

Messy Lives

John 1:29-42

INTRO:

When you go out to eat, where do you go?

I don't know about you, but I love eating at Chipotle.

I didn't used to, because I don't like the rice they put on **every sandwich**,
or so I thought.

I have found that you can get your Barbacoa burrito without rice!

*I get mine with sautéed green peppers and onions, cheese, sour cream,
and guacamole. This is not something I can eat in the car.*

It's a mess, but it is **so worth it!**

What do you order at Chipotle? Is it messy?

Of course it is!

But isn't it worth it?

Jesus is the lamb of God.

John makes it clear in his Gospel that Jesus has become the true Passover Lamb for the world—His death brings salvation for the children of God.

I wonder . . . if we in our overly sanitized world can really appreciate the meaning of the image of the sacrificial Lamb of God.

It could be that this **loss of connection with the messy side of life** also explains our struggle with serving people who are in painful and broken situations.

ME:

When I was in high school, I became a vegetarian for half a year. It all started when I realized that eating meat *was like eating my own bicep muscle!*

That seemed really gross!

*I realized the **connection** between meat and killing animals.*

And it's messy!

Real messy!

It's funny how we forget about where meat comes from, **isn't it?**

- *For us to get meat, something has to die.*
- *For sin to be forgiven, something, or someone has to die.*

That's the idea we are going to think about this morning.

Let's pray together and then dive into John's Gospel to see what God has for us ...

GOD:

John 1:29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

30 This is the one about whom I said, ‘He who comes after me is really greater than me because he existed before me.’

31 Even I didn’t recognize him, but I came baptizing with water so that he might be made known to Israel.”

John moves right into the talk about the Lamb, *he wastes no time!*

How did he know Jesus was the Lamb?

John answers that in the next verse:

32 John testified, “I saw the Spirit coming down from heaven like a dove, and it rested on him.

33 Even I didn’t recognize him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘The one on whom you see the Spirit coming down and resting is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’

34 I have seen and testified that this one is God’s Son.”

35 The next day John was standing again with two of his disciples.

36 When he saw Jesus walking along he said, “Look! The Lamb of God!”

37 The two disciples heard what he said, and they followed Jesus.

38 When Jesus turned and saw them following, he asked, “What are you looking for?” They said, “Rabbi (which means Teacher), where are you staying?”

39 He replied, “Come and see.” So they went and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o’clock in the afternoon.

40 One of the two disciples who heard what John said and followed Jesus was Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter.

41 He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which means the Christ).

42 He led him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon, son of John. You will be called Cephas” (which means Peter).

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For both John the **Baptist** and John the **writer**, the image of the Passover lamb is central to understanding Jesus.

The image comes up again and again **highlighting** our need to **understand** this idea about Jesus.

As John tells the story of Jesus' night that led to Jesus' crucifixion, it is written so that we understand Jesus is condemned to death by Pilate on the preparation day for Passover at noon.

That's the hour when the priests begin the slaughter of Passover lambs in the temple.

Only John's Gospel records that the soldiers do not break any of Jesus' bones **"to fulfill the Scripture."**

This refers to [Exodus and Numbers](#) where none of the Passover lamb's bones were to be broken.

Then the soldier pierced Jesus' side and the outflow of blood and water are seen as signs of the life-giving sacraments of Holy Communion and baptism.

John the Baptist would not have had to explain these images to the Jews of his day.

He says that Jesus is the Lamb of God and his disciples follow Jesus.

They understood the **power of such a connection.**

We probably can't *really* understand the **significance** and the **connection** of Jesus with the Passover lamb.

We may be able to *intellectually* grasp the idea of Christ being willing to be a sacrifice who's blood is literally poured out on the cross, but that doesn't change our discomfort with it.

It's just too messy!

I read about a man who was trying to weave his way from one side of the **Superstore** to the other, from **the automotive section** to **the peanut butter section**.

After going about a half a mile, *he passed through the "kill an animal at any cost" section!*

Also known as Sporting Goods.

