

John 1: 29 - 42

The Lamb of God

²⁹The next day he saw Jesus coming towards him and declared, 'Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! ³⁰This is he of whom I said, "After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me." ³¹I myself did not know him; but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel.' ³²And John testified, 'I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. ³³I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, "He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit." ³⁴And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God.'

The First Disciples of Jesus

³⁵The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, ³⁶and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, 'Look, here is the Lamb of God!' ³⁷The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. ³⁸When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, 'What are you looking for?' They said to him, 'Rabbi' (which translated means Teacher), 'where are you staying?' ³⁹He said to them, 'Come and see.' They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon. ⁴⁰One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. ⁴¹He first found his brother Simon and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah' (which is translated Anointed). ⁴²He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, 'You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas' (which is translated Peter).

"United in Purpose"

John 1: 29-42

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La Habra UMC

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I'd like to start with a story to set the tone of the sermon.
A mother was preparing pancakes for her sons,
John, 5 years old, and Ryan, three years old.
The boys began to argue over who would get the first pancake.
Their mother thought she saw the opportunity for a good lesson.
So she told the boys,
 "If Jesus were sitting here, He would say,
 'Let my brother have the first pancake. I can wait.'"
Right away John turned to his younger brother and said,
 "Ryan, you be Jesus!"

(We laugh because John was honest..... if we can be as honest as this five year old,
then, life would be a lot easier.)

We will come back to this story:

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Last week we studied the baptism of Jesus Christ
 as it was recorded by Matthew in Gospel of Matthew.
In today's scripture we read another account of Jesus' baptism and some follow-up,
 From the point of John the Baptist as recorded in John's gospel.
John, the Baptist, as the one who had baptized Jesus,
 was the prime witness and speaker of today's scripture.

John the gospel writer and John the Baptist happened to have the same given name,
John.

But we doubt that they are the same person

Because we know John the Baptist died way before the gospel John was written.

We meet two disciples of John the Baptist:

Andrew: Explicitly named as one of the two disciples of John.
The other one is most likely **John the Apostle** and the writer of John's gospel.

Throughout the gospel, John avoids naming himself directly
but sometimes described himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved."

So this John the writer was originally a disciple of John the Baptist.
And the scripture for today shows how he was introduced to Jesus.

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To give you some background
In the 10 verses leading up to today's scripture, the following happened:

Jewish leaders sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem
to ask John the Baptist, and John denied
being the Messiah, Elijah, or the Prophet,
and identifies himself as "the voice of one calling in the wilderness,"
which was written in the Book of Isaiah

So, John's work fulfilled one of Isaiah's prophecy.

He explained to those inquiring about him,
that he baptized with water but that
someone much greater, who is already among them, would come after him.

This conversation took place at Bethany,
across the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

And then, our scripture begins as the next day, John saw Jesus:

The first thing John, the Baptist declared
'Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'

If you remember from your reading of Luke's gospel,
the parents of John the Baptist were Zechariah and Elizabeth.

Zechariah was the author of the Book of Zechariah in the Old Testament
And priest whom we meet in the first chapter of Luke's gospel.

As you know Zechariah was the priest
 who was chosen to enter the holy of holies
 to offer the annual incense
 when he met the angel who told him that
Elizabeth, in her old age, would become pregnant.

And of course, you know that Elizabeth was the other woman
 Mary, the mother of Jesus, had visited when she found out she was pregnant.

They were like cousins.

Elizabeth was like a mentor for Mary.
Elizabeth too old to be pregnant was now pregnant,
 and Mary, out of wedlock, a young lady.
Both were pregnant.
They stayed together perhaps almost three months, sharing their experiences.

John was, therefore a few months older than Jesus.

So for John the Baptist,
who grew up in the home with the priest as the father,
 it was not unusual to use the symbol of the sacrificial lamb
 to describe Jesus.

One of the main functions of the priests, like Zechariah
 Was to officiate the ritual of
 Slaughtering the sacrificial lamb
 to compensate for the sins people had committed.
Instead of killing people who had done some wrong, knowingly or unknowingly,
Lambs died to wash away the sins of many people.

And John declared,
"Jesus is the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."

Eddie Fox was the General Secretary of World Methodist Evangelism.
After the fall of the Berlin Wall

and the collapse of the communist government of Eastern Europe,
he observed a sign placed in the churchyard
of a little Methodist church in Prague, Czechoslovakia.
The sign went up the very first day after the fall of the Berlin Wall.
It read: "The Lamb Wins!"

Fox noted and wrote: "Not the bear, not the lion, not the tiger.
But the Lamb - the Lamb wins!"
The power of sacrificial love is
stronger than any power we can imagine.
It may seem like the physically stronger,
or seemingly powerful might be winning at times.
But ultimately, it is the power of sacrificial love
that triumphs over any other powers.

