

If you were in danger, and you could pick one animal to rescue you, what kind of animal would you choose? That would probably depend on what kind of trouble you were in, right? If you were being attacked, maybe you'd choose a lion, because it's stronger and scarier than anything you might face. If you were drowning, maybe you'd choose a dolphin to swiftly swim you to safety. If you fell into a well, maybe you'd choose a loyal dog, who could go find help, Lassie style.

Plenty of good options in the animal kingdom, right? But it's hard to envision a scenario where you'd say, "I'm in serious danger! I better call for a lamb!" Little woolly lambs aren't powerful, or intimidating. They make people go, "Awww!" They're not wise, loyal, or brave. They're more prone to wander into trouble themselves. There are seemingly so many better options that a lamb to rescue you from danger!

And yet, as John the Baptist watched Jesus walking towards him, he didn't exclaim, "Look, the Lion, or dolphin of God. He proclaimed, ***"Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"*** When it comes to our most deadly danger, the spiritual problem of sin, we put our trust in...a lamb. Obviously, not a baby sheep. But Jesus, the Lamb of God. Brothers and sisters, we are **Disciples of the Lamb**. And as such, we have two tasks:

1.) Trust in the Lamb and 2.) Share the Lamb

Everything finally clicked for John the Baptist. When God had sent John with his mission to baptize, and prepare people for the coming of the Savior, John tells us, ***"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.'***" Last week, we heard how John baptized Jesus in the Jordan River. And as the last drops of water fell from Jesus' head, the heavens tore open, and the Holy Spirit descended and rested on Jesus in the form of a dove, and the voice of God roared from Heaven, ***"This is my Son, whom I love."*** And just like that, God's promise to Adam and Eve, Abraham, Moses, and David—that he would send a Savior—eagerly anticipated for millennia, suddenly appeared. ***"I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God."***

John the Baptist knew who Jesus was, and why he'd come—to be the Lamb of God! But why a "lamb"? To truly understand that title, we need to understand the purpose lambs served for Israel.

From the beginning, when Adam and Eve disobeyed God and ushered sin into a perfect world, the reality was clear. Because of sin, death was and would always be a part of the broken world. Because of sin, Adam and Eve, their children, and everything in the world would die. And so God, in his infinite wisdom, knew that the solution to death-inducing sin, could only be accomplished through death. And he wanted his people to remember that.

Lambs were a vital part of Israel's worship life. God instructed his people that whenever they wanted to approach him for forgiveness, they needed to offer a sacrifice, a reminder that sin always leads to death. As the author of Hebrews says, ***"Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness."*** As people brought those innocent animals—certainly, they'd done nothing to deserve death—what a striking reminder God gave them. As they stood there, watching the sacrifice made on their behalf burning up on God's altar, God was reminding them, "Blood and death is required as payment for sin. But not your blood and death." Instead, God puts it on another. On a sacrifice. An innocent substitute.

It was that realization that John proclaimed when he said, ***"Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"*** Jesus was God's lamb, the perfect sacrifice sent to take away the sins of the world, once and for all.

For 1,500 years, the Israelites had brought lambs, goats, and birds to be sacrificed, knowing they'd just have to bring another sacrifice, because they'd sin again. But now John explains, "This isn't like every other sacrifice. This is THE lamb." Every other lamb foreshadowed this Lamb. Every other sacrifice was to point ahead to this sacrifice. In that title John gives Jesus, "The Lamb of God," we understand Jesus' purpose. **"He has appeared once for all...to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself."** The final, complete solution for sin had finally come. A sacrifice to rescue us for eternity.

Part of the sacrifice's ritual included the sinner laying his hands on that animal, to signify the transfer of his sins onto his sacrifice. It's as if the whole world laid their filthy, sin-stained hands on the pure, perfect Jesus, transferring their sin onto his shoulders, so that he could carry it all to the cross and pay the price to **"take away the sin of the world."**

Can you even fathom that? The sin of the world. Every sin of every person that's ever lived. Everything from the Holocaust to running in the hallway. Serial killers to serial liars. That includes those secret sins only you know about because you're too ashamed to tell; your sins that keep you awake at night; your sins you just can't forgive yourself for. Every one of our sins, and the sins of the whole world collected into one giant ball, and hefted onto the shoulders of Jesus, so that he might remove them **"as far as east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us."**

That's why we're disciples of the Lamb, brothers and sisters. That's why we trust in the Lamb for rescue. Because only through his sacrifice are we saved from the eternal danger of sin and death!

