

John 1:29-42 Second Sunday After Epiphany

Today our Gospel reading is chalk full of themes of sacrifice, Christ's identity, and discipleship. A nicer Pastor would pick one of those to preach on, but sadly for you, you get the whole thing.

Verse 29: The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." And he will repeat this title the next day as well.

We see the sacrificial themes here, don't we? The Old Testament sacrificial system was culminating in this One perfect Final offering for all time, for all the world. But I don't think we register the visceral reaction this term should bring about in us.

My little sheep flock up on the hill grew this year. We had two little lambs. One white, one black. So adorable. The kids loved them, and petted them, and followed them around - to the great concern of their mother, by the way. So sweet and innocent.

What would the reaction be then, if I picked one up in my arms, and slit its throat?

What would my children or wife think of me?

A monster! Then to take that blood and throw it on them! Or this altar!

Is God a depraved monster to command such things?

Look around at the world we are in. Are we spotless innocent little lambs in it? What crimes, how many tears of bitterness, or rage, or pain, do we cause? In our lives and relationships, in the news, are we the little lambs?

No, we are the monsters here. Not God. And the savvy atheist or agnostic would say, "Well if he's good and omnipotent he could do something about it!"

And he could. He could wipe it all away –and he could do it now, and he just might start with you.

Instead, we hear Good news from John today. Good news that God has done something about us monsters running around this world, hurting children and each other. He sends a Lamb and it will be innocent, not wanting to harm anyone, it will be silently led to slaughter, it will be tortured and cry out, suffering, and it will die.

And it's blood will be upon us and our altars.

It is a horrifying thing to see, visceral, a monstrosity has taken place. But that's the point. The world is so evil, we are so evil, we need something so pure and so innocent to pay the price, that we might have forgiveness and life. Money, gold, power, won't pay this bill, the blood of a billion sinners can't pay it. God is Holy and Just he won't let this debt go unpaid and sin unpunished and left to hurt his people. So as you see injustice in the world, make no mistake, the unrepentant will pay, they will give an account of their crimes. But what of our crimes?

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

In this title we see that God is not a monster: he is just and he is merciful.

Verse 30: John continues, “After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.”

John comes preaching, and after him, another will come preaching, Jesus. And this one, even though he comes after him, will be greater in rank, this One need not bow to His elders to John, or to David, or Moses or Abraham or any before, why? Because “even though he is after me, he was before me.” Long before John ever preached, or was born, long before Abraham was: I AM.

Jesus, true God and King of kings reigned. And now he is here, the Word made flesh has come to dwell among sinners to save them. And even now (2026) he, Risen and exercising his full divinity, is with us. We are right to give homage to the Risen Lamb, the Word who was in the beginning, taken on flesh and now risen is with us to save us.

31: John continues: “I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing...”

This may raise an eyebrow for us. “John didn’t know Jesus? Weren’t they related?” Mary, Jesus’ mother meets Elizabeth, John’s mother and stays for three months. And John didn’t know Jesus? Either that family had a falling out so that they never got together on the yearly trips to the Passover... OR... or to *know* Jesus, really *know* him, is to know him beyond just a cousin... it’s to know him beyond a historical figure that lived and died and stayed dead. It’s to know him beyond “a good teacher like Buddha.” It’s to know him as the Lamb, as the Messiah, as God comes to save.

Something John says was ultimately revealed to him during Christ’s baptism, when the Spirit descended and the voice from heaven spoke. “Now I know who He is,” John says.

May we know this Jesus as more than a self-help guide, as more than one of many other figureheads of a worldview or a political outlook... may we see in this Lamb, this Messiah, God and Lord and real, living Savior. That is to know him.

The rest of our text bears this out.

Two of John’s disciples see him point to Jesus. And so what do they do? They go follow the guy he pointed at. Is John jealous? Does he throw a fit? Or is this right that he should point people to Christ? It is right. It is why he came.

And these two former disciples of John the baptizer: Andrew, and maybe John – who humbly doesn't name himself in his Gospel because it isn't about him, it's about Jesus - these two go to Jesus and he asks *what they are seeking*... a deep question no?

They respond somewhat awkwardly to our ears: "Rabbi where are you staying?" But there is more to this question: "Rabbi" means they will now follow and learn from him, not John. And "where are you staying?" is not just an awkward response to "what are you seeking?" It is the answer, "We are seeking the Lamb of God, the Messiah. And where he stays, we will too." It's as if they are asking, "Where do we need to move our sleeping rolls to?"

Because if this is the Messiah it will change their life.

And already by the next day they know there is something more to this Jesus. Because they start by calling him Rabbi, but when they go to Peter, Andrew doesn't say, "hey Peter, we've found a new *Rabbi*," he says "we have found the *Messiah*."

Since this is a sermon I suppose I should make a cheesy preacher move: Jesus asks two disciples, "what are you seeking?" Could he ask the same of us? What are you seeking? Meaning, fulfillment, healing, family? Hear today from John and two of his former disciples. In Jesus there is Forgiveness, for Jesus is the Lamb whose blood, visceral and monstrously grotesque and brutal, was poured out to pay your price. In Jesus there is wisdom, for he is a Rabbi. In Jesus there is meaning and fulfillment, for he is the Messiah, the One who was and is, and is the fulfillment of God's promises. In Jesus there is courage, healing, hope, justice, mercy, and victory even in a monstrous world of death and brokenness and sin, for He is the Lamb who was slain but is Risen and, for you, has shed his blood on the Cross that you might share in His inheritance of light, and life.

Rejoice, maybe even pull up a bedroll like two disciples, and stay near this One, Jesus. Be careful, he might change you with his word and promises, but it's a good place to be, near him, yes, on a Sunday morning where his gifts and blood are offered, but even more throughout our lives: in time of trial or sin or even in death, there's no one better to be near. And don't worry, even should we think we aren't following well, or have wandered, rest a little, for if we were to ask, "Rabbi, where are you staying?" He has promised: near you, with all of his gifts. "Lo I am with you always to the end of the age."

Amen.