A mother had obviously hesitated way too long, and her child, who seemed around six years old, had stopped, fascinated with a video on deer hunting.

She rushed her innocent child away with the words, "**Come on. We don't wanna watch this.**"

They walked quickly down the aisle and into the hamburger restaurant in the rear of the store.

Oh the irony!

I wonder if that mother understood the irony of the situation?

You know, if I was there, I probably would've done the same thing.

Yeah, we know where meat in the supermarket come from; *we just don't want to think about it any more than we have to.*

We are too comfortable with our *sterile environment*, or *overly sanitized culture.*

And we like it this way.

Death no longer happens at home.

At one time, slaughtering animals for food or gathering around the relatives deathbed were considered normal. No more.

As those life and death moments have moved out of our ordinary lives, we have grown more and more uneasy dealing with death, illness, and other things like them.

We are so much more comfortable in our orderly neat places with orderly and neat people, abiding by orderly, neat schedules—*like our worship services.*

Everybody knows that worship should be **tidy**.

Sanctuaries are supposed to be **clean**.

People are to be **courteous** and **quiet**.

Even sermons should be neat and tidy, **wrapping up all the difficult questions of life.**

Death and illness are the last things we want to bring into our weekly worship service.

Of course we have funerals, but those are special occasions where we break out special language and rituals.

At one time, church families took care of preparing bodies, digging the graves, **“sitting up”** with the deceased all night before the funeral.

Now . . . we hire professionals to manage these details.

Death and **illness** are messy, and we don't deal with messy.

In seminary we learn how to make rituals come alive.

During baptism, *we splash water around by pouring into a bowl getting everything soaked!*

They even tell us let the congregation experience the wetness of the moment.

One student pastor tried this in his church . . . and it resulted in the first anonymous letter in his career!

"Spill water on our carpet again and there will be real trouble!"

This is so different from where we began.

When God gave details on how to worship to the children of Israel, it became clear that the Lord is not such a neat freak.

“Build the temple,” God said , **“a great temple where my name will dwell.”**

And then there's the animals that we are to take into the temple—very small animals like **doves** and great big animals like **bulls**—and slaughter them there.

Take their blood and pour it over all the sides of the altar.

This is what God required.

Worship was messy!

Or go even further back than that to the Passover, *the great salvation event of the Old Testament.*

“To save yourselves from death, you must take a lamb,” God said.

“Slaughter it and paint your door post and lintels with this blood.”

Worship in our faith family has always relied on blood to be spilt.

Our sin is so great, our salvation so costly, something or someone has to die to pay for it.

And this didn't change with Jesus coming into view in God's plan; we still rely on blood.

We no longer have to slaughter animals every week, but only because Christ became the final sacrifice of blood.

John called out, **"Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"**

Jesus is the Passover lamb for us.

His blood will be spilled, and we won't just talk about splashing it on the door post or on the carpet.

We get plunged into it headfirst, singing, **"What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus!"**

John's disciples understood the power of that image.

Hearing the prophet say Jesus is **"the Lamb of God,"** they turn and follow a new teacher.

The early church, having celebrated Passover, having watched sacrifices in the temple, would've understood the connection too.

But can we understand?

Don't get me wrong.

I am so glad the sacrifice was final.

I can't imagine going to school to learn how best bleed an animal.

I hate to think what the temple smelled like after a long day.

But surely we can realize we have lost something in this transition . . . *if we forget that the blood of Christ was just as real as the blood of the animals.*

Just because it isn't thrown against our altar every week doesn't mean we can forget about its meaning.

After the Host is broken in the Eucharist, the priest says, "**Christ, our Paschal Lamb, has been sacrificed for you.**"

You see, the life and death of Christ were not neat and clean.

Life is messy; sacrifices are always messy.

To **remember** and to **glorify** that sacrifice made for us . . . means we cannot become obsessed with keeping worship neat and tidy.

