

Look! The Lamb of God, the Messiah, Has Come to Redeem Us

John 1: 29-42

29 The next day John^[the Baptist] 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 I would not have known Him, except that the One who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘The Man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is He who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’ 34 I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God.”

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 spent that day with Him. It was about the tenth hour. [4:00 p.m.]**

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). 42 And he brought him to Jesus.

“Come on! Let’s go!”...“Where to?”...“Don’t worry; just come. You’ll see!” That could be children playing, teens having fun together, a husband to his wife looking for a brief getaway from the house, or many other situations. Those who follow are willing to trust the speaker and where he’s headed.

That attitude is absolutely necessary when it comes to genuine saving faith in Jesus. The one beckoning is JESUS, and WE’re the ones He’s calling. As He calls, Jesus has NO intention of getting us into evil trouble. His call is that of a Good Shepherd showing a concern for the welfare of the sheep: **Come to Me, all you who are weary & burdened, and I will give you rest!**^{Matt.11:28}

Today we’ll be considering an incident where 2 men followed Jesus...partly due to trusting the encouragement of John the Baptist, and partly due to trusting Jesus’ invitation. Obviously the Holy Spirit had this recorded so that WE would reflect on how & why WE are following Jesus and His call to US. So as we investigate this story, let’s personally hear John exhorting US to “Look!” while Jesus invites US to “Come, & You’ll See!”

Look! The Lamb of God, the Messiah, Has Come to Redeem Us

I. Come, See, & Follow Him! II. What more could you want?

Last week’s Gospel reading took you to the Jordan River where John the Baptist was preaching repentance & spiritual renewal as he administered a “baptism of repentance.” When Jesus told John to baptize Him, John was puzzled. He knew that Jesus was God’s holy Son, not a sinner in need of John’s ministry. But Jesus told John that it was necessary **to fulfill all righteousness** ^{Matt.3:15} – i.e. It had to be done as part of Jesus’ substitutionary righteous living on our behalf.

When that baptism ended & Jesus came out of the river, the Father and the Holy Spirit sent forth Jesus into His 3-year public ministry: 1) the Father spoke from heaven about His delight & full support of His eternal Son’s mission, and 2) the Holy Spirit descended as a dove to pour out His power on Jesus for His ministry and eternally saving work as The Christ. Following that “christening,” Jesus went into the wilderness for 40 days to be in deep communication with the Heavenly Father, even as He took on Satan’s deceiving temptations in a most intense manner—a story of temptation we consider every year on the 1st Sunday of Lent.

Today’s text takes place soon after Jesus returned from the wilderness. John had recently been “investigated” & quizzed by Jewish leaders from Jerusalem as to who he was, particularly in light of the public “buzz” going on about him. John told them clearly that he was Isaiah’s fulfillment of the **“Voice crying in the wilderness to prepare the way for the Lord!”**^{Is.40:3} The Jewish leaders were puzzled, though, as to why he was baptizing so many people. While O.T. ceremonial washings were commonly made in small pools called **mikvehs** to symbolize physical and spiritual purification, the idea of baptizing unto repentance was not how such washings were regarded.

The day after John had been “investigated” by the Jewish leaders, he saw Jesus coming near and pointed Him out to the people around him: **“Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”** That was a unique name for Jesus by which John described how Jesus was the *fulfillment of all the O.T. sacrificial system*. He then further described *Jesus as being part of the eternal Godhead* by saying, **This is the One I meant when I said, ‘A Man who comes after me has surpassed me because He was before me!’**

Apparently weeks earlier, when Jesus was first coming on the “public scene,” John hadn’t fully grasped or realized Jesus as the Messiah, but the Holy Spirit revealed that more completely to him. John knew that his own mission was to prepare people for the coming Messiah with his preaching, baptizing, and “call to

repentance,” and he did recognize Jesus when Jesus told John to baptize Him. But John confessed that it was particularly *when he witnessed Jesus’ “christening” by the Holy Spirit* that his understanding and convictions of Jesus’ Messianic role were solidified. So he said: **“I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on Him. ³³I would not have known Him, except that the One who sent me to baptize with water told me: ‘The Man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is He who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’ ³⁴ I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God!”**

