

*John 1:29-41. ²⁹ The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" ³⁰ This is the one I meant when I said, 'A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.' ³¹ I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel." ³² Then John gave this testimony: "I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. ³³ I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' ³⁴ I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God." ³⁵ The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. ³⁶ When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!" ³⁷ When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. ³⁸ Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "**What do you want?**" They said, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?" ³⁹ "**Come,**" he replied, "**and you will see.**" So they went and saw where he was staying, and spent that day with him. It was about the tenth hour. ⁴⁰ Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. ⁴¹ The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). ⁴² And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "**You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas**" (which, when translated, is Peter).*

Behold the Lamb of God.

- 1. Christ has been made known to us.***
- 2. We gladly make Christ known to others.***

Last week we talked about the first words of Jesus recorded in the book of Matthew. We talked about these first red-letter words of Jesus (in some Bibles Jesus' words are designated with red-letters). We made note that these words were packed full of significance. Remember the context of those words from our Gospel lesson last week. Jesus had come down from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. John at first tried to deter Jesus, but then Jesus replied. "**Let it be so now, it is proper to for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.**" It was a meaningful reply, words that just *sounded* like they were dripping with meaning and significance. It seemed fitting that these were the first red-letter words in the New Testament. Jesus came in fulfillment of the Old Testament Scriptures. He came to do the Father's work. He came to be our substitute, to be our Righteousness. He came to fulfill all righteousness in keeping all of God's commands and being our Savior from sin. It seemed fitting that these word the first words of Jesus recorded in the book of Matthew.

However, those of us familiar with the life and times of Jesus we know that these were not chronologically the first words of Jesus recorded in Scripture. No, those words are found in the book of Luke. When Mary and Joseph searched frantically for their son and finally found him in the temple remember what the 12 year old Jesus said. Remember those first red-letter words in the book of Luke, when Jesus, looked at his parents and said, ⁴⁹ "**Why were you searching for me?**" "**Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?**" (Luke 2:49 NIV) or

“I must be about my Father’s business?” (Luke 2:49 KJV) Again these are words that obviously drip with meaning. Jesus is going about his father’s work. Jesus was in the temple, listening to the Word of God, as a boy he was teaching the teachers. He was doing what he came to do, teaching others about the message of salvation. He was fulfilling the Holy Scriptures that testified about him. These are words that jump off the page as being meaningful. And so it is with the first words of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark, ¹⁵ ***“The time has come,” “The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!” (Mark 1:15)***

But what about the words before us today; what about these first words from the book of John? These words don’t seem to have the same ring to them. In fact, these first red-letter words in the book of John, especially if read a certain tone, they sound, well, kind of rude.

In the Gospel for today, John the Baptist sends some of his disciples to follow Jesus and Jesus turns around, and the Savior of the world, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, he says to them, ***“What do you want?”*** These are words that don’t seem to be dripping with meaning and significance. These words don’t really jump off the page as words that are obviously dripping with meaning and urgency. Instead they seem to fall off our Savior’s lips and land with an awkward thud.

However, this probably isn’t the best translation of this Greek sentence. Another Bible translation does better when it translates these first words of Jesus in the book of John with the phrase, ***“What are you seeking?”*** (ESV John 1:39). Aha! This sounds a bit more like it. This translation certainly helps us understand the tone in which Jesus said these words.

A look at the immediate context also helps us to see that these words have grand significance. Jesus says to them, *“What are you seeking? What do you want?”* These two men weren’t quite sure how to answer so they came up with this reply, ***“Rabbi,” “where are you staying?”*** And Jesus’ answer to this question was another phrase packed with more meaning than these men could fathom as they stood in the moment. Jesus said to them, ***“Come, and you will see.”*** These men would have their eyes opened. They would soon understand what John had been trying to tell them. Jesus was the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. In Jesus they would see God’s salvation.

This title Lamb of God was not a familiar title like the term Christ or Messiah. This was not a title plucked from the pages of Old Testament Scripture, but rather this was a name that John rightly coined to help explain how important, how vital this Jesus was to God’s plan of salvation. One writer put it this way. *John the Baptist rightly summarizes the totality of God’s plan of salvation by pointing to Jesus and calling him the Lamb of God. Christ is the fulfillment of all the sacrificial victims of the Old Testament, from Yom Kippur’s (The Day of Atonement’s) goat to the Passover Lamb and every sin and guilt offering in between. They are all fulfilled in the Son of God made flesh that he might stand in our place, that he might take the burden of sins off the world and onto his shoulders, and that he might die in our stead.*

These men that John sent to follow Jesus didn’t really know what they were seeking, they didn’t really understand who Jesus was, but Jesus would show them. Their eyes would be opened in faith as they would be in the presence of the Almighty God who took on flesh to lay down his life for those he loved. They would see the fulfillment of all of the Scriptures, the Old Testament prophecies, and the festivals, and the sacrifice. Jesus was the fulfillment of an entire worship system and really an entire way of life for God’s people and these men would see Jesus, they would see the Lamb of God willingly led to slaughter for the sins of the whole world. Jesus wasn’t kidding when he said to them. ***Come and you will see.***

In hindsight these are not words that can be dismissed as mere conversation, but these are words that would be so wonderfully significant for these two men who would follow Jesus. Their eyes would be opened. They would truly see. They would watch our substitute live a life of complete perfection. They would see his compassion and mercy. They would see first-hand and up close the wonders of God in his miracles, but most importantly they would witness the very source of salvation for us undeserving sinners. They would see our scapegoat take our sins away from us as he carried them to the cross. His blood would be shed in our place. His innocence would be given to us. Our sins, our guilt, would be gone, paid for, taken away.

