

MESSAGE - Declaration: The Lamb of God  
January 15, 2023  
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SCRIPTURE            John 1:29-42

<sup>29</sup> The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" <sup>30</sup> This is the one I meant when I said, 'A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.' <sup>31</sup> I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel." <sup>32</sup> Then John gave this testimony: "I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. <sup>33</sup> 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.' <sup>34</sup> I have seen and I testify that this is God's Chosen One." <sup>35</sup> The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. <sup>36</sup> When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!" <sup>37</sup> When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. <sup>38</sup> Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?" They said, "Rabbi" (which means "Teacher"), "where are you staying?" <sup>39</sup> "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. <sup>40</sup> Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. <sup>41</sup> The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). <sup>42</sup> And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which, when translated, is Peter<sup>[b]</sup>).

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You may have heard me say before that I didn't grow up going to church on a regular basis. But once in a while I did go. Sometimes my grandma would take me and I would sit next to her singing with the liturgy – it was a Lutheran church. We would sing, "Christ thou lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Have mercy upon us." It would be repeated with the third time instead of "have mercy upon us" it would end "grant us your peace"

It wasn't rushed – those three verses.

It was repetitive; meditative; holy.

I didn't understand the rich theology around the statement. I didn't have a clear understanding of sin and the need for salvation.

I didn't even know what the word mercy meant...but that experience became for me a core memory.

- something that forms and informs in life.

Because the recollection of it deeply moves me and my spirit clings to that experience as something that is so very important: to worship Jesus.

Now while I cannot speak to it being a core memory for them, there was an experience that seemed to change a few people's lives – because they heard the same words that I did:

*Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*

John the Baptist's statement about Jesus was powerful.

It declared to those around him – and to us – what Jesus' life is about.

"Lamb of God" - recalls the final plague upon Egypt...the Passover in which a lamb was sacrificed; its blood used to mark the doors ... and those within the houses of the marked doors would be spared from the angel of death.

So right there are the beginning of Jesus' ministry, when he is just being identified, John also makes a big of a spoiler statement declaring how his ministry would end: in sacrifice

"That takes away the sin of the world" – declares a deliverance; a different kind of deliverance from the one in Egypt – that was a deliverance from being actual slaves to Pharaoh.

This deliverance by this lamb is a deliverance from a different kind of slavery. We state it in our communion liturgy every month:

By the baptism of his suffering, death, and resurrection  
you gave birth to your Church, you delivered us from a slavery to sin and death.

Delivered from a slavery to the broken relationship.

It's a deliverance that breaks the cycle.

This is a deliverance that removes a burden from our shoulders; a burden we cannot hold up under.

*This is not just a theological statement...it is a basis for a response:*

John's statement

*The lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.*

is so compelling that it causes the hearers to act: his own disciples leave John and start following Jesus.

Now maybe they were told by John that this day would come, when his own ministry would begin to diminish as Jesus' ministry ramped up...nevertheless, there is such a compelling experience that they make a change in their lives.

They begin to walk behind Jesus.

When Jesus asks them, "what do you want?"

All they can say is, "where are you staying?"

It's kind of a strange-sounding response...but it does seem to indicate that they have more than just a question to ask. They want more than one conversation with him. They want more than a passing experience. They want to experience Jesus.

What compels you to change your life?

What compels you to examine your life, your behaviors?

What compels you to make changes; to repent?

It might be our human desires for wealth, popularity...

I am here to state that who Jesus is and what Jesus does is the most compelling reason to respond and change our lives... because then we will accept the deliverance and experience the freedom that deliverance brings.

You will experience Jesus.

So is there anything holding you back from responding to John's declaration?

Close your eyes and listen:

*Here is the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.*

What does that statement bring you to think or feel?

How is that statement calling to you?

I wish I could go back to that little girl in the church with the singing going on and sit and sing that liturgy with her; and affirm to her what her young spirit was opening up to:  
*He is the Lamb of God. Follow that. Let him be your Lord.*

But since I can't do that.

I will say it to my older self today

And I will say it to you:

*This bold statement; this holy liturgy can be the key to your life.*

As a response, let us affirm our faith together as found on page #885 or on the screen.

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH #885

We believe in God the Father, infinite in wisdom, power and love, whose mercy is over all his works, and whose will is ever directed to his children's good.

We believe in Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of man, the gift of the Father's unfailing grace, the ground of our hope, and the promise of our deliverance from sin and death.

We believe in the Holy Spirit as the divine presence in our lives, whereby we are kept in perpetual remembrance of the truth of Christ, and find strength and help in time of need.

We believe that this faith should manifest itself in the service of love as set forth in the example of our blessed Lord, to the end that the kingdom of God may come upon the earth.

**Amen.**