remembers the exact hour.

Dear disciples, doesn't John the Baptist tell us the same thing when we hear him proclaim: ***"Look, the Lamb of God?"*** He is telling us Jesus is the Christ. Put your trust in Jesus. Listen to and learn from Jesus. Follow Jesus. Jesus is someone you might want to get to know better. If you have doubts about Jesus, wonder about where your life is going, question if God really cares, are looking for purpose and guidance, the Lamb of God is waiting for you in His Word. He is right here inviting you to come and see. What better way can we spend a day other than what we are doing right now by spending the day with Jesus! How foolish and slow to learn we are at times when we neglect the Word, when we refuse to look, when the things of this world distract us from the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Thank God this Lamb carries on Himself and carries off those sins too.

My prayer is that we all take the time daily to, ***"Look, the Lamb of God."*** My prayer is that like John the Baptist day after day we point others to Jesus and say: ***"Look, the Lamb of God."*** Did you catch what Andrew did after getting a good look at the Lamb of God? ***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).*** The next verse tells us Andrew brought Simon Peter to Jesus so he too could have a look at the Lamb of God.

Think of this scenario for a moment. You are out with some friends having a good time and suddenly you look and see that Peyton Manning or George Clooney is there. Do you kind of shrug your shoulders and say *"hey that's pretty cool"* and not say a thing about it to your friends. I highly doubt it! You get your friends attention and say: *"Look...Look...Look who is here...can you believe it!"* How much more like Andrew should this not be the first thing we do after we have had a good look at the Lamb of God! I pray we tell others to look. I pray we invite them to come and see. I pray we all make a dedicated effort to bring others to Jesus.

We might imagine what it would have been like to grow up in a faithful Israelite family. We may wonder what memories might come to mind as John pointed to Jesus urging: ***"Look, the Lamb of God!"*** Yet, the truth is we have been given so much more. We have more than shadows or pictures of what was to come. Now when we hear, ***"Look, the Lamb of God,"*** we look and see the last Passover Lamb ever needed – the final and all sufficient sacrifice for sin. We look at the Lamb of God who hung from the cross to take our sins away. We look at the Lamb who was slain now standing victorious over sin, over the devil, even over death and the grave. When we hear, ***"Look, the Lamb of God,"*** we look at the one who gives us His own body and blood in simple bread and wine to personally assure us He taken away the sin of the world. He has taken away your sin. ***"Look, the Lamb of God!"*** Walk away in His peace. Amen.