

“The Next Day!”

Dear Friends in Christ,

When preparing a sermon, one of the first things I do is review the appointed Scripture lessons for the day, seeking the Holy Spirit’s guidance and inspiration, while lifting up the preacher’s prayer from Psalm 19: *“Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.”* (Psalm 19:14)

Well, two things quickly caught my attention after reading today’s Gospel Lesson from John 1:29-42. Though I have preached on this Biblical text several times over the years of ministry, it was the redundancy and similarity of three verses that caught anew my attention and focused my thoughts for today. Take a fresh look at verse 29 and then verses 35-36 and note the similarities:

The next day *he [John the Baptizer] saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”* (John 1:29)

The next day *again John was standing with two of his disciples, and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God!”* (John 1:35-36)

Only twice, on two consecutive days, does Scripture record anywhere except here in John’s Gospel the introduction of Jesus as *“the Lamb of God.”* Why, in this moment, as Jesus begins His public ministry, is there so focused, so precise a title given to Jesus: *“The Lamb of God?”* The Bible, in fact, contains a collage and mosaic of names for *“Jesus,”* as *“Son of God, Messiah and Christ.”* The Babe born in Bethlehem’s manger has

been revealed in the prophetic Word as *“Wonderful Counselor, Almighty God, Everlasting Father”* and *“Prince of Peace!”* (Isaiah 9:6) He is the *“Servant”* who comes, as Isaiah prophesies in today’s Old Testament lesson, to *“bring salvation to the ends of the earth!”* (Isaiah 49:6) He is called *“Rabbi”* and *“Teacher”* by those who followed Him, **but only here...only here** is Jesus ever specifically called *“the Lamb of God!”* It me think that perhaps we should all sit up, quit daydreaming, nodding off and take notice, asking *“What does Jesus, the Lamb of God, mean for my life...today and **the next day...and the next day?**”*

The first response which calls for attention is clear: *“Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”* It was John the Baptizer’s single, solitary goal to prepare the way for the Messiah, Jesus the Christ, the Son of God! It’s the message signaled every Advent that leads us to Christmas: *“Prepare ye the way of the Lord!”* It was intended to spark readiness and repentance in the hearts of the children of Israel who had been waiting and longing for fulfillment of God’s promise of redemption and salvation! And now, John declares **not one time, but two times, and the only times** in Scripture: *“Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”*

This picture and image of Jesus and this unique name, *“Lamb of God”* is so personal and powerful, my friends, because it calls attention to the Savior’s ultimate sacrifice, giving His life on Calvary’s cross *“for the sin of the world”* – for your sin and mine! It’s a prelude to the declaration of Jesus: *“I am the Good Shepherd and I lay down my life for the sheep.”* (John 10:14-15) It was a promise fulfilled not only to sinners back then, but also to folks like us, invited by Jesus *“the Lamb of God”* to *“come and see”* and follow Him in faith... *today...and **the next day...and the next day...and all the days of our lives!***

The hymn writer, Gerald Coleman, who served as Assistant Pastor at the Lutheran Church of St. Andrew in Silver Spring, Maryland when Lana and I were members there, used to sit at the grand piano in worship and bring us all to tears as he played and sang the song he wrote:

*The Lamb, the lamb...
He sighs, He dies, He takes my sin and wretchedness.
He lives, forgives, He gives me His own righteousness.
Worthy is the Lamb whose death makes me His own!
The Lamb is reigning on His throne!**

(Lutheran Service Book, Hymn 547, v.4)

It is, as one pastor writes: *The Old Testament asks the question, where is the Lamb? The New Testament answers the question by saying, "Behold the Lamb is Christ." One day Christians, and all who believe in Him, will cry out, "Worthy is the Lamb!"** So, let's make sure *this day...and the next day...and the next day...and on the final day* that we "*Behold the Lamb of God,*" thankful that our sins are forgiven and taken away, saved by grace through faith, confessing and following Jesus the Christ as Lord and Savior!

Indeed, that's what happened when Scripture records the second time: "*The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!"* It was a life-changing encounter as the next verse reveals: "*The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus.*" They responded to the Rabbi's invitation: "*Come and you will see.*" *They stayed with him that day and one of them, Andrew...went and found his brother Simon Peter and brought him to Jesus, saying, we have found the Messiah*" (which means Christ). (John 1:35-42a) Oh, what a **next day** it turned out to be and Jesus wasn't finished yet, as verse 43 of John's Gospel reads: "**The next day Jesus**

decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." (John 1:43)

It was the connection of two phrases "***the next day...and follow me***" which sparked my mind and heart, leading to greater awareness that we just can't "*Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*" without "**the next day's**" of our lives being changed, different, influenced and purposeful, called by the Holy Spirit to "***follow Jesus!***"

Now to be sure, Andrew and Peter and Phillip had no idea how radically changed their lives would be when called to a life of discipleship, witness and service. ***The next days*** of their lives, indeed *the next three years* would be marked by dusty roads, racked up crowds, zealous critics and religious leaders who would do everything in their power to discredit and get rid of Jesus, the Christ! On a lot of days, the twelve disciples, would struggle to follow and understand, bickering about who was the biggest and baddest and greatest dude in the bunch! One would betray Jesus, Peter would deny the Lord and Scripture tells us that after Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane: "*Then all the disciples deserted him and fled!*" (Matthew 26:56)

No, **the next days** of being a follower of Jesus are not without setback and challenge and sin which is why the journey led the Son of God to Calvary's Cross where the "*Lamb of God would give His life to take away the sin of the world!*" But three days later, as the precious hymn affirms:

*He rose, He rose, my heart with thanks now overflows.
His song prolong till every heart to him belong.
Worthy is the Lamb whose death makes me His own!
The Lamb is reigning on His throne!*

(Lutheran Service Book, Hymn 547, v.5)

At the very beginning of this sermon, I said perhaps we should sit up, quit daydreaming, nodding off and take notice, that only twice, on two consecutive days, does Scripture record anywhere except here the introduction of Jesus as “*the Lamb of God.*” Don’t leave this church today without asking personally, “*What does Jesus, the Lamb of God, mean for my life...today and the next day...and the next day?*” How will your followership of Jesus be evident; your words and deeds a joyful response of faith; forgiveness and kindness, love and joy, patience and peace a hallmark in your relationships; inviting neighbors, family, classmates, coworkers and friends to “*come and see*” the “*Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.*” Come and see Jesus in me!

I can’t speak for you, but for me to have assurance that God loves me, forgives my sin and even allows me to serve and follow Him, is a big deal! I am so unworthy, yet forgiven and free, called and empowered by baptism into Christ to live a new life in His name! So, as the poet writes:

*If you from sin are longing to be free,
Look to the Lamb of God;
He, to redeem you, died on Calvary,
Look to the Lamb of God.**

*And follow Him today...
and the next day and the next day
to that final day
when the Lamb is reigning on His throne!*

AMEN

Rev. Preston E. Wagner, Pastor Emeritus
Hope Lutheran Church, Wake Forest, NC

*www.sermoncentral.com/sermons/lamb-of-god-jimmy-haile-sermon-on-jesus-christ-156338

*<https://odb.org/1997/04/22/saved-by-the-lamb/>

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