

<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>x</sup>

<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). (John 1:29-41)*

### **Look, the Lamb of God**

“Let’s go, Lambs! Let’s go, Lambs!” Doesn’t quite have the same ring to it...

The Lambs wouldn’t be the most intimidating, exciting, or motivating of mascots. We pick Badgers, Warriors, Panthers, Lions, Tigers, and Bears. We are proud of those mascots and our connection to them as well. But the Lambs? That’s for preschools and Early Childhood Centers where the students remind us of lambs: cute, innocent, harmless. But as you grow up you eventually grow out of the Lambs. Now here’s John the Baptizer putting the Lamb directly in our focus. He sees Jesus walking by one day and explains, **“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...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”** (30-34).

Jesus was born after John the Baptizer, yet Jesus has surpassed and is greater than John: “Because he was before me.” John saw the dove that was the Spirit come down and remain on Jesus. John remembers the promise what this sign would mean. John

confesses: This is true God from eternity—he was before me—God’s Chosen One. And now John says: Look, this is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

John knew that now; before he did not. As with you and me, John needed his eyes opened and the truth revealed. And we still need it even when the truth has been shown to us and we know it maybe even by heart. We need the reminder and encouragement to look at the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world.

We need the reminder because we get so busy. Our minds can only focus on so much, our ears can only listen to so many things, and our eyes can only take in a certain amount. Busy running kids to school, busy going to school. Busy with daily, weekly, monthly schedules packed full of personal responsibilities and other people’s expectations. You hear the need for help here and requests for assistance and volunteers there. You hear complaints about this and problems with that. You see someone who needs your care. You see how you need to take care of yourself. By the time you put your head down at night you wonder, where did the day go?

We need the reminder to look at the Lamb because of our sin! We know we all do it. We readily admit that no one is immune to it. Here’s the target that God wants you to hit with your life with every thought of your mind, word of mouth, and action of your hand. You know the target you want to hit, but you miss. That’s sin. But unlike the game of darts when you miss you have another throw, you sin once and you’ve ruined the whole thing. The truth is, we know we’ve missed God’s mark more than once. We daily sin much and often the same sins as yesterday too. Old sins we thought we had conquered and temptations that had went away, spring back when you least expect it. You might barely be out of bed before you have already fallen into the first one for the day. There are the sins you wish you could forget and want to get past but stick around and haunt you. There are other sins you refuse to forget because you still haven’t quite forgiven yourself.

The fact is something has to be done about all these sins. You know you can’t just ignore or pretend they didn’t happen—sin has hurt you and the people you love! If it were just the bad things we did, that would be bad enough to condemn us. But as Paul said, “You were dead in your sins.” It’s not just what you do, but what you are, by nature that would leave us lost forever in our sins, cut off from God, condemned.

Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Fifteen centuries and thousands of lambs, God’s people the Jews had looked at these animals and their sacrifices were central to Israel’s life. They never grew out of it. The horror. The death. The blood. The reminder that sin is always serious and a debt must be paid. The reminder that in order to be saved there must be a substitute. The innocent for the guilty. In order for there to be life, there must be death. And with every sacrifice there was the

promise, one day there would be the one who would do what all these animals could not. Year after year, lamb after lamb, promise after promise imprints onto the mind of the people, not all the blood spilled on Israel's altar could pay the price for sin, but one day there would be.

Then John says it, "Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Look, this man born of a virgin mother is true God from eternity. I did not know him but God has revealed it to me. I saw the dove that was the Spirit remain on him. I heard the voice from the heavens speak. Look, that one, is God's Chosen One who takes away your sin."

How can this be? Because the Lord laid on him the iniquity, the sins of us all. All your missing the mark, all the world's sins, are placed on him who carries them to the altar of the cross. Oh, it was a heavy burden for him to carry. You know how guilt and shame weighs on your mind. You know how heavy it is to lug around the burden of your past sins. You know how the demands of God's Law press heavily on your mind and then pushes down even harder when it shows you how you have failed. The Lord has taken all of that, the burden of past sins along with its guilt and shame, his Law, lifted it off of you and placed it onto the Lamb. He is pierced, crushed, forsaken and suffers while we were dead in our sins. Not just yours, but the sins of the world along with their verdict were nailed to the cross with the Lamb where he suffered to make us at one and fix our relationship with God. When they buried Jesus' body in the tomb, they buried all those sins with him. And now look. The blood that pours off that cross has washed you of every sin. Look, the blood of that Lamb paid your debt to God and you owe nothing. Look, the Lamb has taken your sin, with its guilt and shame, and thrown it into depths of the sea. Look, the sin of the world—not just a specific group or nationality, not just for believers, but the world—the Lamb takes away.

And now that thing that kills you sin has been removed, God makes you alive in Christ. You were buried with him in your baptism and you have been raised with him alive! You didn't come to this on your own any more than John the Baptizer who said, "I did not know him." This is God's work done to you and for you. You didn't know him until someone pointed him to you. That's what John the Baptizer did for those who followed him. He told them, "Look." That's what Andrew did for his brother Simon Peter. He went and told him, "Look, we found God's chosen one." That's what God did for you. Whether that was parent, family, friend, neighbor, stranger, pastor, or teacher, God used someone who had a relationship with you, to point out the Lamb of God to you.

And now we follow him. When Jesus saw two of John's disciples following him, he turns around and asks them, "What do you want?" It's a question that he directs to you.

What do you want? What are you seeking? Will you be held captive by the traditions of the past and how things have always been done because you don't like change and *this* is just how you like it and what you are used to? Will you be chained down by the deceptive philosophy of today that tells you to seek your own truth and what you think is right? Will you be held down by the idea that we need certain programs, people, pastors, or teachers in order for our church to grow? Will you be lost in the false idea that the purpose of the church is make perfect, pious, and better people? Are you seeking Jesus in the hope that he will make life just a little more comfortable right now and at least a little better today? What do you want? What are you seeking?

Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. That's what you need. Without him, nothing else matters. With him, everything does. As we see him for who he is for us and the precious gift he gives, he gives meaning to everything in life. So, we want to stay with him. You don't need to go searching for him. He's right where he promises to be. He's there wherever two or three gather in his name. He's there really present in, with, under the bread and wine giving you his body and blood to forgive your sins and strengthen your faith. He's there in the Word where he opens our minds to know, our eyes to see, and our hearts to believe your sins are forgiven in His name. He's here where he comes to us. He's there, with you always to the end of the age because the Lamb who was slain lives and rules eternally.

And now what? We point others to him. John told his followers and friends, "Look." Andrew went to his brother and said come and see. Who is it going to be in your life? Husbands, point your bride to the Lamb who has taken her sins away. Parents, teach your children, "Look." Grandparents go to your grandchildren and tell them come and see. Maybe it's a coworker or a friend. It might be a brother or sister in blood, or a brother or sister in Christ who need the reminder again. The fact is we all need the reminder and encouragement because we daily sin much. As long as we live in this world, we are quite forgetful. Even when we have already heard it and know it, we need to hear it again. Jesus didn't just die for the world, he died for you, me, for the individual so they might be with him. They need to hear it. We get to share it. That's the purpose of the church, that is, you, God's people that he has made alive through water and the word in Baptism: to point people to the Lamb, Jesus, who takes away their sin. God, open our eyes see the opportunities with the desire, strength, and confidence to do so. Amen.