

<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).

It used to be a tradition here – preschoolers being dressed as little lambs for the Christmas program. Year after year after year Anita would fit the children into those little white outfits she has stored in a box somewhere. The littlest children taking the part of the littlest animals that might have been in the stable there.

John the Baptist saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, “Here is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.” Now Jesus was not a preschooler dressed up in a little costume but a thirty year old man. Yet John declared him a Lamb. Not a lion, or an ox or a horse or a mule – not even a sheep or a ram but Lamb of God.

The next day John was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, “Look, here is the Lamb of God.”

Did John want everyone to regard Jesus the way we think about those little preschoolers in the fluffy outfits? Kind of cute and cuddly – Is that the idea?

“Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” We often sing it right before we come to the Lord’s Table - Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world.

Is the image of the lamb brought to the temple, slaughtered to change the heart of God about our sin – sacrificed for our forgiveness? I am guessing that most of us may be thinking of Jesus in this way.

Or is this title for Jesus to remind us of the Paschal Lamb, the Passover Lamb. When they were still slaves in Egypt God’s people were told to pick a lamb for each household, to slaughter the lamb and take the blood and paint it over the door of their home. They were to roast the lamb and eat its flesh. That night the angel of death came to kill the firstborn of all the Egyptians but the angel of death passed over the houses marked by the blood of the lamb. Is Jesus to be this lamb slaughtered so that the angel of death would pass over all who feast on his flesh and blood?

John the Baptist never tells his hearers why Jesus is called the Lamb of God only that this Lamb of God takes away the sin of the world. Now what does that mean – takes away the sin of the world?

An image that I have liked to use in preaching has been to see Jesus taking all our sins upon himself and carrying them down into death in his dying and leaving all our sins there dead in death. Every time that sin sneaked up on you and got you before you even thought about it Jesus carries down into death. And every time you looked sin over and thought about God or people you loved and you chose sin over them – every sin like that Jesus took down into death – buried in that tomb forever. And sins that were just habits – habits that harmed – even those sins Jesus took down into the grave and left them dead in death. Is that what takes away the sin of the world means?

Sometimes it feels like this to me – that when I think mostly about the forgiveness Jesus brings that I make peace with my sin and the world’s sin. It is not that Jesus takes away the sin of the world but more like Jesus takes away any consequences with God for my sin and the world’s sin. Then I begin to accept as normal greed setting the agenda for the world and for me. I find a way to sleep soundly at night in a world where billions and billions and billions are spent to protect me and my way of life but where food for hungry ones and education for poor ones, and medical care for unproductive ones are way too costly for us to have to pay for. Did God send God’s Lamb into the

world just to take away the consequences of sin or to take sin out of us? Will this Lamb of God suffer and die so that power and wealth and self can continue to rule in the world or so that God would rule?

If it is just the punishment for our sin that God needs to take away then slaughtering a lamb and putting it on an altar from time to time would be good enough. But if God wants all of you - your heart and your spending and your voting and your speaking and your loving – then only the Lamb of God, God’s own Son will do. Jesus wants to take away sin in your life – to take away everything that stands between you and God, between you and your neighbors. Not just in you and in me but in all the world the Lamb of God comes to take away the sin of the world.

Those with power killed John the Baptist – killed Jesus - killed Andrew and Peter as well. Each of them became lambs of God with Jesus – dying not to increase the rule of money and sin in this world but dying with Jesus to take away sin.

Will you be a Lamb of God with Jesus?