

January 15, 2023
Second Sunday after the Epiphany
St. Timothy Lutheran Church – Huber Heights, OH
Pastor Joel Sutton

John 1:29-42

THE LAMB OF GOD WHO TAKES AWAY THE SINS OF THE WORLD.

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Our text for meditation today comes from the Gospel according to St John, the 1st chapter, which you heard read earlier.

What are you seeking? Why do you get all dressed up, get into a cold car on Sunday morning to gather with a bunch of other sleepy eyed people singing the liturgy and hymns? It certainly is not for entertainment. There are plenty of things on TV at this time of the morning to watch. Going to the gym for a workout would have been a healthier choice. A lot of people say Sunday is the only day they can stay in bed an extra hour – but you didn't. What are you seeking?

Last week the Church celebrated the Baptism of our Lord. The Baptism is recorded in all four Gospel accounts, but St John's account is different from the others. First of all, St John does not explicitly record the Baptism. We are left to assume that it has already taken place. Second, St John does not record God the Father's voice proclaiming from heaven Jesus as His Son in whom He is well pleased. (cf: Matthew 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22) Instead, St John alone records the voice of John the Baptist boldly proclaiming the unique title upon Jesus as the One who fulfills Old Testament prophesy saying: (cf: Exodus 12:1–13)

"Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29;
cf: John 1:36)

John did not know that Jesus was the Messiah and he ***would not have known*** Him except that it was revealed in Jesus' Baptism. John had been sent by God to prepare the way for the reign and rule of God on earth in the flesh of man. John preached a water baptism for repentance and the forgiveness of sins. (cf: Matthew 3:11) He knew that he was preparing the way for One who was mightier than he, whose sandals he was unworthy to untie, who would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire. (cf: Matthew 3:11)

The Holy Spirit had told John that the One upon whom the Spirit descended and remained upon – He is the One who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. (cf: John 1:31–34) And when John baptized Jesus, he saw the Spirit descend and remain. He knew that this Man was the Son of God in the flesh of man. (cf: John 1:33–35)

At this point of John's ministry he had a large following and many of his own disciples. People were eagerly expecting the Messiah. Many were asking if John himself might be the Messiah.

But John knew his place. He was only preparing the way for the Messiah who outranks him because in comparison, the Messiah has always been first, even before the creation of the world. The Messiah must increase and John must decrease. (cf: John 3:30)

The next day as John is with his own disciples, he sees Jesus walking by and he dramatically declares:

“Behold, the Lamb of God!” (John 1:36)

You can almost see John’s outstretched arm and finger pointing to Jesus indicating that this is One. John says: ***“Behold! Look over here at this One. He is not just any ordinary Lamb of God. This Lamb is **the** Lamb... the Passover Lamb of God. This Guy is **THE ONE**.”***

Those hearing John’s proclamation would have immediately made the connection to the Passover lamb commanded by God centuries earlier to be sacrificed when their ancestors were held in slavery in Egypt. (cf: Exodus 12:1–13) It was to be a male lamb, perfect, without blemish. They were to put the lamb’s blood on the sides and tops of their doorframes. This blood would save the Israelite’s lives, setting them free from Pharaoh’s bondage. That Passover lamb pointed forward to Jesus, the true Lamb of God, who would sacrifice Himself on the cross for the forgiveness of all sins.

Two of John’s disciples heard John’s proclamation and followed Jesus. They were faithful Jews who had long been seeking the Messiah. Like the rest of Israel they were seeking a messiah who would bring freedom from the oppressive Romans; who would restore Jerusalem and Jewish power; who would heal sickness and disease which were signs of God’s judgment upon the people. They were seeking a Messiah – but like you and me, they did not know exactly **what** they should be seeking. So when Jesus sees that they are following Him, does not ask them **whom** they seek but asks:

“What are you seeking?” (John 1:38)

Believers, unbelievers, and all mankind is seeking something. Unfortunately, many do not know exactly what. And if you do not know exactly what it is that you seek, the sinful Old Adam goes to work at seeking those things that are a delight to your eye, that suit your own passions, and gives you a false sense of security and happiness.

Perhaps you seek **power**. The longing for **power** is regarded as a normal desire in our society. When you have **power** you have control and influence over others. With **power** you do not have to bow down to the decisions and desires of others. You can make the rules. You can do anything you want.

Maybe you seek **wealth**, trying to accumulate more and more so that you might someday live the life of kings and queens. You can retire early and forget your neighbor who is in need. It is your money. You worked hard for it. Right? Relax, eat, drink, be merry. Be comfortable, cozy, and lazy for the rest of your life.

