



Sunday, June 7, 2020



Clifford Baptist Church, Amherst, Virginia
Rev. Dr. Michael R. Fitzgerald, Senior Pastor

(Transcription from the Morning Service that was Streamed Live)

Sermon: “The Lamb of the Bible”

Scripture: John 1:29-34 (King James Version)

Worshipping today were those with the last names of “A-M.” Next Sunday, June 14, the “N-Z” group will come! Deacon Tommy Hunnicutt opened with reading Psalm 71:23-24a “My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto thee: and my soul, which thou hast redeemed. My tongue also shall talk of thy righteousness all the day long.” Pastor Tom Doss led us in singing “Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee” and “Father, We Love You.” Pastor Jeffrey Campbell blessed the offering. The next song was “There’s Something About That Name.” Susan Mawyer sang a lovely solo “I Know Who Holds Tomorrow” accompanied by Pastor Mike on guitar. Pastor Clyde Mawyer delivered the Morning Prayer. Pastor Mike warmly welcomed those in the sanctuary, listening via media, or in the parking lot with an FM signal.

As we read the Gospel of John, I pray it will be a resource in the church for years to come. So many people struggle with how do I begin to read the Bible, where should I start? My prayer is this study can go to those who want to get involved in the Bible; I’ve told so many people to start in the Gospel of John. It introduces you to Jesus as Savior and gives such a great picture of His life. This is a biography of the Son of God, the Savior of the world.

We left off last week understanding the life of John the Baptist. He’s introduced to us in the first few verses—why does John, the gospel writer, introduce us to John the Baptist? The main reason is that he is a witness for Jesus Christ. He begins his gospel with John the Baptist as a witness but when he ends we understand that, we too, are witnesses. John the Baptist “passed the baton” and we are to be witnesses just as he was. As we look at his life, he was born to a godly couple—Zacharias and Elizabeth. His life already had a predetermined purpose; God determined what he would do before he was ever conceived. We read about that in Luke 1; God told Zacharias his son would come ahead of the Messiah and would prepare the way for people to receive the Messiah coming into their hearts and lives. John the Baptist would preach repentance; he grew up to be a preacher. He began his ministry around 29-30 years old and would tell people to be sorry for their sin. Repentance means you’re sorry for that which you’ve done against the Lord, and you want to make a 180 degree turn and walk toward the Savior. So John began to preach sermons about repentance—clear the brambles of sin off the path of your life so Jesus can use that pathway to come to you. I believe while John the Baptist had a predesigned purpose for his life so do you and I. All of us, before we were ever conceived, had a reason and purpose for being here. You can’t begin your purpose until you know Jesus Christ as your Savior. He enacts through His power, His spirit living in us who we’re supposed to be and what to do in His kingdom. John the Baptist knew his entire purpose in life was not to point to himself but always to a coming Christ, a coming Messiah and Savior.

I want to back up 1800 years before Jesus was born in Bethlehem. There was a man who lived; his name was Abraham. God called him to follow him in faith. He started out as Abram—God renamed him Abraham—would become the father of a nation. He would be the patriarch, the progenitor of the Israelite people. One of the most touching and gripping passages of Scripture is in Genesis 22. I love this passage; it brings me to my knees every

time I read it about the humility Abraham had before his God. God gave him one of the greatest earthly gifts possible in that he gave him and his wife, Sara, a precious son. All of our children are precious to us, but this son was particularly precious because his parents were in their old age. It had ceased, biologically, for them to have a child and yet, miraculously but also biologically, God gave them a son—Abraham was 100 and Sara was 90! It was a natural birth but it came long after they were able to have children. They loved that boy—can you imagine—who came into their lives so late. The day came when God brought Abraham to a decision, a supreme test. He asked him who do you love more—the son the Great Giver gave to you or the Great Giver of your son. God says if you love Me more, are humble before Me, trust Me and have faith in Me as your leader and King, I want you to sacrifice your son, Isaac, to Me. I promise you Abraham if you will give your son, Isaac, as a sacrifice to Me I will not fail you. You can trust Me in all things; I will be Your God. Will you trust Me in this ultimate decision? Abraham, amazingly and without qualm, said he would do what God wanted. He formed an entourage of two servants, a donkey, Isaac, and himself and set off to a place of worship called Moriah. When they get to the base of this mountain, Abraham tells the servants to stay with the donkey. My son and I are going to worship God with a sacrifice. He takes the wood that would be offered to God and lays it on Isaac's back to carry up the mountain; that tells me Isaac is a strong teenager. Abraham carries the hot coal to light the fire. In Genesis 22:7 I believe Isaac asks his Dad one of the most important, primary, pivotal questions in all the Bible which teaches us about God's love. As they go up the mountain, Isaac says we have the wood and fire but where is the lamb for the sacrifice? Old Abraham says don't worry son; God will provide a lamb. You know that when they get to that place of sacrifice, Abraham binds his son—he surrendered himself. He held up the knife ready to take Isaac's life as an offering to God; and as he got ready to plunge that knife God said "Abraham, Abraham!" don't sacrifice your son. God says I know now you love me most of all; you trust me and have faith in me. In that thicket you'll find a ram caught by its horns; take it and sacrifice it in place of your son. This was not that "precious lamb."

