

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!"* ³⁰ *This is the one I meant when I said, 'A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'* ³¹ *I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel."* ³² *Then John gave this testimony: "I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. "* ³³ *And I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.'* ³⁴ *I have seen and I testify that this is God's Chosen One."* ³⁵ *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!"* ³⁷ *When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus.* ³⁸ *Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?" They said, "Rabbi" (which means "Teacher"), "where are you staying?"* ³⁹ *"Come," he replied, "and you will see." So they went and saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with him. It was about four in the afternoon.* ⁴⁰ *Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus.* ⁴¹ *The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ).*

What do you want from the Lamb of God?

1. The Lamb of God takes away the sin of the world
2. To follow Jesus

"What do you want?" That's the question Jesus asked the disciples who followed him. That's the question he asks us today. What do you want from the Lamb of God? Do you want him to fix your life? Do you want him to make you feel better? Do you want him to make you financially secure? Do you want him to make all your enemies go away? Do you want help coping with daily burdens? Do you want life made easy? What do you want with the Lamb of God?

The truth is, we want a lot of things besides Jesus, don't we? We want a bigger house, nice car, good job, success at work, success in sports, plenty to eat and drink and time to watch our favorite shows.

I was talking to a mother in our congregation a couple years ago. I won't name names but she will probably remember this conversation. I remember it because of what she said. This family is very active in the church. Her husband had just been promoted which meant a lot more travel. She has a good job, also. She was telling me how hectic life was getting. The kids have school and sports and other activities. She said they also want to be in worship every week and volunteer at church as much as they can, but there is just so much going on in their lives. Then she said, "That's the problem – we want it all." She hit the nail on the head.

She understood that it's not all that sin or bad stuff out there that's the danger to us. Even the good things in life that can get in the way of God's Word and harm our faith. In this sinful world, Satan can use even the good things against us.

We need to see that we are broken people living in a broken world. Angel was in ICU. Her parents couldn't understand why their beautiful, 17-year-old would starve herself. Her bulimia had almost killed her. Angel said she hated her body. She felt fat and ugly.

Maybe we haven't reacted the way Angel did, but we have all said something like that, haven't we? "I don't like my nose. I don't like my hair. I don't like my ears." We recognize that we are not perfect. That imperfection goes a lot farther than our appearance. John uses a word for sin here that means missing the mark. Like playing darts or shooting arrows, we are expected to hit the bull's eye of holiness every time. Do we ever miss the mark? Lustful thought, angry response, disobeying our parents – how many times each day do we miss the mark?

That's why John's statement is so important to us. *The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"* For the Jews who heard John make this statement, a lamb brought two things to their minds: innocence and Passover. Remember what happened at Passover. The last plague on Egypt was the death of the firstborn. God spared Israel this plague by having them choose a lamb without blemish or defect and sacrifice it. Then they were to take the blood and spread it around their doors so that the angel of death would pass over them.

God commanded them to commemorate this event every year. So, every spring a Jewish father would go out to his flock and pick out a year-old male lamb. He would look for one that wasn't crippled or damaged in any way. He would

want one without spots or any other marks; it needed to be pure white, the symbol of innocence. Then he would bring that to the priest for sacrifice.

God picked out the one perfect Lamb who had no sin, no imperfection. He chose his own Son as the Lamb for sacrifice. Then he sacrificed him on the cross. Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

What does he take away? The sin of the world. Notice, that he uses the singular: the sin of the world. He takes all our sin, puts it into one big bundle and lays it on Jesus. All sins of all the people of all the world are wrapped up with guilt into one bundle, tied up with shame and laid on Jesus.

Are you part of the world? Did your sins contribute to that bundle on Jesus' back? Then hear what John is saying to you. Jesus has taken it away from you and put it on his shoulders. Either sin is laying on your shoulders or it's laying on Jesus. If it's laying on you, you are doomed. But if it is laying on Jesus, it's no longer yours but his. There's no longer anything to condemn you. By using the singular, sin, John was telling us that there are no exceptions. Either Jesus has the sin of the world or he doesn't have any of it. If he has the sin, all of it, then there can be none left for you. Look at that window [Agnus Dei window] and every time you look at that remember what John said. Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away your sin.

What did the disciples do when they heard John say that? *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!"* ³⁷ *When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus.* We often use the word, "discipleship." We don't just want to be members of a church, but we want to have a connection to Jesus. We want to follow him. We want discipleship. Discipleship begins with our baptism.

Then John gave this testimony: "I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him." ³³ *And I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.'* John's statement has often confused people. John isn't making a distinction between his baptism and Jesus' baptism, since Jesus never baptized anybody anyway. And John is not making a distinction between water baptism and so-called Spirit baptism. But John is making a distinction between persons, between himself and Jesus. Like any pastor today, John baptized with water. All John could do or any pastor today can do is proclaim the Word and administer the sacrament. Only God, the Holy Spirit, can work faith through these means.

Don't let people confuse you about baptism and don't let them take away the simple comfort that comes from saying, "But I'm baptized." Baptism works faith and strengthens faith. It is a source of comfort that you can use when struggling with temptation and problems. Baptism is like adoption. God has adopted you into his family and he is such a loving Father that he sacrificed his own Son so that you could be part of the family. So no matter what comes, you can say, "I am God's child. I am baptized."

That's where discipleship begins; that's not where it ends. *"What do you want?" They said, "Rabbi" (which means "Teacher"), "where are you staying?"* ³⁹ *"Come," he replied, "and you will see."* *So they went and saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with him.* Discipleship is spending time with Jesus, listening to Jesus and taking his words to heart. Don't treat Jesus like that distant uncle you pop in on once in a while and only because you have to. That's not discipleship. Disciples want to spend time with Jesus, growing closer to him by listening to his Word.

Disciples also don't keep Jesus to themselves. *Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus.* ⁴¹ *The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ).* Andrew brought his brother to Jesus. He didn't try to change his heart. He just made an introduction. You can, too. Who do you care about? Who's important to you? Introduce them to Jesus. We do this when we bring a child to meet Jesus in baptism. We do this when we read Bible stories to our children. We do this when we invite a friend or relative to church.

What do you want from the Lamb of God? Understand what he gives. He doesn't give fun; he gives forgiveness. He doesn't give us financial security; he gives us a mission. He doesn't give us time to watch our favorite shows; he makes us disciples. He doesn't give us an easy life; he gives us eternal life. May that be what we want from the Lamb of God.