

## John 1:29-41

### Epiphany 2; January 15 & 16, 2023

How do you feel about washing dishes? Washing dishes is kind of gross, isn't it? Whether you wash by hand or wash them in a dishwasher, there is one thing that all washing dishes have in common. The water starts off being so clean. The soap creates bubbles that can smell good. But then one by one, the dishes dirty the water. Then there is the sponge or dish rag that you might use. It can start off so clean. But then one by one the dirty dishes can make the clean dish rag become dirty and smelly. It will need to be washed clean again. In this whole process of dish washing, the dirt doesn't just disappear. Instead, the dirt on the dishes will be transferred to the water in the sink or into the water that your dishwashing is using. All of this happens with one purpose in mind – to wash your dishes clean.

With that in mind, let us consider what John means in our text for this morning as he says: **“Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”** John the Baptist was the voice of one calling in the wilderness, **“Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.”** He prepared the **“way of the Lord”** by proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, a sinner's baptism. In John's day, to baptize was to *“wash.”* You would *“baptize”* or wash your hands before dinner. You would *“baptize”* or wash the dishes after dinner. And John was proclaiming a *baptism*, a *washing*, for sinners, to wash away their sins, to repent, to turn from their transgressions. Repentance is a turning away from the bad and a turning towards the good. To symbolize this turning, John called people to wash away their old way of life, to wash away their sins.

As John proclaimed this message of repentance and washing, the crowds came. People from all walks of life came. People from different cities, different religious beliefs, different backgrounds, different problems, different hurts came. People came out to the Jordan to be baptized by John, to wash away their sins. They came because they were sinners. They had a problem, and John offered them the solution. So, they went to John, and he baptized them, he washed-off their sin. He washed them into the water of the Jordan River. All the filth of their lives left them and went into the water. The greed, the lies, the theft, the hate, the affairs, the disrespect, the neglect of worship, the abuse of God's name, the false worship of phony gods, all of it washed off them, into the water.

And when all the people were baptized, the white, spotless Lamb walked into that same, filthy, brown water. You know what an ideal lamb looks like in our minds: white, fuzzy, wooly, pure, clean. When all the people were baptized, a brilliantly white, wooly lamb went into that filthy, brown water. Just like when the dishes are washed, all that guilt of sin needed to go somewhere. That somewhere was Jesus. That dirt of sin stuck to the lamb. All that nasty, smelly, gross things of sin stuck to the Lamb and he carried them away. That's what John is talking about when he points his finger at Jesus and says that day along the Jordan River: **“Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”**

When John said those words, they knew what John was saying. After all, you grew up celebrating the Passover. You joined with friends and family to slaughter a lamb that had become your pet. You listened to your father tell the story of the first Passover when the blood of the lamb was put on the door posts of the homes to spare people from the angel of death that passed through the land of Egypt. You travel to Jerusalem to worship in the temple. Your family brings a lamb. You care for it. You watch as your father hands the lamb to the priest. The priest takes the life of the lamb and sprinkles some of its blood on the altar. All these lambs that shed their blood taught you there could be no forgiveness without the shedding of blood. **“Behold the Lamb of God.”** Immediately you think of blood and see blood. Here is the real Lamb of God who will shed his blood for your sin. Isaiah the prophet said the Messiah would be led like a lamb to the slaughter and he would be pierced for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities.

But when it came time for God to redeem his people, to deal with sin once and for all, he didn't ask us to offer something that was costly to us. No, he furnished the sacrifice at great cost to himself. He sacrificed his one and only Son, Jesus. As Jesus is about to begin his ministry here on this earth, he wanted to be very clear as to what he had come to do. **“Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”** The prophet Micah had described the work of that Messiah. **“Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy. You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.”** (Micah 7:18-19)

What do we do with this message of the **“lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world?”** We follow and we tell. That’s what we see in our text this morning. **“When the two disciples heard him say this (Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world), they followed Jesus. Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, “What do you want?” They said, “Rabbi” (which means “Teacher”), “where are you staying?” “Come,” he replied, “and you will see.” So they went and saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with him. It was about four in the afternoon. 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).**

Business runs on referrals. If you find a coffee bar you think is neat you invite a couple of friends the next time. When you like a particular school, you share that with your friends with kids the same age. You share with others plumbers, electricians, and computer technicians you’ve used and liked. When Andrew started following Jesus and spent the day with him, he knew without thinking he had to share. We can’t help but want to do the same thing.

May the light of Jesus move you to let Jesus shine through you. Look at what he has done and continues to do for you. All that ugly dirt and grime of sin is washed away. May God help us to John the Baptist in saying: **“Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”** Amen.