One more day passes. Jesus comes near the area where John is talking to 2 of his own disciples and, once again, John points out Jesus and reiterates what he had said the previous day: **Look the Lamb of God!** Our text reports, **When the 2 disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus.** One of those 2 was Andrew, who eventually went to tell his brother, Simon Peter: *“The Messiah has come after centuries of waiting! **We have found Him, and this is no fraud!**”* The other disciple is speculated to have been the writer of this Gospel, the apostle *John*, since he frequently refers to himself in indirect or innocuous ways and since he & Andrew would have been friends, working as fishermen for John’s father, Zebedee. ^{Lk.5:10}

Did this make John the Baptist jealous when Andrew & John went to follow Jesus? Do we hear him saying, “Come back! I need you! Your supportive friendship is really important to my ministry!”? No. It was Jesus’ public ministry that John had been sent to prepare people to receive, and his goal was not to gain his own followers or “groupies.” On a previous occasion, not long before Jesus’ ministry began, John proclaimed, **After me will come One who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry.** ^{Matt.3:11}

Those of you who have been salesmen, owned a business, or have worked in Public Relations for a company are certainly aware of the ongoing effort it takes to build up a clientele—a group faithful to you. Special incentives, benefits, discounts, & good service are common ploys used to retain a corps of buyers or supporters. You don’t want them lured away by a competitor. So, think what a different goal this 30-year-old prophet, John the Baptist, had from the way that our world normally operates. *His objective was to attract attention to his own message, yet to wean any followers—“clientele”—away from him towards Jesus.* And to attract attention, he didn’t use all sorts of gimmicks, freebies, handouts, or entertainment. He preached & taught Law & Gospel, Sin & Savior, and the Holy Spirit used it in powerful ways.

How *difficult* it can be, in the weakness of human vanity, to *direct people away from yourself* to follow someone else when people tend to become *attracted to the messenger rather than the message*. It appeals to the pride of the messenger to have a “following”—even into our own day. People are often more *interested in the messenger’s personality, style, & looks than the actual message*. Two chapters after our text, some of John’s followers actually became jealous of Jesus and His followers because they seemed to be getting more attention. **They came to John and said to him: “Teacher, that Man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan—the One you testified about—[well]...everyone is going to HIM!”** In response, John told his disciples, **“I am not the Christ, but am sent ahead of Him...He must become greater. I must become less.** ^{John 3:26} There was absolutely no jealousy on John’s part that Jesus was gaining in public interest over John, and that is something he wanted his own disciples to realize: *Jesus, not John, should be the focus of their interest.* After all, that’s what *his* message was about!

John didn’t attract people by telling them what THEY wanted to hear but what they needed to hear. He preached sin, condemnation, repentance, forgiveness, renewal, & salvation in through the Anointed One, which was a refreshing & uplifting message to a people whose religious leaders were, too often, emphasizing *work-righteousness* and obeying the ceremonial laws more accurately, all of which does *not* bring peace to the human soul but only insecurity/frustration/antagonism.

In preaching repentance & forgiveness, John directed people away from themselves & from himself to Jesus (an understanding of *ministry* that should be the aim & goal of every true shepherd under Christ). John was determined not to steal Jesus’ thunder but was happy to lose people to Jesus. We might even say that John was in a situation where *he needed to work himself out of a job*—the short-term job that God had sent him for. And, not long after this, Herod imprisoned John, eventually beheading him when he was only about 33 years old!

The 2 disciples mentioned in our text respected the coaxing of their mentor, John. John had taught them well, and they were anticipating the Messiah’s coming. So when John said, *“Look! There He is—your Sacrificial Redeemer from sin,”* Andrew and probably John (the future apostle) started walking after Jesus. Testing their faith, Jesus turned around to them and said, **What do you want?**

II.

What do you want? That’s what *we* ask when we’re trying to understand someone. **“What do you want?”** can carry suspicion & distrust *or* convey a desire to help someone. **“What do you want?”** can intimidate those who are being asked, or it can reveal a servant’s heart towards them. But *notice that Jesus asks “WHAT” instead of “WHOM do you want?”* Were they seeking forgiveness & spiritual help from this Lamb of God? Were they seeking the Kingdom of God more deeply? *What DID they want?* And why were they following Jesus all of a sudden? The 2 disciples replied to the poignant question with a question of their own: **Rabbi**

(Teacher), where are You staying?

This wasn't meant to be presumptuous, implying that their following of Jesus depended on whether He stayed in a nice or shabby place, or whether He was staying nearby or far away. What they wanted was an *opportunity to go somewhere to talk with Jesus more personally and privately*, even talking along the way. They may have been a little self-conscious about Jesus responding in the open to some of their questions.

Jesus replied with acceptance, yet with a command to which their faith would need to respond if it were genuine: **Come, and you will see.** He didn't tell them exactly where or how long it would take. But His response showed that He was willing to talk with them and answer any number of questions that they may have about Him. At the same time, Jesus required that the 2 men follow Him wherever His destination might be. If they were "**going to see**," then they had to be willing to put other matters aside. Apparently, the location wasn't that far so that they were able to spend a good chunk of the day listening & asking questions.

Once the day with Jesus was over, Andrew was clearly excited. This good news of the arrival of the Messiah—the long-Promised Deliverer—was nothing to keep silent about! How many generations of sincere believers down through the centuries had been waiting for this time?! And even though Jesus looked like a mere man and had not yet performed any miracles, Andrew put together what John the Baptist had taught him with what Jesus said. He was convinced the Scriptures were fulfilled and that Jesus was not a fraudulent or delusional Messiah. So what did he do? He went to tell his brother, Peter, because he sensed the significance of what it means that Jesus is **The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world**. A person who truly believes that good news doesn't want to hoard it. It's too good of news that other people need to understand.

This simple story of 2 of John the Baptist's disciples being directed to Jesus and becoming His disciples contains some soul-searching questions for all of us.

Imagine Jesus asking you, **What do you want?—What do you want from Me?** *What do YOU want by associating with Me and calling yourself by My name, CHRISTian? Why have you come to church today to worship Me? What about studying my Word in Bible class for your life? What's your goal & purpose for your church membership? What do you expect from Me for claiming you are a Christian? Why did you go to catechism classes to be confirmed in the faith (or why are you going to such classes)? Are you coming to Me for self-righteous reasons?...or for humble, repentant, godly reasons?*

What do YOU want from Jesus? Do you want help in coping with daily burdens? Do you want to shape up a life that has made some bad *mistakes & choices*, or has developed some ungodly/poor *habits*? Do you want forgiveness of your sins and an eternal life with Jesus? Do you think that Jesus will take away all your earthly problems & frustrations, which people generally want from a mere socio-political Messiah, not realizing that through our struggles Jesus seeks to strengthen your trust and reliance on Him?

Are you coming to Jesus with preconceived notions? Are you coming to Jesus with a need/desire to know more of what He is and offers? Are you expecting things that He hasn't promised? Are you coming to Jesus because you realize that you need the *Son of God and Savior* of the world to be the priority in your life that He hasn't been?

What do YOU want? Whatever your reasons are, they'll be revealed by your response. Recall how the 2 disciples replied: **Teacher, where are You staying?** They wanted *special time* with Him to know more about this **Lamb of God**. Their answer demonstrated a *willingness to go where Jesus went and to follow wherever He took them*, which is why Jesus responded, **Come, and you will see.**

Is it your sincere intent to go & follow Jesus, too? Do you truly have the desire to know Him better and to follow the **Lamb of God**? Then are you willing, since He isn't visibly among us, to obey Him as He directs you to *learn more* of Him by making His Word an integral part of your daily life? After all, it is Jesus who said: **Search the Scriptures...These are the Scriptures that testify about Me.**^{Jn.5:39} Has doing that searching become an empty thing for you—a nuisance?...something you don't even make time for anymore, manufacturing a variety of excuses? Or, like Andrew, as you learn more from Jesus' words, do you feel more like joining the saints of heaven in singing Jesus' praise: **Worthy is the LAMB that was slain, & has redeemed us to God by His blood to receive power & riches & wisdom & strength & honor & glory & blessing!**^{Rev. 5:12}