That's the most amazing, important news anyone can hear. John understood that that unfathomable good news applied to him and the whole world. So John throws himself into the task of sharing the good news of the Lamb with others!

The following day after he first pointed out the "Lamb of God," John stood with a couple of his young disciples. One's name was Andrew, a fisherman from Galilee; the other is unnamed, but many think he might be John, the writer of this gospel. And as John the Baptist sees Jesus walking past, he nudges his two young followers, and says, "Look, the lamb of God." As if to say, "It's time to leave me. You need to be Jesus' disciples now."

And they do follow Jesus. You can almost picture them staying a safe distance behind Jesus, subtly coughing into their fists to get his attention until Jesus turns and asks them, "What are you seeking?"

They replied, **"Rabbi, where are you staying?"** They weren't all really interested whether Jesus was staying in a Motel 8, or what he had in the fridge. They wanted personal time with their new teacher Jesus. So he could teach them that he was the Lamb of God. An opportunity to sit at Jesus' feet, and learn from him as he pointed to himself in all the Old Testament practices and promises. And after hearing from the Lamb himself that John had been right, **"The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, 'We have found the Messiah.'"**

As a disciple of the Lamb, so moved by the good news of the Lamb, Andrew couldn't help but share the Lamb with others. The first thing he did was sprint off to tell his brother, Simon Peter. And as disciples of the Lamb, that's the privilege we have also!

When you see a great movie, or eat at a delicious restaurant, don't you want to tell people about it, so they can enjoy it too? Shouldn't we be even more excited to tell everyone we know that Jesus is the Lamb of God who has taken away their sin, and gives them eternal life?

Literally, this is the only conversation you can have that applies to every person in the world. Some people don't like the Packers. Some people don't like kids. Some people think pizza is disgusting. Some people prefer books over movies. But EVERYONE in the world has had their sins forgiven by Jesus, And EVERYONE needs to know it.

And so this morning, I want you to leave with two practical tips for sharing the Lamb of God with others. First, get energized. Notice, it was only after he spent time being taught by Jesus that Andrew sprinted off to tell others that they'd found the Messiah. Sometimes, the beauty of the gospel becomes mundane, routine, unexciting, or distracted, and our zeal to share it decreases. We need to be re-energized by the gospel! You can do that by attending a Bible class or a Life Group; through regularly attending worship; through personal devotions at home, or with your family. Keep the truth that Jesus is your Savior fresh in your mind and heart. Let the gospel energize you to excitedly share with others the best thing that's ever happened to you, and them!

Second, know your audience. Maybe you'd prefer death over knocking on a stranger's door to invite them to church. Maybe you've never struck up a spiritual conversation in line at the grocery store. That's OK. Look at Andrew. He didn't run out and find the first stranger he could. He started at home. He shared the Lamb with his brother, Simon Peter. In the same way, sharing Jesus starts with people you already know! Whether it's bringing your child to Sunday School, or inviting your friend to come to Fall Festival or Family Fest, or inviting your co-worker with questions about God to take the Foundation of our Faith class, start sharing the Lamb with people you have a relationship with!

In a recent poll, over 55% of unchurched people said they would go if invited to church by a family member or friend. First, pray for courage, then visualize your family, friends, school, or work, and consider, "Who could I invite to church next weekend?" Chances are good they'll take you up on the offer. As disciples of the Lamb, we share the Lamb with others!

"Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" May that beautiful message of Gospel comfort bring you peace and joy today and every day. May that beautiful message be your motivation to bring others peace and joy in Jesus. God grant it, for the sake of the Lamb of God. Amen.