

Look, the Lamb of God!

- I. John's Mission
- II. Jesus' Mission
- III. Our Mission

²⁹The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! ³⁰This is the one I meant when I said, 'A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.' ³¹I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel." ³²Then John gave this testimony: "I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. ³³I 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.' ³⁴I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God." ³⁵The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. ³⁶When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!"

³⁷When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. ³⁸Turning 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. ⁴⁰Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. ⁴¹The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). ⁴²And he brought him to Jesus.

When I was a boy, one of the things my father liked to do was take our family on trips across the United States. Typically he'd do a bunch of research before we went. He'd figure out where we were going to stay and what he wanted us to see. And then as we traveled to the various places, he'd point out, "There's the United States Capitol", or "Look it's the Empire State Building." Or "Check out the view of the Grand Canyon." Or, "Look, it's Redwood National Park." You know, as I think back on those trips with my dad. I think my dad was more excited about pointing out all those sites to us for boys than he was seeing them with its own eyes. I mean he couldn't wait to say to the ones he loved, "Look, there it is. It's what I've been wanting to show you my whole life." You might say that was like dad's mission in life—to help us boys see something we'd never seen before.

You realize, 2000 years ago, there was a man who had a similar mission in life. He lived his whole life preparing for that moment when he could say to the ones he loved, "Look, there he is. It's what I've been wanting to show." Today we turn our attention to the words which John the Baptist spoke as he pointed his disciples to Jesus, the Son of God. John simply said, "*Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.*" If you think about it, John wanted to point Jesus out to more than just the people of his day. He wanted to point Jesus out to you and me too. Here in the pages of Holy Scripture John still says to you and me,

Look, the Lamb of God!

Today we take a little closer look at this account recorded in John chapter 1 to help us clarify three things:

- I. John's mission in life
- II. Jesus' mission in life
- III. Our mission in life

First, John's mission. If you think about it, those five words, “Look, the Lamb of God,” perfectly summarize what God sent John to do. John's job, John's mission, was to point people to Jesus. Even though John had a thriving ministry of his own, even though, as Mark tells us, *the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. (Mark 1:5)* Even though John had disciples of his own, still John's message was all about the one who would come after him. What did John himself say to his followers? *After me will come one more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit. (Mark 1 7-8)* With those words, John is not saying that his baptism is ineffective or that plain water baptism doesn't give you the Holy Spirit. No, John is looking ahead to Pentecost when the Holy Spirit would be poured out in a very dramatic way.

John's point is this. “When compared to the one who is coming after me, I'm not the main event. I'm like the warm-up act. My whole job is to prepare people for the real Messiah. He's way bigger than I am.” How did John put it here in our text? *“A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me. (John 1:30)*. That's a reference to the fact that Jesus, as the very Son of God, has been in existence from eternity. As true God, Jesus is eternal.

Now, do you think John always knew that about Jesus? Do you think that John realized that his shirttail cousin, Jesus (remember, Mary and Elizabeth were related to each other, Jesus may have been the kid that little Johnny B. played with when he was younger.) Did John know who Jesus really was? Well, maybe not. Twice in this section, John makes a statement that implies but he didn't fully realize who Jesus was—until he saw the Holy Spirit descend on Jesus in the form of a dove. Look at what John says about that event. *“I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. 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.’”* That's why John goes on to say, *“I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God.” (John 1:32-34)*

In other words, even though John undoubtedly recognized that there was something special about that kid Jesus (I mean, what kind of 12 year old spends three days in the temple playing “stump the rabbi”)? Even though John had undoubtedly heard the stories about how the angels foretold his birth and the birth of Jesus, even though John had probably memorized all the Old Testament passages about the coming Messiah, still, it was not until the Spirit ID'd Jesus, it's not until God told John, “When you see the Spirit come down on a man, that's the guy!” That's when John could finally say, “This is the Son of God!” That's what God called John to do. It was his mission in life, to be able to say, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.”

But again, if you think about it, the words, “Look, the Lamb of God,” not only define I. John's mission in life, (namely, to point people to Jesus). Those words also highlight: II. Jesus' mission in life. Now, you maybe know that back in Jesus day, there were a lot of people who didn't really grasp what Jesus' mission in life was. There were some who thought that the Messiah would come to make their lives more comfortable. They liked the idea of a guy who could supply food for thousands at the drop of a hat. Others looked to Jesus to be the one to heal their diseases, extend their physical lives, get them up and walking again. Others, like the

Pharisees, probably expected Jesus to commend them for being good, law-abiding, citizens they were. Others were clamoring for the Messiah to overthrow the Roman government and “Make Israel Great Again”.

