**JESUS IS THE LAMB OF GOD**

September 11, 2016

John 1:19-51

Key Verse 1:29 “The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, ‘Look, the

Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!’”

In the prologue, we learned that Jesus is God, and that Jesus is the life and the light. We learned most of all that the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. He is full of grace and truth. Today we learn more about Jesus through John the Baptist. In today’s passage we hear John’s testimonies about Jesus: Jesus is the Lamb of God.

**First**, “I am the voice of God’s King” (19-28). John the Baptist was the last prophet of the Old Testament. Jesus called him the greatest man who ever lived. He came to this world as the forerunner of the Christ. He preached a baptism of repentance in order to prepare the way for the Lord Jesus (Lk 3:1-14). John’s ministry grew and grew until it shook the country. When John preached the message of repentance, many people from rank and file came to him and repented, beating their breasts, and they were baptized by John. The Jews baptized Gentiles when they wanted to come into the Judaism as a symbol of their desire to be cleansed on the inside. The Jews went through this washing, which meant that those who were doing it were saying, “I am no better than a Gentile.” That is quite a confession of sin for a very self-righteous and spiritually proud people. The Pharisees were not baptized because of their pride.

John’s popularity was sky high. Then the politicians of the times were alarmed. They decided to investigate John the Baptist through the priests and Levites. So the Jewish religious leaders sent investigators to check up on John and his work. They came and asked John who he was in order to find out if he were the Christ—because people were wondering if he were the Christ. John was not intimidated. Knowing their motive, John did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, “I am not the Christ.” They asked him again, “Who are you? Are you Elijah?” He said, “I am not.” “Are you the Prophet?” He answered, “No.” In answering them, John talked about himself less and less. “I am not the Christ.” “I am not.” “No” (19-21). He did not say, “I’m the son of Zechariah, the esteemed priest. I am the greatest man who ever lived, by the way. I am a man who was, just for your information, filled with the Holy Spirit when I was still in my mother’s womb.” He just says, “I am the voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way for the Lord.’” It is a quotation from Isaiah’s prophecy concerning the forerunner of the Messiah (Isa 40:3). When John said this, he meant, “I am the forerunner of the King, and I came to prepare the work of the Messiah.” In the past, the king’s coming was announced by forerunners so that people might prepare for the king’s coming, and bow down to the ground to pay homage to the king. According to God’s time schedule, John the Baptist came first, and then Jesus the Messiah.

This time, some of the Pharisees asked him, “Why then do you baptize?” Their question was an intimidation, accusing him of baptizing without a license. John was not at all intimidated by them. Rather, he turned the topic of conversation away to Jesus. He said, “I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not know. He is the one who comes after me, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie” (26,27). In this verse, John, though he was a man of great spiritual authority, compares himself to a royal subject and Jesus, God’s King.

**Second**, Jesus is the Lamb of God (29-31). The next day when John saw Jesus coming toward him, he did not say, “Look, God’s King,” but he said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (29) When John the Baptist said, “Look, the Lamb of God!” he associated Jesus with the Paschal Lamb or Passover Lamb (Ex 12:1-13). The people of Israel groaned in their slavery and cried out day and night under the bondage of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. They were like North Koreans under Kim Jong-Un, or Zimbabweans under the dictator Mugabe. They were brutally oppressed with no way out. What’s more, they were in great torment because of their sins. Their sufferings were beyond human comprehension. God sent Moses to deliver his people. Because of Pharaoh’s stubborn refusal to let go of the Israelites from their captivity, God finally inflicted on the Egyptians the plague of death of all kinds of firstborn. The angel of death struck down every firstborn in Egypt--both man and animal. But the Israelites, according to God’s command through Moses, slaughtered a year-old lamb without defect, and took some of its blood and smeared it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of their houses. The angel of death passed over the houses of Israel when he saw the blood of the lamb on the doorposts. The people of Israel were set free from the hand of Pharaoh at the cost of the blood of the lamb. We call this the paschal lamb or Passover lamb. People offered the blood of the lamb as a sacrifice for sin.

Likewise, Jesus became the Lamb of God. He was sacrificed on the cross to save men from their sins. How can it be that the one and only Son of God should have to die? That is not what people expected to hear. Why would the Messiah be a Lamb? What does it mean that the Messiah is a Lamb? This is shocking. They would have expected John the Baptist to say, “Behold your King. Behold the triumphant One. Behold the Anointed One.” But he says, “Behold the Lamb of God.” A lamb is weak. And lambs were sacrificed all the time. All through history Israelites knew about a sacrificial lamb. And they also knew about Isaiah 53, “He was led as a lamb to slaughter. The One who was pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities.” They knew about sacrifice. But they didn’t know how it fit because they never saw themselves as a people needing a sacrifice. In other words, they assumed that the combination of their righteousness and their obedience in offering an animal was enough. But those animals couldn’t take away sin; they could only point to the one sacrifice that would take away sin that had not yet come until Christ. Hebrews 10:3-4 say, “But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of their sins. It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.” Because they didn’t recognize their sinfulness, they didn’t recognize they were under judgment, under wrath, needed a sacrifice, and that their Messiah was to be that sacrifice that Isaiah 53 was talking about. They had no idea that the Messiah would be a lamb. So Johns says, “Look, the Lamb of God”—the lamb that God has chosen to be the sacrifice.

