

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).*

Look, the Lamb of God

1. See the Lamb of God
2. Follow the Lamb of God

"Mary had a little lamb, little lamb, little lamb. Mary had a little lamb, his fleece was white as . . . ??" Did anyone have trouble finishing that nursery rhyme? Even the youngest ones here know how that rhyme goes. What you probably don't know, however, is the history of that verse. One source said that this rhyme was written in 1830 by Sarah Hale, a classmate of Mary Sawyer who one day brought a lamb to their school in Sterling, Massachusetts. Another source said that this rhyme was developed in England as a way to teach children about Jesus, the Virgin Mary's little lamb. That isn't a bad way to think of Jesus, as long as we remember that he is more than Mary's lamb. He is the Lamb of God.

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" The stain glass window right up here portrays our lesson today. It is a lamb carrying a banner. In the banner is written, "Ecce, Agnus Dei." "Behold, the Lamb of God." Jesus is a lamb, but not just a lamb. He is THE Lamb. In the Old Testament, a person picked out the lamb from his flock and gave it to the priest for sacrifice. Jesus is the Lamb of God. God himself chose Jesus for sacrifice.

Have you ever heard of a pro football team called the Lambs? No. Football teams want a mascot that conveys power and speed, like the Broncos or Da Bears. Packers? I don't know. The Lambs? Won't happen. Lambs are helpless, weak creatures.

Jesus is 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.

And there is a lot of sin in the world. Abortions, murders, blatant disregard of God's institution of marriage, pornography, cheating and lying. Yes, we might say, the world has a lot of sin. But let's not forget that we are part of the world. John is not talking just about those sins out there in the world. He also means those sins and those sinners in here. John uses a word for sin here that means missing the mark. Like playing darts or shooting arrows, we are expected to hit the bulls 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? Yes, we can include ourselves in the sin of the world.

What does the Lamb of God do with it? He takes it away. 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.

The animal sacrifices of the Old Testament were only I. O. U. notes that put off paying the real debt of sin because human sin can only be paid for with human blood. That's why God's Son became Mary's son, Mary's little lamb, so that he could pay for our sins with his human flesh and blood.

That's the prayer that we sing right before we receive that flesh and blood in the Lord's Supper. We sing the *Agnus Dei*, Lamb of God, to remind ourselves that we are receiving the Lamb of God and the forgiveness he was sacrificed to earn for us.

That forgiveness is also communicated to us in 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."

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 [Lamb of God window] and every time you look at that remember what John said. Look, the Lamb of God who takes away your sin.

See the Lamb of God. Follow the Lamb of God. *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."*

These two disciples might sound like stockers but actually they were just looking to make an appointment with Jesus. Have you ever had someone drop in without an appointment and say, "Have you got a minute?" The disciples didn't want to do that. They weren't going to be so bold as to demand an audience with him at the moment. They wanted to find out where he was staying so they could set up an appointment. They called him Rabbi, teacher, and wanted to learn from him because the Lamb of God is our teacher.

"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.

"What do you want?" Do we want to spend time with Jesus? Do we want to learn from Jesus? That's what disciples do. 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.