The question Isaac asked his Dad goes unanswered for 1800 years. One thousand, eight hundred years later the answer comes. Look at John 1:29; John's with his disciples: "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him and saith, Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." I don't know about you but this is one of the most stirring events in the Bible. Here's the lamb of true sacrifice which will bring the world forgiveness. Let's read the entire passage, verses 29-34: "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him and saith, Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw and bare record that this is the Son of God." May God add His blessing to the reading of that portion of His precious, Holy, inerrant, word.

This passage reminds me that all the Bible can be summed up in three statements: (1) Where is the Lamb? (2) Behold the Lamb. (3) Worthy is the Lamb (Revelation 5:12). Look at John 1:30 "This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me." John says he was before me; by simple math, humanly speaking, John was before Him—six months older. But John the Baptist is pointing out the eternal nature of Jesus Christ the Messiah. Jesus was not created in the womb in the same order as we are created. The flesh was biologically formed in Mary's womb but Jesus stepped out of His position of God in heaven, part of the Godhead, God the Son and Son of God. He stepped out from the trinity of heaven and took on flesh. He was

before John; He was before Abraham; He was before Adam and Eve because He's eternal in nature. Then John recalls baptizing Jesus in the Jordan. Look at verse 33 again; John said "...I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost."

Matthew 3 and Luke 3 give us a "snapshot" of Jesus being baptized. Let's read Matthew's account 3:13-17 "Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." As Jesus approaches John in the river, he is baptizing people in this baptismal water in sorrow and repentance for their sins. He baptized people in order they would get their heart right that when the Savior does come they would be ready to receive Him. It was a baptism of preparation, repentance, of getting the brambles off the pathway. Jesus comes to him and says "Baptize me, John." Immediately, John's eyes are opened. He says Lord, I cannot baptize You. In all humility, I need You to baptize me. Jesus replies "to fulfil all righteousness." I ask you to baptize me in obedience to the will of God. I believe this is the moment Jesus says "I will" go to the cross—this is the beginning of His earthly ministry. If you notice this picture in Luke and Matthew, it's a clear statement—we never see the word "trinity" in the Bible—we see Jesus the Son in the water, the Holy Spirit coming down like a dove to light on Him, God the Father speaking from heaven. We see the equality, the eternity of God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit.

In the Greek language which guides us I think it's very easy to see Jesus was baptized by immersion. I believe Jesus was "buried" beneath the water and then breaks the surface of the water as He rises up. That is a fitting picture of the prophesy that He will die, He will be buried in a tomb dead—you don't breathe under water—and when He breaks through the water it signifies His resurrection, His power over the grave, and His power to give us eternal life. Matthew and Luke say in truth the heavens open and the Spirit of God comes down with the grace, speed, and silence of a dove lighting on Jesus. God the Father's voice "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." John the Baptist remembers that moment from his baptism of Jesus the Christ. He says the moment I brought my cousin out of the water, I knew He was more than just a family member. He's the Savior, the Son of God! He's mightier than I; He's preferred over me. He's the one I've pointed to in all my ministry of preaching and prophecy about a Savior coming—this is Him! He's the Lamb coming to us! He's the fulfillment of my purpose in life. I preached about Him; I prophesied about Him; I've pointed to Him and here He is standing with me. John the Baptist lived in awe of Jesus the Christ. He lived thinking I'm not worthy to untie His shoes or to pick up His sandals and yet He's given me the undeserved privilege to speak His name and serve Him with my life.