Every family chose its lamb at Passover. Every father chose a lamb. This is the lamb that our Father God has chosen. He has come to deal with sin at last, to be pierced for our transgressions. He offered Himself as a sacrifice on the cross. He bore our sins in His own body. God made Him who knew no sin, sin for us. The Jews wanted a prophet. The Jews wanted a king. They got a lamb. They wanted an exalted messiah. They received rather a humiliated sacrifice. They wanted one who could kill all their enemies, and they got the One whom their enemies killed. But then again, they could never have a king until they had a lamb. They were ignorant of the fact that Jesus had to come twice. There could never be a coming in glory to reign until there is a coming in humiliation to die.

Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Sin is like a garbage. If garbage is not taken away, it become rotten and it smells and maggots will grow. Several years ago, there was garbage collectors strike in Toronto in August. There was no garbage pickup for several weeks. It was terrible with smell and maggots. Likewise, if sin is not taken away, it accumulates in us and in families and societies. Sin corrupts us and make families and societies rotten. It becomes so smelly and people cannot live in such a society. There is no solution to sin. No one can take away the sins. Many religions say, “Your sin is your problem (karma), and you can solve it yourself.” No, sin is too heavy a burden to carry. Those who try to bear the sin are crushed to death under the weight of sin. Only Jesus can take away the sin of the world. 1 John 1:9 says, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” Jesus does not say, “Since I took away your sin, from now on you should live sinless life with your own strength.” Not only Jesus takes away our sins, he enables us to live a holy life by baptizing us with the Holy Spirit. Baptism of the Holy Spirit is coming of the Holy Spirit to those who accept Jesus as Lord and Savior. When the Holy Spirit comes to us, he gives us a holy desire to live a holy life. The Holy Spirit transforms us into holy children of God. Many people have misconception about Christian life. They think that good Christian life is austere life, life with many rules, moral life, and life with no fun. No, Christian life is life in the Holy Spirit. It is life led by the Holy Spirit. It is life with joy in the Holy Spirit.

**Third**, Jesus’ first disciples. Look at verse 35. “The next day John was there again with two of his disciples.” We know that one of them is Andrew. The other one is John the author. Andrew and John started out as followers of John the Baptist, getting ready for the Messiah. The next day John is standing with them and he looked at Jesus as he walked, and he says to these two disciples, “Look, the Lamb of God!” He is saying, “Look, what are you still doing hanging around me? Go, follow him.” So they followed Jesus. Jesus saw them following (38), and asked, “What do you want?” This question sounds easy to answer. But fallen men want so many things in the world that they do not know what they should want. I think he would ask you the same question. What do you want? They said, “Rabbi, where are you staying?” They wanted to go where Jesus was and see about who he really was. Look at verse 39. “’Come,’ he replied, ‘and you will see.’” He meant, “If you will truly come to me, you will see spiritual reality. You will have spiritual sight.” Coming to Jesus in John’s Gospel means again and again entrusting yourself to Jesus, and receiving his promises (5:40; 6:35, 37, 44, 7:37). If you come to Jesus, you see. You see spiritual reality. You see the key that unlocks the ultimate meaning of all things. This is the glory of the Son of God. This is the grace we receive.

Look at verse 40. “Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus.” After meeting Jesus personally, Andrew was convinced that Jesus was the Messiah and the Savior of the world. Something great happened in Andrew’s heart. Andrew’s heart was overflowing with joy. He could not keep this to himself. So he first found his brother Simon and told him, “We have found the Messiah,” (that is, the Christ). What a great discovery he had made. He said, “We have found the Messiah.” He meant, “Eureka!” He was looking for someone who could solve all his life problems. “Messiah” means “God’s Anointed One.” In the Old Testament, three kinds of people were anointed with oil: kings, priests and prophets. Jesus came to this world as King, Priest and Prophet. He came as the Savior who will solve all our life problems.

Like Andrew, we must come to Jesus and have fellowship with him until we can confess, “We have found the Messiah!” When Andrew brought his brother Simon to Jesus, Jesus did not pay attention to Andrew anymore. But he was greatly interested in Peter and said, “You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas” (which meant a rock or Peter). Peter was someone who needed vision and hope. He was deeply disappointed with his current self. He was sorrowful that he would spend all his life, chasing fish at Lake Galilee. If someone asked him, “What is your dream?” he would just blink his eyes and bow down in despair. “Simon” means “sand.” “Peter” means “rock.” Jesus had great hope for Peter. Jesus does not look at our current situation. He looks at our future glorious self.

When Jesus saw Philip, with spiritual authority, he commanded, “Follow me.” Philip immediately followed him. Then Philip found Nathanael and told him about Jesus on the basis of the Old Testament. “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph” (45). Nathanael was a scholarly man. He knew that the Messiah would be born in the town of David, so he said, “Can anything good come from there?” (46a) Then Philip simply said, “Come and see.” When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, “Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit.” Nathanael wondered how Jesus could know him before meeting him. Jesus answered, “I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you.” Then Nathanael, amazed at Jesus’ transcendental knowledge, immediately made a confession of faith: “Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel.” His description of Jesus was the same as that of Andrew, “You are the Messiah!” In this way, one-to-one Bible study had spread. Look at verses 50-51. These verses are a story about Jacob’s dream about the angel of God in Genesis 28. Nathanael must have been meditating about Jacob’s dream under the fig tree. Jesus said to Nathanael figuratively, in light of Jacob’s dream, “If you believe in God, your spiritual eyes will be opened and you will see the spiritual things and the glorious kingdom of God.”

In this passage we learn that John the Baptist made the confession of faith, “Look, the Lamb of God.” Andrew said, “We have found the Messiah.” Nathanael said, “You are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel.” May God help each of us come to Jesus and make a confession of faith.