You realize, things haven't changed much in the past two thousand years. People still have a lot of different ideas about what they want God to do for them. “Make my life better. Cure my cancer. Heal my marriage. Fix our broken government.” Now, understand, God can do and sometimes does do all those things. And therefore it's not wrong to ask God for those things. But recognize, our greatest problem in life is not that our government, or our job or our health or our marriage, is bad. Our greatest problem is that by nature, we are bad. By Nature, we cannot and will not love God more than we love ourselves. That shows itself in so many ways in our lives. I want to do what I want to do. And even when I don't want to do it, I still do it. It's like this condition I have that I can't get rid of. This stain that I can't get off my hands. And my conscience tells me that if left to myself, this sin in me will separate me from God forever. St. Paul said it well. “*Who will rescue me from this body of death?*” (Romans 7:24).

Fortunately, God has an answer for our greatest problem. And it's simply this, “*Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.*” Just for a moment, think about how much God packs into that one statement. Look, the Lamb. Anyone familiar with Old Testament Scriptures would immediately think of the image of the Passover Lamb whose blood when spread on the doorposts, rescued the people of Israel from certain death. Or you think of how the prophet Isaiah spoke about the coming Messiah with the words, *he was led like a lamb to the slaughter.* (Isaiah 53:7). Or you think of the thousands of lambs that were offered as the prescribed sacrifice for sin throughout the history of Israel. This Lamb Jesus would not be a lamb offered by men. Rather he would be the lamb offered by God, the lamb offered as God. The perfectly sinless Lamb of God.

And what would that Lamb be offered up to do? To take away the sin of the world. In the original language, the word translated there as “take away”, can have two slightly different meanings, both of which apply here. It can mean “to bear or to carry”. That word underscores the idea that Jesus took our sins on himself. Scripture says, *Surely, he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows.* (Isaiah 53:4). But that verb also brings with it the idea that he carried them away from us. They are no longer charged to our account. The psalmist said it well. *As far as the east is from the west, so far has God removed our transgressions from us.* (Psalm 103:12)

And notice, it's not just our sins that God has taken away. It's not just all the times we've broken God's commands that he's erased. No, God says that Jesus has taken away our sin, in the singular. Jesus is not only fixed what we've done wrong. He's fixed who we are. He's given us a whole new status in his eyes. We are holy and blameless before God.

In exactly who has Jesus done all this for? Did Jesus die for all WELS members? Did he pay for the sins of people who are working hard to clean up their lives? Did Jesus die for all those who open their hearts to Jesus? No, whose sins did Jesus take away? John tells us. “*Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.*” Yes, the world! That's maybe the most important word in this whole statement. Why do I say that? Because that's how you know that Jesus' complete payment for sin applies to you. Think about it. If John the Baptist said, “Look the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of all good people, could you be sure that Jesus took away your sin? No. If John the Baptist said, “Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of all Lutherans,” could you be sure that those words apply to you? I don't know. Remember what Luther said? “Even if the Bible said that Jesus died for Martin Luther, I wouldn't know if I was the Martin Luther the Bible was talking about. But because the Bible says that Jesus died for

sinner, I know he died for me.” Or the case of John the Baptist’s words, because the Bible says that the Lamb of God takes away the sin of the world, we can all know that our sins have been taken away as well.

My friends, you realize, that's really good news. It's news that every human being wants and needs to know. Deep down, in their heart of hearts, every human being wants to know where they stand with God. They want to know what God will do with their flaws, their failures. Well, now you have the perfect answer for them. It's, “Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Or to put it another way, when John the Baptist carried out his mission in life, to point people to Jesus, who then carried out his mission in life, to take away the sin of the world, he has in turn empowered you and me to carry out His. Our Mission in life, namely, to share the good news with others.

Isn't that what John the Baptist did? When John saw Jesus coming toward him he told his two disciples, “Look, the Lamb of God.” The implication there is, “Jesus is the one you should now follow.” Which is exactly what they did. They spent that whole day listening and learning from Jesus and ultimately became two of Jesus’ 12 disciples. But what those two disciples found in Jesus they could not keep to themselves. What does Scripture say? *Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, “We have found the Messiah” (that is, the Christ). (John 1:40-41)*

My friends, isn't that the way it so often still works today? When you have some really good news, you just can't wait to share with someone. Well, God has given us the most heart-warming, peace giving, soul-saving, news of all! And our mission is to share it. So the question is, “If you are Andrew, who is your Simon Peter? Who is that person you need to go and tell. Who's the person who's maybe still searching for something more in life? The one who is trying to make sense of this mixed-up world? Someone who needs to know what God has done for them? Can you invite them to come and see? Here's an idea. Five weeks from today, Mount Olive will celebrate what we're calling A Festival of Friendship. It's a day designed specifically for the purpose of inviting our friends and relatives and co-workers to come and meet our best friend and theirs, Jesus Christ. Start thinking and praying about who you will invite.

The bottom line is this: By grace alone, God has allowed us to see that Jesus has carried out his mission in you. Now it's our turn to carry out the mission he's given to us. And that's just simply share the best news of all. To say, in the words of John the Baptist, “Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” May those words bring peace to our hearts, and put an invitation on our lips, in Jesus' name. Amen.