

St. Andrew's Anglican Church, Douglas, GA

The Rev. Fr. John E. Commins+ Rector

Scripture: John 1:29-41

“The Lamb of God”

Today's Gospel lesson brings us to an area near Jericho, right by the River Jordan – the day after Jesus was baptized. During His baptism, Jesus arose from the water and the sky above Him was opened – and there, was the incredible presence of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The Father spoke and the Holy Spirit descended like a dove, above the Son, – the Holy Trinity affirming the divinity of Jesus – in the very same water that parted so that in Joshua chapter 3 - the Ark of the Covenant could cross on “dry land” the very first time; the same water from which Elijah's chariot of fire ascended into heaven; which Elisha parted with Elijah's mantle – across from Jericho just like the Red Sea. *“And when he also had struck the waters, they were divided here and there; and Elisha crossed over.”* (2 Kings 2:14) And now, John the Baptist gives further proclamation of Jesus' identity for everyone to hear – at that spot in the Jordan. This time the waters weren't parted like before –but instead the heavens were – as the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus -- and God the Father spoke. This was no ordinary place – and this as we know, is no ordinary man! This was the One who would be sacrificed – ONCE – for the sins of all.

John the Baptist announces Jesus to be the *“Lamb of God.”* We are familiar with the term *“Lamb of God”* – we sing it every Sunday - but how many of us are sure of just what that means or where it comes from? John the Baptist was famous for many things, but I believe his first job was to point away from himself and point towards Jesus – specifically as God's Lamb. Right here – he tells us not only who Jesus is – but he tells us why Jesus must die such a sacrificial death on the cross – for the sins of the whole world!

To get a better understanding of the importance of this announcement by John the Baptist, we need to go all the way back to the Book of Genesis.

- One of my very favorite chapters in the Book of Genesis is chapter 22. Abraham leads his only son – Isaac, up Mount Moriah – to the place where he was to sacrifice him? Isaac sees that they have the wood, which he is carrying on his own back and the fire for the burnt offering – but he asks his father – *“where is the lamb?”* Perfect lambs were used as a sacrifice to Almighty God. Abraham, knowing that God would somehow let his son survive, answers Isaac's question: *“God himself will provide the lamb.”*
- Then years later, as the descendants of Abraham's grandson, Jacob, also known as Israel, are suffering as slaves in Egypt, with Moses going before the Pharaoh time and time again asking him to let them go – God once again uses a sacrifice –of an innocent lamb, to save His people. Moses tells the people to slaughter the Passover lamb. Then take some hyssop, dip it into the bowl of blood and put some of the blood on the top and on both sides of the doorframe. When God sent the angel of death to the Egyptians, he will see the blood on the top and sides of the doorframe and he will pass over that doorway, so he will not kill your firstborn. (Exodus 12:21-23)

Israel's children were saved by the “Blood of the Lamb” at the first Passover – and so too are we, the children of Abraham – born or adopted – through the blood of an innocent Lamb.

When that blood was put on the door posts – Jesus Christ is revealed to the world! Jesus is not A DOOR – or one of many doors to heaven – but He is “THE DOOR.” We are all familiar with John 14:6 and it is perfectly clear to me that Jesus wasn’t dropping any clues when He said *“I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.”* He was stating the absolute truth, plain and simple. Sadly, however, there are many who are still not ready to hear this, or to believe this – and worse yet – there are some who outwardly reject this – in the name of inclusivity and political correctness. May God have mercy on them!

Holy Scripture tells us that after Isaac, Moses and the Exodus from the bondage in Egypt, the Prophet Isaiah foretold of God’s sacrificial lamb, over 600 years before Jesus was born, and how He would stand before men, be judged – and then be killed. *“He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.”* (Isaiah 53:7) It is right there in the Old Testament, yet there are people who have blinders on and cannot connect the dots.

The Apostle Peter reveals the very same thing: that Jesus, the Lamb of God, the One whom he identified as *“the Messiah, the Son of the Living God”* (Matthew 16:16) who paid the ultimate price; *“with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.”* (1 Peter 1:19) Only God could pay this perfect price – so that He could provide perfect justice – and free us from our sins – the ultimate atonement. God Himself!