If you intend to follow Jesus along the path to heaven, are you willing to submit to His exhortation?: **If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself & take up his cross & follow Me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for Me & for the gospel will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit His soul....If anyone is ashamed of me & My words in this adulterous & sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His Father's glory with the holy angels.**^{Mark 8:34-38}

To follow Jesus means what it says! *It doesn't mean that WE do the leading.* It doesn't mean staying comfortable in treating Him casually or according to our desires. It means following HIM—in humility, repent-

ance, thankfulness, interest, & obedience. Why follow? Because His path leads to life & salvation and many invisible, priceless blessings even in this life! His kingdom is all about **righteousness & peace & joy in the Holy Spirit.** ^{Rom.14:17} He has the wisdom & power to **make all things work together for the good of those who love Him.** ^{Rom.8:28} As a sheep following this Good Shepherd, you can say, **Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for YOU are with me!** ^{Psalms 23}

In our American society where we are told that we should be our own selves and “do our own thing,” we need to push aside those appeals to our self-serving ego when it comes to the Jesus Christ. As we see Him saying: **Come, and you will see,** we can’t help but think of the eternal destination where **in His presence is fullness of joy. At His right hand there are pleasures forevermore.**

Conclusion

“C’mon....You’ll see.” is a phrase we use in everyday life that holds eternal meaning when Jesus says it to us. Jesus will never lead you astray because He’s the *Lamb of God* who came to suffer & die for all your sins. His invitation offers you peace, forgiveness, & a new life in Him. Let Andrew’s & John’s example encourage you to realize the blessing in truly following & getting to know that Lamb more fully that He may fill your life in ways you don’t even realize right now. Amen.

General Prayer

Lord Jesus, the Anointed Christ of heaven and the Lamb of God come among us to take away the sin of the world: You delight in making Yourself known to us and to others. Through the preaching of Your Word send the Holy Spirit into our hearts that we respond to Your continuing call to “Follow Me.” We know that, wherever You lead us, You are a faithful Shepherd who gave Your life for us and will not seek to play games with our lives. You even call on us to “take up the cross to follow You,” and we know that You will provide the strength and encouragement to do so in order that we might receive the crown of eternal life in Your heavenly home.

As You called ordinary men to do extraordinary things as Your followers, we ask that You equip and empower us to serve You and our neighbor, witnessing to Your salvation in the process. Preserve Your truth among us, and let our anticipation of the heavenly kingdom enrich our conduct, ennoble our thinking and speaking, and increase our joy in all aspects of earthly life.

As we think of the new life You came to bring mankind in a culture of sorrow, selfishness, degeneration, and death, we particularly ask You to help us bring the message of life—physical, spiritual, and eternal—to the society around us. Encourage all those who work with the ill, disabled, or dying, and grant them compassion and joy in their challenging service to their fellowman.

In light of tomorrow’s Martin Luther King Jr. Day, help us all to honor all people—no matter what color or nationality—as people for whom our Savior died that they might know forgiveness in repentance and a new life in the Living God. Root out prejudice and hatred that are inflicting our nation, breeding division and fear. Let Your Gospel change people’s hearts and lives how You, Lord, have not held prejudice against us sinners, but accept people from everywhere who call on You for forgiveness and strength to live in faith towards You.

We pray this in Your name, Lord Jesus, as You also taught us to pray: LORD’S PRAYER

Hymns - Jan.15, 2023

CW#27 O Jesus, Lamb of God

(use tune of *Von Himmel Hoch* = #38 *From Heav’n Above*)

CW#100 A Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth

CW#397 Just As I Am

CW#20 vv.1,3-4 When All The World Was Cursed

(I don’t think there is any Communion)

Appointed Psalm is #40

