

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Des Moines, WA
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John 1:29-42

"Look, the Lamb of God!"

- 1. See what he does**
- 2. Follow where he goes**

Hymns: 80 – 93
Distribution: 78 – 311
Closing: "Glorify Thy Name"

All Scripture quotations from NIV 1984

John 1:29-42 – 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. 36 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). And he brought him to Jesus.

What do you remember about John the Baptist? There are some "strange" things to remember! John the Baptist:

- Baptized people – No kidding!
- Wore clothes made of camel's hair – scratchy!
- Ate grasshoppers! And honey.
- Did not cut his hair
- Did not drink alcohol
- Lived in the wilderness
- Preached a strong message
- Was beheaded because of a young girl's request

However, if you remember one thing about John the Baptist, it shouldn't be one of these things! If you remember one thing about John the Baptist, it should be that he said, "**Look, the Lamb of God!**" He was sent by God to say these words! He was a "forerunner" of Jesus, meaning that he pointed him out to those he preached to, preparing them for the coming Savior promised in the Old Testament. Today, as we worship in the Epiphany season, which is the time we focus on the "manifestation" of Christ, let's look at whom John the Baptist is pointing out to us. "**Look, the Lamb of God!**" **As our eyes look at the one whom John pointed to:**

- 1. See what he does!**
- 2. Follow where he goes!**

1. See what he does

We read, "John 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."'" What does this person do, whom John is pointing out to us? Greater things than John himself! It would be unusual for a person to talk this way normally. In John's day, when someone was older than you were, they were given a position of respect as being wiser, even greater. But John here says that this is not true!

Even though John was older than Jesus, he knew Jesus was greater!

He uses a picture to describe this. He says, *"Look, the Lamb of God!"* When an Israelite thought of the word LAMB, vivid pictures came to their mind. The main picture that came to their mind religiously was SACRIFICE. Since ancient times, lambs were associated with this.

Perhaps you remember when Abraham was commanded by God to sacrifice his young son Isaac as a test of his faith. When the two of them were going up the mountain to the sacrifice, do you remember what Isaac asked his father? *"The fire and wood are here, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"* Even at that time, it seems lambs were the common animal sacrifice to God. When God commanded his people in the Old Testament to offer sacrifices in the Law of Moses, lambs had a key role. The Lord commanded that there be "daily sacrifices," one at sunrise and one at sunset. Each of these times a lamb was to be offered up. There was a major festival they had every year, where a lamb was sacrificed: The Passover. Every year to commemorate God's deliverance from Egypt they sacrificed a lamb and ate it in a special meal. And there were also other sacrifices that used lambs.

It is very fitting that John the Baptist would call Jesus a lamb, especially when we consider the Passover lambs. Jesus, of course, made his sacrifice when he was put to death on the cross. Here are some reasons why "lamb" is a good term for him:

- The lambs offered for Passover had to be **perfect**. God commanded that they be one year old, with no spots or blemishes, and certainly not crippled. The Lord only wanted a lamb in perfect condition. This is a perfect picture of Jesus, who is truly perfect. John says in our text, *"I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God."* This was no mere man who sacrificed his life! It was the Son of God! He was perfect.
- The lamb offered for Passover also was **innocent**, in a sense. Had this lamb that was about to die for this meal

committed a crime for which it deserved to die? Had it done evil things? No, there was no direct reason for its death, only God's command that this was the way to celebrate this festival. In the same way, Jesus was innocent of any wrongdoing. When Jesus was being confronted by religious leaders of the people in his day, he asked them, *"Can any of you prove me guilty of sin?"* No one could respond to him and do this! He was innocent! He did not deserve to die.

- The lamb is often characterized as being **meek**. The lamb is no ferocious beast to be feared. It has no sharp teeth or claws to fight. Indeed, it doesn't have the disposition to fight, either. It is a calm, peaceful animal. In the same way, Jesus the suffering servant is spoken of in Isaiah 53: *"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."* Jesus did not protest or complain in the face of his murderers, but went meekly.
- But these are not the most important comparisons to Jesus and Old Testament lambs of sacrifice. The most important comparison is in what the blood accomplished. In the Passover sacrifice of the Old Testament, the blood of the lamb **spared life**.

You might remember that the blood of the lamb was to be spread on the doorframes of the houses where the people had eaten the Passover meal. After that, the Bible tells us, when the angel of death came to take the life of every firstborn in Egypt in this last plague of God, the angel of death would "pass over" the houses that had this blood on the doorframes and not harm anyone in the house. The blood was the sign to the angel to pass over. There are many important Bible passages that tell us that

this is exactly what happened when Jesus gave his life on the cross:

- *“He does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself” (Hebrews 7:27).*
- *“We have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Hebrews 10:10)*
- *“Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.” (1 Cor. 5:7)*
- *“(In heaven) they sang a new song: ‘You are worthy... because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.’” (Rev. 5:9)*

When God saw the blood spread on the cross, his perfect justice for sin’s price was satisfied, and he now passes over all mankind with his judgment of “Guilty of death!” All people can be spiritually safe!

So here we are, 2000 years later, with John the Baptist’s words ringing in our ears. Do you see what the Lamb has done for you? Do you fully comprehend it? Imagine for a moment that you were invited to a meeting and you came that night to hear someone talk. The person talked and talked about a new disease that scientists had discovered that was dangerous. The person went on to tell how there were ways to treat this disease and control it. You might find yourself concerned about the disease and interested to hear about it. But imagine then, that the speaker says that all you people who were invited to hear him speak had this disease. Suddenly, you would be very interested in what he had to say. You would be interested to hear about its symptoms and its treatments. You would rejoice that the disease could be treated!