I think like that, too—I do not deserve to stand in this Holy place. On my merit, on my life I have no right to stand behind this pulpit. It is by the undeserved grace of Jesus Christ. What a privilege it is to stand here for 38 years; what a privilege He's given to me. I want to worship Him, serve Him; I want Him to be the purpose of my life. The old hymn says we should "stand amazed in His presence." John the Baptist did, and this Scripture leads me to that same amazement that He allows me the privilege to give my life to Him. For all of us, we should be intent to worship Him. Praise God the sanctuary is open now; praise God for the streaming capability that has so many gathered with us in worship. Praise God for those in the parking lot listening by an FM signal. We need to be

intense to serve Him with all our lives that He is our purpose, the reason we get up in the morning, and the reason He gives us a peaceful rest so we can get up and serve Him another day. Praise God for every day He gives us! We need be intense in our service to Him, wherever your life takes you, you can serve Him there. We need to be content that we're saved by Him. The world strives for contentedness all over the place—how much money you can make, how many possessions you can buy, how much fame you can build up, how many diplomas you can have. Everyone comes up at a dead end because none of those things will bring you contentedness—only Jesus will. We need to be content, intent in worship, and intense to serve Him. Believers, we need to come to Him just as John the Baptist did 2000 years ago and say Lord, You're not just an addition to all the "stuff" in my life; You're not just another helping on the "plate" of my life. You're life itself! You're my purpose, and I'm all Yours! Lord, You are willing to wear a crown of thorns for me and bear the cross of Calvary for me. Any sacrifice You give is far short of the sacrifice You gave for me. Help me, Lord, to live a sacrificial life. Help me meet people in the love, salvation, and grace of a Savior who met me and gave me life.

My prayer, ladies and gentlemen, in this sanctuary, by media, or in the parking lot is that we'll have that kind of surrender to that Savior who surrendered Himself to us. He is the Lamb. Worthy is the Lamb. May we live our lives for Him. I pray we allow Him to use us up the way He wants us to fulfill His purpose. There's a description of getting into heaven that I've shared before but I want to read it again. A lot of people think we walk up to the golden gate, meet St. Peter, and all those things we learned in childhood. But listen to this one—"Life should not be a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in a pretty, well-preserved body. Rather, we should skid into heaven broadside in a cloud of smoke, thoroughly used up, totally worn out, and loudly proclaim "Wow, what a ride!" Lord, use us up! You are our purpose, You are the Lamb, You are the King! Use us in Your ministry; use this church and use my life that we'll bring a lost, hurting, anxious world to a Savior. If you're here today and have never come to that Savior, He has a purpose for your life. You can't begin your purpose until you begin to walk with the Savior. I invite you to Him today, not because I'm a sinless man, I'm just a forgiven sinner. I want you to have that same forgiveness; it has changed my life and I want it to change yours. He loves you, He went to the Cross for you, and He rose from the grave for you. I want you to lift up your eyes and see the Lamb on the cross for you. I believe God has given you that picture right now. Realize He did that so this moment you can come wherever you are today and say "Worthy is the Lamb." I accept you as my Savior. Church home, whatever your need, He meets us here.

Let us Pray: Our Father, our God, this passage we read today brings me to my knees, Lord. Abraham and Isaac, John the Baptist, pointing out "there's the lamb." One of these days Revelation 5 tells us that we who are believers will chant with the angels and saints of glory saying for eternity worthy, worthy, worthy is the lamb. Maybe there's someone here today who needs to join us in the family of Jesus Christ and say worthy are you Lord to have our life. Lord, bless that one who needs to give You his or her heart today. I pray for believers that we will be reinvigorated and revived in what it means to serve You. I pray we will not look at our own comforts and lifestyles, that we won't preserve that which is in our box but we'll be willing to step out, Lord, in sacrifice for You because You ultimately sacrificed Your life and we belong to You. It's not about us; it's about You. Bless us we pray. Bless that one who needs You or needs a church home. Bless us in this very important moment, in Jesus' name. Amen.

The service closed with the singing of "I'm Forgiven." Pastor Clyde dismissed us with prayer.