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The prime witness John the Baptist testified that
he saw the Spirit descended from heaven like a dove,
and it remained on Jesus.
The spirit of God was often visited upon
many Old Testament leaders and prophets
as divine help in times of crisis.
But most of the times, the Spirit returned to God.

Here, as John the Baptize remembered, the Spirit remained on Jesus.
As the Messiah, the true leader,
the Spirit has descended and remained with Jesus always.

A True leader is, like Jesus, to whom the Spirit comes and remains with.

In 1968, at the Ecumenical Council of Churches Meeting at Uppsala,
Metropolitan Ignatios of Latakia spoke these words:

Without the Holy Spirit, God is far away,
Christ stays in the past,
the gospel is a dead letter,
the church is simply an organization,
authority, a matter of domination,
mission, a matter of propaganda,
the liturgy, no more than an evocation,

Christian living, a slave morality.

But in the Holy Spirit:
The cosmos is resurrected
and groans with the birth pangs of the kingdom;
the risen Christ is there;
the gospel is the power of life;
the Church shows forth life of the Trinity;
authority is a liberating service;
mission is a Pentecost;
the liturgy is both memorial and anticipation;
human action is deified.

As the followers of Jesus Christ,
and especially as leaders of the church,
we need constantly be reminded of the power of the Spirit.
For the Spirit to come and remain with us,
we need to be in constant prayers
and purposefully be open to the leading of the Spirit.

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The baptism story is followed by John's account of
how Andrew and John, and eventually Peter first met Jesus.

After hearing what their own teacher and leader, John the Baptist,
How he described who Jesus was,
Andrew and John followed Jesus.

And Jesus asked, "What are you looking for?"
They in turn asked, "Rabbi, Where are you staying?"

They were curious.
"My teacher said that you are the one he was preparing us
and he is encouraging us to get to know you.... Are you really the
messiah? Then we want to know What your daily life is like, teacher?"

And Jesus simply answered them, "Come and see."

Jesus was the leader who was not reluctant to show everything about him.

There is no hidden agenda,
It is like, "I live what I say."
Jesus simply said, come and see how I live.
If you want to be my disciple, learn from my life.

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Notice how the story does not unfold in isolation.
John shared his revelation with his disciples,
and as a result, how own disciples were drawn to Jesus.

Likewise, when Jesus asks, "What are you seeking?"
He is not addressing just one, but all who desire to follow.

Think about it!
We could just have built strong relationships with Jesus
individually and privately.

But we come together weekly and became a church.

There is a private dimension of the spirituality.
As a church, however, our response is collective—
we walk together, celebrate and struggle together,
and seek answers together.

Jesus calls us not just as individuals, but as a team
—one body striving for unity and service.

In this, we see the foundation of teamwork:
listening, sharing, and supporting one another as we journey in faith.

Andrew, after encountering Jesus,
immediately goes to find his brother Simon Peter.

He does not keep the good news to himself but brings others into the fold.

This act reminds us that teamwork is about sharing our discoveries
and inviting those around us to be part of something greater.

The early disciples did not embark alone;

they built a fellowship,
encouraging and guiding each other as they followed Christ.

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We know that the Wright Brothers invented airplane. They had very different gifts.

- Wilbur Wright was the visionary strategist. He had a deep intellectual curiosity and was known for his methodical thinking and ability to conceptualize complex problems.
- Orville Wright was the mechanical genius. He had a knack for building and tinkering, turning abstract ideas into working prototypes.
- Together, they combined Wilbur's theoretical brilliance with Orville's hands-on craftsmanship, supported by a shared passion for flight and relentless perseverance.
- They also drew on outside expertise: referencing Otto Lilienthal's glider experiments, consulting with engineers, and even using a wind tunnel they built themselves to test over 200 wing designs.

Their success wasn't just about intelligence—it was about complementary strengths, mutual respect, and a shared goal.

Neither brother could have done it alone.
Their teamwork led to the first powered flight in 1903,
changing the course of history.

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Going back to the first story I started the sermon of the different brothers:

When their Mother said,
"If Jesus were sitting here, He would say,
'Let my brother have the first pancake. I can wait.'"
And the older brother turned to his younger brother and said,
"You be Jesus!"

As the followers of Jesus,
we don't have to encourage others to be like Jesus.

Dearly beloved,
as Christians, our job is to be like Jesus,
who was a leader filled with the Holy Spirit
and didn't hesitate to give up his life
in the name of love.

We had that popular sentence for a while, “What would Jesus do?”
That was not a question addressed to someone else.
It is a question we address to ourselves.

Today’s text invites us to reflect on our own lives and communities.

Are we working together as a church to seek truth, hope, and purpose?
Do we support and uplift one another, sharing both burdens and joys?

Amen

Response to the Word:

As we go forth this week, let us embrace the spirit of teamwork found in the Gospel. May we encourage one another, act in unity, and invite others into our journey of faith. In Christ, we are stronger together. Amen.