

<sup>29</sup>The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" <sup>30</sup>This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me.' <sup>31</sup>I myself did not know him; but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel." <sup>32</sup>And John testified, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him." <sup>33</sup>I 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.' <sup>34</sup>And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God." <sup>35</sup>The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, <sup>36</sup>and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!"

<sup>37</sup>The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. <sup>38</sup>When 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?" <sup>39</sup>He 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. <sup>40</sup>One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. <sup>41</sup>He first found his brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated Anointed). <sup>42</sup>He 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).

We have never talked about Jesus before. We have talked about the family, and the weather and how things were when she was a girl, but we have never talked about Jesus before. She has heard me preach a sermon once, she was there when I was ordained, she loaned me a book about prayer that she thought was important, but we have never talked about Jesus before.

She is my grandmother. My Aunt Leola told me that Grandma wrote that she wants to help those in need so that she is ready when she comes before her maker. She has been writing thirty to ninety checks a month. I want to see her tomorrow to talk with her about Jesus.

I don't know how I will do it. How can I talk with her about Jesus and not sound accusing, or critical, as if I know something she does not? How can I talk about Jesus with this woman who told my own mother of him? She has been the pipeline through which Jesus came to me; who am I to speak of him to her? But I must because I don't think it is Jesus who is

filling her with anxiety, even fear. For Jesus has taken away all her sins, Jesus has won for her eternal life, Jesus gives her the gift of himself. There is no payment she can make for what Jesus gives freely, no paying back, no deserving - just a word of thanks. I want to tell her.

I want to be like John who saw Jesus coming and declared, "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." I want to be like John who led two of his disciples to Jesus. Or like Andrew who then came to Jesus, remained with him and told his brother Simon, "We have found the Messiah." - and then brought Simon to Jesus.

But sometimes I feel like that servant in the first lesson. He confesses: "The Lord called me before I was born; while I was in my mother's womb he named me. He made my mouth like a sharp sword, in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me a polished arrow, in his quiver he hid me away."

It is like this is the shadow of God's hand, here in this place. This is the quiver of God, here. Here we are all sharp swords and polished arrows. We testify to God, we speak of Christ, together we boldly confess Jesus is our Lord, here. But we remain hidden here, hidden from the world, hidden from our friends who are not with us here, hidden even from relatives and members of our own family. God has made us like sharp swords and polished arrows but then hidden us. The sword never cuts through out there, the arrow never pierces into the hearts of those who need Jesus.

We know all the reasons why we would like to remain hidden, we don't want to appear arrogant - we don't trust those with all sorts of words about Jesus on their lips. But I want my grandmother to be certain of the love of God and not driven by the fear of losing that love. And each of you knows people that you have prayed for and carried in your hearts.

"Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." John speaks and then John is gone, only Jesus remains. "We have found the Messiah," says Andrew, and then Simon moves ahead of Andrew in importance and honor and place in the memory of the church. And now you and I are to follow them in pointing to Jesus, inviting others to come here and be and remain with him.

There is a surprise in all of this. It was not long before the disciples were witnessing to John. One moment he is leading them to Christ; in the next they are leading him. So it is here, one moment the Holy Spirit reaches into your heart through the word I preach, the next the Holy Spirit gives me faith and direction through the word you speak. We all need Christ, we

receive him when the arrows of God's word are no longer hidden but released as we tell one another of Jesus.

Let God give you the courage to speak. Speak to the people of your life. Tell them of Jesus who is love and forgiveness and life for you. Tell them of Jesus whom they need more than all else.

A final word: I hope my grandmother will keep on giving, not out of fear but in generous thanksgiving. For in Jesus there is so much to be thankful for. For what Paul wrote to the Corinthians is now our assurance: "God will strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord."