

MARY HAD A LITTLE LAMB

A Scripture Sermon

Biblical Texts Arranged by Dr. G. Robert Jacks

Introduction

It has been a year full of many words,
words on the news, words among political leaders,
words from preachers and pundits
trying to embrace the significance of what we've lived through
and in what we'll put our hope for days to come.

It somehow seemed appropriate to end this year by resting together
on what God has said and done.

The message this morning is simply a literal reading from God's Word,
tracing a single theme from Genesis through Revelation,
Alpha to Omega,
Beginning to End.

We will be reminded as we read that God understands sacrifice and bloodshed.
He understands the pain and heartache that sin can wreak.
He knows that redemption comes only where someone
is willing to enter in and pay a great price.

And so to Mary and to all of us, God sent the greatest gift of all,
A Lamb...
to open the door to peace.

Hear now the Word of the Lord...

Isaac said to his father Abraham, "My father?"

And he said, "Here I am, my son."

He said, "Behold the fire and the wood,
but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"

**Abraham said,
"GOD will provide himself the Lamb, my son."**

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[Then] Moses summoned all the Elders of Israel

**and said to them, “Go at once
and select the animals for your families
and slaughter the Passover lamb.**

Take a bunch of hyssop,
dip it into the blood in the basin
and put some of the blood
on the top and on both sides of the doorframe.
Not one of you shall go out the door of his house until morning.

**When the LORD goes through the land
to strike down the Egyptians,
he will see the blood
on the top and sides of the doorframe
and will pass over that doorway,
and he will not permit the destroyer
to enter your houses and strike you down.**

“Obey these instructions as a lasting ordinance
for you and your descendants.

**When you enter the land
that the LORD will give you as he promised,
observe this ceremony.**

**And when your children ask you,
‘What does this ceremony mean to you?’
then tell them,**

‘It is the Passover sacrifice to the LORD,
who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt
and spared our homes when he struck down the Egyptians.’“

Then the people bowed down -- and worshiped.

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**Who has believed our message
and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?
He grew up before him like a tender shoot,
and like a root out of dry ground.
He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him,
nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.
He was despised and rejected by men,
a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering.**

Like one from whom men hide their faces
he was despised, and we esteemed him not.
Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows,
yet we considered him stricken by God,
smitten by him,
and afflicted.

**But he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was upon him,
and by his wounds we are healed.**

We all, like sheep, have gone astray,
each of us has turned to his own way;
and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

**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.**

By oppression and judgment he was taken away.
And who can speak of his descendants?
For he was cut off from the land of the living;
for the transgression of my people he was stricken.
He was assigned a grave with the wicked,
and with the rich in his death,
though he had done no violence,
nor was any deceit in his mouth.

**Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer,
and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering,
he will see his offspring and prolong his days,
and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand.**

**After the suffering of his soul,
he will see the light of life and be satisfied ;
by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many,
and he will bear their iniquities.**

Therefore I will give him a portion among the great,
and he will divide the spoils with the strong,
because he poured out his life unto death,
and was numbered with the transgressors.

**For he bore the sin of many,
and made intercession for the transgressors.**

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An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream
and said, "Joseph son of David:

Do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife,
because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.
She will give birth to a son,
and you are to give him the name Jesus,
because he will save his people from their sins."

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet:

**"The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son,
and they will call him Immanuel"**

-- which means, "God with us."

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There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John.
He came as a witness to testify concerning the light,
so that through him all might believe.

[And John] said, "Behold, the Lamb of God,
who takes away the sin of the world!"

The Lamb of God—

"the good shepherd [who] lays down his life for his sheep."

"I AM the good shepherd;

I know my sheep and my sheep know me

—just as the Father knows me and I know the Father

—and I lay down my life for the sheep."

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[And Jesus said]:

"Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?"

Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground
and prayed, "My Father,

if it is possible,

may this cup be taken from me.

Yet not as I will, but as you will."

[And Jesus said]: "Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?"

**Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks
a participation in the blood of Christ?**

And is not the bread that we break

a participation in the body of Christ?

[And Jesus said]:

"Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?"

Because there is one loaf,
we, who are many, are one body,
for we all partake of the one loaf.
[And Jesus said]: “Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?”

