

²⁹The next day he saw Jesus coming toward 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." 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).

I remember roller-skating on the back porch with my sister, Kay. She was older, stronger than I. For a reason I have long since forgotten I was angry with her. Our porch was connected to two buildings, our house and a structure that we called the "old house." I skated into the "old house" for the door was always open, then waited just inside the door for Kay to pass. When she did I was going to leap out and knock her down – which is almost what happened. I waited, leaped out at just the right moment but the one thing I hadn't counted on happened – I missed her. Instead of Kay crashing to the floor, I did, coming down right on my two front teeth – chipping them.

I remember another day. I was on the school bus. My friend, Scott, and I were fooling around. Scott took all of his books, notebook included, lifted them over his head and smashed them all down on my head. My mouth struck the metal bar that ran along the back of the seat. As I lifted my head, I saw a white mark on that bar, a little piece of tooth that had been broken off.

Though I have long since forgotten what caused me to want to hurt my sister or what may have led to Scott's striking me, as long as my teeth exist they will be a testimony to those two moments in time.

“Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” So it was that John the Baptist announced Jesus as he approached. “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”

Maybe some of those present thought of the scape goat as they heard these words. God had commanded Israel that the priest should lay both of his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the people of Israel, and all of their transgressions, and “he shall put them upon the head of the goat and send him away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who is in readiness. The goat shall bear all their iniquities upon him to a solitary land; and he shall let the goat go into the wilderness”

Would Jesus be like this goat spoken of in Leviticus? Would he take all the iniquities of the people upon his head, carrying them into a solitary land?

Or would this Lamb of God be like the lamb of Isaiah 53, for there we read, “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that led to slaughter and like a sheep that before his shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole and with his stripes we are healed.”

“Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”

Jesus would be like both. And like a Passover lamb as well, the lamb slaughtered so that his blood painted around the door would cause the angel of death to pass over that house.

“Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”

You have heard it so often, how Jesus, the Lamb of God took our sins upon his head. He who was without sin, suffered and died for our guilt. The death we deserve he suffered; the life that was his now is yours and mine through Jesus faithfulness.

Yes, each week you bring all your guilt, all your shame, all your failing here. All that burden is lifted from you, and laid upon him. You are forgiven, renewed, through the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, who takes away the sin of the world.

But this week as I think of what that means I am remembering the bits of enamel on the metal bar of the school bus seat. I think of the brokenness I can still feel as I run my tongue over my front teeth.

The sins of those moments are all forgotten. But some of the results of the sins still remain. A murderer goes to jail, serves his sentence, pays for his misdeed. But the victim's family suffers the consequences of his misdeed as long as they live.

Jesus takes away my guilt, but the marks and scars of my sins are still left upon my neighbors, and upon me.

“Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”

Maybe we have been seeking too little from Jesus.

“I am no saint,” I say as an excuse for my latest sin.

“I am only human,” I remind you as my word or my deed has hurt you once more.

What do we expect from Jesus? That we can run through life marking everything with our sin, and he will chase after us with an eraser – forgiving?

Or is Jesus calling us away from sin? Does the Lamb of God intend not only to take away your guilt but also to make you a saint?

Hear what Paul writes to the Corinthians: “To the church of God which is at Corinth; to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Martin Luther taught this prayer to be prayed each morning: “We give thanks to you, heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ your dear son, that you have protected us through the night from all danger and harm. We ask you to preserve and keep us this day also, from all sin and evil, that in all our thoughts and words and deeds we may serve and please you. Into your hands we commend our bodies and souls and all that is ours. Let your holy angels have charge of us that the wicked one have no power over us.”

Not only does Jesus intend to take away the sins that have happened but through Jesus we ask God to keep those sins from happening. This, too, is part of Jesus taking away the sin of the world.

And there is one more part. We call it the Kingdom of God, eternal life. In that time and in that place teeth will no longer be chipped. The dead will be raised and God promises, “Behold

I make all things new.” Then, sin shall be truly taken away, not simply my sin, but the sin of the entire world taken away by the Lamb of God.

There at the Jordan, John told everyone for it was good news to announce the Lamb of God. Today, every day, God invites you to share that same good news. Point to Jesus and tell everyone, “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”