Some seek **knowledge**, not for the sake of knowledge and making a difference in the world. They seek knowledge for the sake of flaunting it in the face of others and to make them feel inferior. It is a huge ego boost when you wield your brain-power over others. Who does not like to control

and manipulate others? Or perhaps you are hoping that by obtaining knowledge you will then acquire to personal wealth.

Now, before you take offense, there is nothing wrong with power, wealth, and knowledge – in and of themselves. But like all of God’s gracious and good gifts, the sinful human nature likes to distort and abuse God’s gifts and use them for evil. And at the end of the day, all the power, wealth, and human knowledge will leave you empty and wanting. They will not add a minute to your life. Their pursuit and making them your false god merely pushes you one step closer to the grave.

As you seek the pleasures and treasures of the world, John the Baptist interrupts your pursuit saying:

“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29;
cf: John 1:36)

When Jesus sees the two of John’s disciples following Him, does not ask them *whom* they seek but asks:

“What are you seeking?” (John 1:38)

These are the first words of Jesus recorded in John’s Gospel and then throughout his Gospel account John records many miracles and signs that reveal Jesus as the long foretold Messiah and Savior of the world. John responds to Jesus’ question at the end of his Gospel where he writes:

“... these [things] are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” (John 20:30–31)

What are you seeking? Seek that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His Name. This is what John’s two disciples are seeking. They respond to Jesus’s question saying:

“Rabbi’ (which means Teacher), ‘where are you staying?’” (John 1:38)

They are not merely being polite. They are not simply wondering about the place of Jesus’ residence. They are indicating that they desire to embrace the life that Jesus lives, living a new life, converted from one way of living to another. Concordia Commentary writer William Weinrich suggests that:

“If the disciples seek where Jesus is “remaining,” they seek the goal of Jesus’ way, and they seek it as Jesus himself comes to it.” (Weinrich, John 1:1–7:1, Concordia Commentary, 277)

What are you seeking? Many seek what they should not, and others are not seeking what they should. Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. In Him is the highest treasure anyone can seek: forgiveness of sins, life, and eternal salvation. Salvation is found in no other.

God calls you and me and all mankind to repent of seeking after the false gods of power, wealth, knowledge. Repent of offering up sacrifices of your time, talent, and treasures so that you might lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal. (cf: Matthew 6:19) Confessing them to be sinful false gods, you are freed to seek the

true Lamb of God. In contrition and repentance, all who trust in the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, desiring to live a new life in Christ, receives His forgiveness.

Because of our sinful nature, you and me and the whole world could not seek after God – so He came seeking to save us. Jesus lived the perfect life that you and I could not. To be a sacrificial Lamb, He must die and shed His blood. John calling Jesus *the Lamb* meant nothing other than sacrifice. In those days that is what lambs were for, being a sacrificed and shedding its blood. St John records that Jesus was condemned on the day of preparation for the Passover, at the very time when the lambs began to be slaughtered in the temple. (cf: John 19:14) God's prophet Isaiah foretold that:

“⁷ He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.” (Isaiah 53:7)

But there is a difference with the true Lamb of God. Unlike all other sacrificial lambs, Jesus is resurrected after his death. Moses' Passover lamb is still dead. All the lambs sacrificed in the temple are still dead. But God the Father accepted Jesus' sacrificial death on your behalf and raised Him from the dead. He stands forever as the sacrificed but risen Lamb of God.

Ascended into heaven, He has given His Holy Spirit to you in Baptism and the gift of faith so that you can seek after and follow Jesus. At the font you were given all the gifts Christ won for you on the cross: forgiveness, life, and salvation. By the power of the Holy Spirit He restores to you the joy of His works of salvation. By His sacrificial death on the cross on your behalf, He strengthens you to strengthen you to respond to His love by living a life as one redeemed by the Lamb of God who takes away all your sins. His sacrifice is greater than any other. His sacrifice is for the salvation of the whole world, in all times and places. It is even for your salvation and mine.

What are you seeking? Entertainment? Power, wealth, or knowledge? [point to the crucifix] ***“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”*** Wise men still seek Him today and He comes to you right here in the Divine Service. The Lamb of God comes to you in the words of Absolution saying: *“Your sins are forgiven.”* He comes clothed in ordinary water with the invocation of the Name of the Father, and the ✠ Son, and the Holy Spirit to assure you that you will always be His child. He comes to you clothed in humble bread and wine, which are His very body and blood, feeding you with life that lasts forever. He comes to you as the sacrificed but risen Lamb of God, forgiving your sins and showing you grace upon grace unto life everlasting. (cf: John 1:16)

Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understand, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus,
Amen.