Behold the Lamb of God speaks to you. He says turns to you and he says in these words, *“What about you? What do you want? What are you seeking?”* I think that is an important question for us to ask ourselves as Christians. I think it is an appropriate question to ask ourselves at this time of year especially. At this time of annual meetings and annual reports it is important to think about what you want out of your church. It is important to think about what we want to present before those who come and visit us in worship. It is important to think about how we present ourselves to those we are trying to reach? And finally, it really all comes down to a simple question. What are we seeking? What is our purpose? What are we seeking when we come here? Why do we come together regularly and meet in this building for worship, and for bible study? Why do we send our children early to Sunday school? Why do we carve out time for voters’ assemblies, and council meetings? Why do we come here? What are we seeking? The answer is, the answer has to be: Christ Jesus - for he is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the whole world.

We are sinners broken by sin and we therefore have this need that only Christ can meet. We are sinners and therefore we have this need that leaves us restless and searching. We sinners have this need forgiveness and peace and we find this in Christ. We are broken and we need to be made whole. We need to be restored and this is done through Christ. We find all that we need in our substitute who became our righteousness, who offered himself as an offering for all sin. He has brought healing that makes us whole and peace that makes us right with God.

As human beings we naturally seek community, involvement, a place, and a purpose, direction, and strength, and this too we find in Christ. He brings us into his family and he unites us into one body. He gives us the gifts that we can use to serve him and each other. He gives us purpose and passion. In him we find strength. In this family of believers we are able to encourage and rebuke one another. We are able to keep each other in check and lift each other up. We do this because we are in Christ Jesus, we are blessed with the presence of our Savior. Behold the Lamb of God who takes away our sin and helps us find what we are searching for!

So let this forever be our simple goal and our blessed purpose: **to know Christ and to make Christ known**. In everything we do we want to make Christ Jesus known. In worship we are directed time and again to the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Week after week, year after year, our eyes are focused on his sacrifice that fulfilled God’s plan. In God’s word we are taken from the Garden of Eden in Genesis to the new heavens and the new earth in Revelation and God’s Word points us over and over again to this promise made and fulfilled in Christ. We are pointed again and again to the Lamb of God, the Savior who would take away our sins and give us his righteousness. This is it! This is the simple truth that John tried to instill on his disciples. And that’s why he gladly and persistently proclaimed, **“Look,**

the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” Jesus is our Savior from sin. He is mine. He is yours. He is the Savior for you and your brother and your sister, your neighbor and your friend. He is the one who takes away our sins. This is the powerful message that we get to behold week after week. This is the wonderful message that we have the privilege to share.

So what do we want? What are we seeking? It is Jesus. It is the good news that he is our Savior from sin. Our eyes have been open. This good news has been made plain to us. This joy is ours to know and it ours to share. That’s why we hold services. That’s we maintain this church. This is why we are starting a preschool. That’s why we support the work of the synod. We do all of this so we can be directed to Christ and we can make Christ known to our families, our community, and throughout the world. Our simple mission is to know Christ and make Christ known.

In many different ways and for many different reasons we can get diverted from this goal in our mission as Christians and as a Christian congregation. In our flawed and sinful reasoning we might think that it is too simple. It’s not enough. We have to more important, more accepted in the eyes of the world. We need to branch out more. We should become more relevant, more influential; we should take on bigger issues and be more socially minded. After all we need to make a difference. Well, what bigger difference can we make than to direct a precious soul to the Lamb of God who takes away our sin? We will certainly want to help those in need and do things to help our community. But let us not forget our chief purpose as a congregation: to know Christ and to make Christ known. And so we compelled by the love of God in Christ Jesus we will have one on one, and face to face conversations with those around us about Jesus. Again what bigger difference can we make, what greater service can we provide, than to direct a precious soul to the Lamb of God who takes away our sin?!

Both John and Andrew served as excellent examples in our text for today. It was revealed to John that Jesus was the Savior; that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God who had come to save us and so John testified to this truth. He knew Christ and then pointed his disciples and everyone else to the Lamb of God. John pointed Andrew to the Lamb of God and Andrew’s life was forever changed. Christ Jesus was made known to Andrew and then Andrew was able to follow Jesus and spend some time with him. Christ was made know to Andrew and then what was the first thing that Andrew did? ⁴¹ ***The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, “We have found the Messiah” (that is, the Christ).***

Christ has been made known to you. By God’s undeserved love you have come to know Christ. The Spirit has come into your heart through Word and sacrament and now this is our blessed purpose as believers, to know Christ and to make Christ Jesus known. This is our high calling, our joy our delight. We get to spend time with Jesus. We get to hear and learn from his blessed Word. We get to gather at this place where he dwells and we are able to bring our family and friends along to meet him too. With grateful hearts we share this message. With grateful hearts we will see this as our primary goal as Christians and as a Christian congregation: to know Christ and to make Christ known. He is the one we all need. He is the one who is worth searching for and following. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the whole world. Amen.