If we celebrate a God who is with us in every aspect of the mess of our lives, we sometimes have to get messy too.

Neat and tidy worship may be **comfortable**, but we cannot allow our worship to become **sterile**.

- Church researchers have found that one reason many people are not coming to worship is that they don't feel they don't have the right clothing.

*That is **sterile** worship.*

- Ask congregations why they don't make efforts to reach out to the homeless, to those with mental and physical challenges in their community, and they will talk about smells or how uncomfortable it makes them.

*That is **sterile** worship.*

- Go to congregations around the nation and try to find children.

- We may talk about being a church family, *but we don't allow crying or screaming in this family!*

*That is **sterile** worship.*

- Ask people why they didn't come to church last week and they may tell you, "**My back was hurting, and I didn't think you would want me to get up and walk around in the middle of the service,**"

- *God forbid!*

*That is **sterile** worship.*

Sterile.

It doesn't only mean **clean**, but also **lifeless, unable to sustain life.**

Is it surprising that we live in an age when the church struggles with attendance?

Worship doesn't seem to be relevant, to relate to people's real and messy lives!

Life is messy. Birth, illness, death, and all the parts in between are messy.

And God is involved in every one of them.

In fact, Jesus **identified** Himself with those who had **messy** lives.

We are taught to see Jesus in the outcast, the broken in our society.

If that is true, we should be careful about inviting Jesus to our worship service; *it could get messy!*

THE BOTTOM LINE:

Jesus identified with those who had messy lives, we should too.

YOU:

Here's what you can do about this, here are ways to apply this today and this week:

1- **Smile at them.**

When a baby cries in worship, and the parent looks at you, so embarrassed, smile at them and let them know, somehow let them know, *crying babies are welcome in our worship!*

If the baby gets too loud during an important part of my message, *I'll gladly repeat that part until you can hear it!*

Crying babies are welcome in our worship!

So smile at those parents!

2- **Watch for it.**

Look for opportunities to step into the midst of someone's messy life and **show** them Jesus.

I didn't say **talk** about Jesus, though that may be appropriate sometimes.

It is **always appropriate** to **show** them Jesus.

Always. Always. Always, show them Jesus.

If Jesus hasn't affected the way you live your life, I wonder if you have really met Jesus.

Watch for it!

3- **Look around you and allow.**

In the middle of your own messy life, look around for others who are sent to you to **show** you more of Jesus in the midst of your messy life.

And allow them to do their job!

Christ has sent them to you to help you.

Allow them to help you!

Allow them move you further into your relationship with Christ.

So . . . **smile at them, watch for it, look around and allow.**

WE:

- *Imagine it!*

Think of the difference you will make in someone's life if you help them feel comfortable in worship even if they are noisy, or smelly, or somehow distracting.

That is how you worship God!

With other messy people in their messy lives.

- Imagine the difference it will make in others' lives when you notice them and the trouble they have gotten themselves into, the mess . . . but you still go to their side and walk with them through the mess.
- **How would you like it if you allow others to bring more of Jesus into the mess of your own life?**

You will probably like it as much as the ones who allow you to bring more of Jesus to them.

So, please let me know the differences that these action steps bring into your messy life and the messy lives of others!

CLOSE:

For six months I was a vegetarian.

It was not always easy, but I did it.

And soy “meat” products do NOT taste like real meat products!!

Well, I was reading the Bible one day, after six months of being a vegetarian, and I read something that helped me get back to eating meat.

Here’s what I read:

Genesis 9:3 God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, “Be fertile, multiply, and fill the earth.

2 All of the animals on the earth will fear you and dread you—all the birds in the skies, everything crawling on the ground, and all of the sea’s fish. They are in your power.

3 Everything that lives and moves will be your food. Just as I gave you the green grasses, I now give you everything.

That didn’t mean I had to eat meat, *but I sure missed hamburgers and steaks!*

I know it, I am a mess!

Good thing Jesus identifies with our messy lives!

Let's pray together...