This lamb picture hits so close to home when we realize how much we need a Savior! **This**

was done FOR YOU! The cure is available for you because of the Lamb of God. Those without faith do not receive this gift! Realize this and give thanks! You could never be the perfect person, fit for heaven on your own! You could never get there by yourself! This is your ticket!

How fitting it is that we use a form of this sentence as a song in our communion services, called **“Oh Christ, Lamb of God.”** As we sing this final song before receiving his body and blood, we say, **“You take away the sin of the world! Have mercy on us and grant us your peace.”**

2. Follow where he goes

There is another encouragement from our reading today. We also read, *“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.”* One of these men, we find out later, was Andrew, the brother of Peter. The other was, many have guessed, John the young apostle, because he never mentions his name in his book of the Bible. These two men had been John the Baptist’s disciples. Obviously, they were spiritual men interested in religious teachings and had seen that John the Baptist had a message from God.

But isn’t it interesting that it didn’t seem that they followed Jesus the first day? The way things are laid out here, it seems that there were a number of people present the first day that John the Baptist had announced his message to, and that he gave these two disciples of his a “second call” the next day! *“Look, the Lamb of God.”* This time the disciples decided to approach Jesus and find out more about this person their teacher had pointed out. They had a discussion with him: *“They followed Jesus. Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, ‘What do you want?’”* The Savior gave them a thought-provoking question! *“They said, ‘Rabbi’ (which means Teacher), ‘where are you staying?’”* implying that they want to spend some time with him. *“‘Come,’ he replied, ‘and you will see.’”* Jesus welcomed them to be with him and spend time with him that day. *“So they went and saw where he was staying, and spent that day with*

him. *It was about the tenth hour.*" The disciples' interest was piqued, and it didn't take long for Andrew, we hear, to be convinced that they had found the Messiah promised in the Old Testament, for he later found his brother Peter and told him, "*We have found the Messiah.*" It seems that this memorable day struck John, our writer here, so much that later he even remembered the time when he first met his Savior - the tenth hour of the day.

So began quite a relationship! These men would be two of the twelve apostles of Christ. They would keep on following the Savior not only that day, but all through his earthly ministry. They would follow in good times:

- Seeing him do miracles
- Watching him heal people
- Hearing him teach the people
- Watching the crowds accumulate and gather around him

But it would not always be good times. In fact, there would be some very hard times:

- When Jesus' crowds saw that he wasn't going to be a "bread king" and began to desert him
- When the religious leaders of the day hated him and opposed him
- When Jesus' life was threatened
- When he suffered and died – Perhaps they might even have had doubts?
- When as missionaries they would encounter much of the same opposition, even death threats

They followed Jesus through many tough times. Yet he taught and guided them throughout his life and beyond, through the time he rose from the dead and commissioned them to be public missionaries for him. He even assured them that "*Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age*" (Matthew 28:20).

Here we stand today, having heard John the Baptist tell us, "*Look, the Lamb of God!*" And the question that we now have to ask ourselves is: WILL WE FOLLOW? Our first reaction might be, "Of course I will!" But seriously consider this question.

There will be good times in your following Jesus in life. For one thing, he is always approachable, just as he was when these two disciples first came up to him. A memorable verse from Isaiah says that "*a smoldering wick he will not snuff out,*" in other words that the Lord will not spurn those who have just a flickering faith. This is good news for us, for we desperately need him. Without him we are nothing! And without him we are headed away from God to destruction. Thank goodness Jesus is ready to welcome us and be approachable!

Another positive we can see is that only Jesus will bring you ultimate happiness. For the person who follows him, they find forgiveness in his death and resurrection, they find inner peace in this life from their guilty conscience, and they find the gift of heaven waiting for them after this life. Jesus truly has ultimate happiness! Will you follow in good times? Will you follow when you're so important that schedule gets busy? Will you follow when God makes you rich? When everything is going great?

But we must consider the harder things too. We must consider that this God of ours is exclusive. In other words, if you follow him, you follow no others. Only him! "*I am the LORD, that is my name; I will not give my glory to another, or my praise to idols,*" he tells us in Isaiah. You cannot follow him and other gods in your life.

We must also realize today that following Christ will bring testing and ridicule. Will you keep following when a trying time of life comes? When you lose a loved one? When you lose friends? When you lose your health? Will you follow when Satan comes with temptations, ones that seem pretty desirable?

TEENS, will you follow your whole life? Or do you feel you want to sow your wild oats for a while, and then follow later in life after you've had your "fun"? Will you follow God until someone of the opposite sex gives you a "better" deal for a night? Will you follow him when many your age aren't thinking about the health of their soul? Will you follow only the true God and his Word?

PARENTS, will you follow God and be an example to your children of a godly person? Even when you're angry? Will you follow even if your spouse stops following Jesus? Will you plant spiritual seeds in your children as well as the physical seeds (driver's license, prom dresses, and cell phones)? Will you reprimand them if they stray from God's house and God's commandments?

CHURCH MEMBERS, will you follow God with your whole heart? Or does having a church membership just look good for a resume? Or just for social connections? Or will you keep your church membership officially "just in case" this God-stuff is true and he asks you about it on the Last Day? Then you could say, "I have my name on a membership list of a church somewhere"? Or will you be a disciple? Will his house be a cherished place that you frequently come to? Will you serve him with the talents and gifts he has given you? WILL YOU KEEP FOLLOWING?

With God's strength, you can. Thank the Lord that he does not require you to do this of your own strength alone. These questions are not meant to make you doubt, but to build your confidence! He will help you! He will hold you. So follow him. Love him. And live for him.

Today, thank John for pointing out the Way. May we follow his finger that points, as he says, **"Look, the Lamb of God!"**

- 1. Rejoice in the forgiveness of sins he wins for you with his sacrifice.**
- 2. Follow him all through your life!**

Amen.