The people of Israel were familiar with lambs for the sacrifices and it was an important part of their culture; and who they were. Those lambs could not take away sin, but the Lamb of God can and does take away sin. THIS Lamb would shed His blood for the whole world! The Father made it clear to John the Baptist just who Jesus is by sending the Holy Spirit to light on Him like a dove. What a beautiful picture of the Holy Trinity! How awesomely ironic – that at the time of Jesus’ crucifixion – at the very hour that He was nailed to the cross – the Passover lambs were being slaughtered and prepared for the Seder. This is not a chance occurrence, this is God’s perfect timing; God’s plan for mankind and for His Lamb. This is so much more than symbolism – this is God fulfilling His promise and His plan of Salvation for the world from the very beginning of time. The hope and freedom that God provided through the first Passover was fulfilled by the Lamb of God, the ultimate sacrifice – giving us hope and freedom that comes with His gift of eternal life.

I don’t believe in coincidence. I believe they are God incidences. It is no coincidence that God speaks plainly to us about His Lamb. We can get a much clearer picture of God’s plan for creation and the role of His Lamb – in the Book of Revelation. The Apostle John witnessed a sea of people who were robed in white and he asked one of the elders present who these people were. The elder answered: *“These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore, “they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them. Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb at the center of*

the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.” (Revelation 7:14-17)

- The Lamb of God – Jesus of Nazareth, is, was, and shall be the Redeemer of all mankind. There’s more: John writes *“Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.” (Revelation 22:1-4)*

That is the promise that comes to all those who seek, know and love Jesus Christ as Lord – *“the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world.”* The evidence is right before each one of us. This sinful world needs a Savior – and God in His mercy and love has provided one – and His name is Jesus of Nazareth – the Lamb of God. Sadly, many cannot see it and just as many refuse to. In 1977 (forty years ago) Melody Green and her late husband, Keith knows who the Lamb of God is – His Name is Jesus. She was writing this song, and was having trouble with a final verse. Keith came in and added the last verse – *“when I stand in glory...”* just 5 years before the tragic plane crash on their ranch on Texas that would take him and two of their children to do just that. (Lead the singing of *“There is a Redeemer”* - lyrics are at end of this sermon)

A Testimony, an anthem, a message to be shared – it is the Truth of the Gospel!

Some people are more likely to consider accepting Jesus in their life if they hear about Him from someone that they already know and trust. It means that the people you have the best chance of introducing Jesus to - are those who know you and trust you, could be a family member, friend, or neighbor. Sharing Jesus is best when it happens through already existing relationships. It is through friendships and close relationships that people can truly see, experience, and get to know the love of Jesus Christ. The two men in today’s Gospel – John the Baptist’s disciples - present that day at the Jordan – they followed Jesus and then went and told two of their family members. Our patron Saint - Andrew told his brother Peter – and John who wrote this Gospel, told his brother James. Strong relationships are formed through sharing love with others.

Jesus asks these disciples, *“What do you want?”* Today Jesus asks each one of us that very same question. Whether we realize it or not, each of us is looking for something. Every person on this planet is created by God to need Him, to be in relationship with Him, to be fulfilled by Him. This is what the Gospel of John is about: making God known through Jesus Christ, the Son of God. If you already know Jesus as the Son of God, you are still invited to follow Him, to follow Him down deeper paths of discipleship, obedience, and faith. We can always learn more! There is not one of us here today that can claim to know Jesus completely. We will never know Jesus completely – until that day when we stand in Glory before Him and we will see His face, there we will see our King forever – in that Holy place. Our relationship with Jesus should

never reach a point when we can say, “Well, that’s about as far as I can go with this Christianity stuff!” If you know Jesus - but want to know Him more, this invitation is STILL for you!

If you’re wondering who Jesus really is, or maybe you are not sure, don’t worry about it friends if there are moments in your life when you doubt, and you question. My answer to that is pray! Pick up the Bible, read God’s Holy Word – He will strengthen you, gird you and guide you, He will bless you and He will teach you! If you are longing to know more about Jesus and even if you’ve never made the decision to follow Him, I hope and pray that you will consider making that decision today. Jesus invites you to follow Him and to get to know Him. Please open your new Bibles to Revelation 3:20 – on page 1917. These are words that speak to each one of us: Jesus says “*Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.*” Jesus, the Lamb of God, makes His invitation – and all we have to do is to accept – opening our hearts to Him. It all starts with an initial response to what He says to those first two disciples: “*Come and you will see.*”

There is a Redeemer

Written by: Melody Green, Keith Green

There is a Redeemer
Jesus God's own Son
Precious Lamb of God, Messiah,
Holy One

Jesus my Redeemer
Name above all names
Precious Lamb of God, Messiah
Oh for sinners slain

Thank you Oh my Father
For giving us Your Son
and leaving your spirit till
The work on earth is done

When I stand in glory
I will see His face
There I'll serve my King forever
In that Holy place

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