**Then he took the cup,
gave thanks
and offered it to them,
saying, “Drink from it, all of you.”**

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Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.
Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast,
the yeast of malice and wickedness,
but with bread without yeast,
the bread of sincerity and truth.

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**Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God’s elect,
strangers in the world,
who have been chosen
according to the foreknowledge of God the Father,
through the sanctifying work of the Spirit,
for obedience to Jesus Christ
and sprinkling by his blood:
Grace and peace be yours in abundance.**

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!

In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope
through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,
and into an inheritance
that can never perish, spoil or fade —
kept in heaven for you,
who through faith are shielded by God’s power
until the coming of the salvation
that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

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**Just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do;
for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.”**

**Since you call on a Father
who judges each one impartially according to his deeds,**

live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear.

For you know that it was not with perishable things
such as silver or gold
that you were redeemed from the empty way of life
handed down to you from your forefathers,

but with the precious blood of Christ,
a lamb without blemish or defect.

**He was chosen before the creation of the world,
but was revealed in these last times for your sake.**

**Through him you believe in God,
who raised him from the dead and glorified him,
and so your faith and hope are in God.**

Now that you have purified yourselves
by obeying the truth
so that you have sincere love for each other,
love one another deeply, from the heart.

**For you have been born again,
not of perishable seed, but of imperishable,
through the living and enduring word of God.**

For, "All flesh is like grass,
and all its glory is like the flowers of the field;
the grass withers and the flowers fall,
but the word of the Lord stands forever."
And this is the word that was preached to you.

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**Then I [John] saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain,
standing in the center of the throne,
encircled by the four living creatures and the elders.**

He had seven horns and seven eyes,
which are the seven spirits of God
sent out into all the earth.

He came and took the scroll from the right hand
of him who sat on the throne.
And when he had taken it,
the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders
fell down before the Lamb.

**Each one had a harp
and they were holding golden bowls full of incense,
which are the prayers of the saints.**

And they sang a new song:

“You are worthy to take the scroll and
to open its seals,

because you were slain,

and with your blood you purchased men for God

from every tribe

and language

and people

and nation.

**You have made them to be a kingdom
and priests to serve our God,
*and they will reign on the earth.”***

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[And] the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders
fell down before the Lamb.

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**Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels,
numbering thousands upon thousands,
and ten thousand times ten thousand.**

They encircled the throne and the living creatures

and the elders.

In a loud voice they sang:

“Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain,
to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength
and honor and glory and praise!”

**Then I heard every creature in heaven
and on earth and under the earth and on the sea,
and all that is in them, singing:**

*“To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
be praise and honor and glory and power,
for ever and ever!”*

The four living creatures said, “Amen,”
and the elders fell down and worshiped.

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**After this I looked
and there before me was a great multitude
that no one could count,
from every nation, tribe, people and language,**

standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb.

...

And they cried out in a loud voice:

“Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne,
and to the Lamb.”

All the angels were standing around the throne
and around the elders and the four living creatures.

They fell down on their faces before the throne
and worshiped God,
saying: *“Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks
and honor and power and strength be to our God
for ever and ever. Amen!”*

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After this

**I heard what sounded like the roar
of a great multitude in heaven
shouting: “Hallelujah!
*Salvation and glory and power
belong to our God,
for true and just are his judgments.***

He has condemned the great prostitute
who corrupted the earth by her adulteries.
He has avenged on her the blood of his servants.”

And again they shouted:

“Hallelujah!
The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever.”

**The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures
fell down and worshiped God,
who was seated on the throne.**

And they cried: “Amen, Hallelujah!”

Then a voice came from the throne,

saying: “Praise our God, all you his servants,
you who fear him, both small and great!”

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**Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude,
like the roar of rushing waters**

**and like loud peals of thunder,
shouting: “Hallelujah!**

*For our Lord God Almighty reigns.
Let us rejoice and be glad
and give him glory!*

*For the wedding of the Lamb has come,
and his bride has made herself ready.*

*Fine linen, bright and clean,
was given her to wear.”*

(For the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.)

Then the angel said to me,

**“Write: ‘Blessed are those
who are invited
to the wedding supper of the Lamb!’”**

“God Himself will provide the lamb....”

“God will provide Himself the lamb....”