

Behold! The Lamb of God!

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Preacher: Joshua Winters

[0 : 00] Right now in our Sunday morning sermon series, we're working through the Gospel of John. And this morning we're going to be looking at the moment when Jesus makes his debut in Israel.

Now, it's not the moment when Jesus made his entrance into the world. That, of course, happened 30 years prior to this, when he was conceived with regard to his human nature in the womb of his mother Mary, and nine months later, born that day in Bethlehem.

But up until this point in the Gospel of John, Jesus has been unknown to the world. There has only been a select few who had any idea who he was.

As John said, we looked at this two weeks ago, I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not know.

He's here. And he's coming. Anticipation has been building up until this moment, and we saw some of that two weeks ago.

[1 : 18] There's John, the baptizer. He's out in the wilderness. He's wearing rugged clothing made of camel's hair.

And he's preaching. And he's teaching. And he's baptizing people in water. He's calling people to repent. To turn from their sinful way of life back to God, back to the Lord.

He's been proclaiming that the kingdom of heaven is near. And that the eyes of the nation of Israel are on John, the baptizer.

So much so that the attention ripples all the way back to Jerusalem, the capital. And we saw two weeks ago how a delegation was sent from the Jewish religious leaders.

A delegation of priests and Levites and Pharisees to come and question John and find out what he's doing out here. What is this message that you're bringing? What is this baptism that you've been performing for people?

[2 : 32] Are you the Messiah? John's answer, the baptizer, was no. I am not the Messiah. I'm not Elijah. I'm not the prophet that was spoken of long ago through Moses.

I am the voice of one calling in the wilderness. Make straight the way for the Lord. The Lord is coming. So get ready.

So the anticipation has been building. The eyes of the nation are on John. And his message is that there is one who is coming that is greater than I am.

One who is so worthy. I'm not even worthy to perform the most menial of services to him and bend down and untie his shoes. The anticipation has been building towards this moment.

And finally, what we're looking at this morning, this moment has come. When Jesus makes his debut to the world. And from then on, in increasing measure, he begins to be known by the world.

[3 : 43] Let's read it in John chapter 1, verse 29. John chapter 1, verse 29. The next day, the day after this delegation had come to John the baptizer.

The next day, John saw Jesus coming toward him. And he said, look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

This is the one I meant when I said, he who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me. I myself did not know him.

But the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel. Then John gave this testimony.

I saw the spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. And I myself did not know him. But the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, the man on whom you see the spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.

[5 : 03] I have seen and I testify that this is God's chosen one. What a moment that must have been.

I would have loved to have been there. John saw Jesus coming toward him. And I think there's a bit of a break here in John's telling of what happened that day.

Says that he said, look, the Lamb of God. This is the one that I meant when I said, a man who comes after me. But then in verse 31, notice that this what John says.

He says, I myself did not know him. I didn't know him. Now, Jesus was John's cousin. And he of course, he knew who his cousin was.

But I think probably what he means is, I didn't know that he was the one. That he was the Messiah. The one who is greater than I.

[6 : 12] The one I've come to prepare the way for. When did John recognize that he was the one? John tells us in verses 32 to 34.

Then John gave this testimony. He said, I saw the spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. I myself did not know him.

I didn't know he was the one. But the one who sent me to baptize with water told me. God had given John a sign to watch for so that he would know who the one was.

And the sign was this. The man whom you see the spirit come down upon and remain. He's the one. And so John has been watching for this.

And up until this point, he hasn't known just who this one is. Can you picture it in your mind?

[7 : 19] That moment. There John is. We imagine maybe knee deep in water. Waist deep in water in the river. And the crowd is all around. And he's preaching.

And he's teaching. And people are coming. And he's baptizing them. And then all of a sudden, Jesus emerges from the crowd and comes walking toward him.

At what point did John recognize that he was the one? Well, according to John's testimony, it was after he saw the spirit come down upon Jesus.

And if we look carefully at the other gospel accounts of Jesus' baptism, the spirit came down upon Jesus just as he was going up out of the water after he had been baptized.

And so that's why I think there's a break there in verse 29. I think John is just, he's telling us the events of the day a little bit out of order. John saw Jesus coming toward him.

[8 : 26] And that day, he said this about him. Look, the Lamb of God. We know from Matthew's gospel that this baptism of Jesus, there was a little conversation there between Jesus and John.

Jesus came out to be baptized and they had a little exchange. And John said to him at that moment, I need to be baptized by you.

And do you come to me? So there was a moment there where he realized, he recognized. But the real moment of confirmation came just after he had been baptized and was going up out of the water.

And John saw the spirit come down upon him. Oh, I would have loved to have seen what that looked like.

The gospel writers tell us that the spirit came down as a dove. What exactly that looked like, we don't know.

[9 : 38] But can you imagine John standing in the river there and watching this? He's just baptized Jesus under the water. And Jesus is going up out of the water.

And then he sees the spirit of God descending down and coming to rest upon him. And his eyes go wide. And the quarter drops.

It's fully confirmed to his heart. This is the sign that God gave me. And you can just see John's mouth begin to open up. Behold, behold, look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

This is the one I meant when I said, he who comes after me is greater than me. He surpassed me because he was before me. I didn't know it.

I didn't know it was him. But the whole reason that I have come baptizing with water, verse 31, was that he might be revealed to Israel. Behold, look at him.

[10 : 47] I saw the spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. That's the sign God gave me that he's the one I have seen, verse 34. And I testify, this is God's chosen one.

What a moment that must have been. Up until this point, the anticipation has been building. John's message has been clear. There's one coming after me.

And he's someone special. He's someone so worthy. He's greater than I am. And all of a sudden, in this moment, his message changes to, this is the one.

Right there, walking up out of the water. I wish I could have been there just to see how the people were responding and taking this in in this moment.

This morning, with the rest of our time, we want to look at what John tells us that John the baptizer said or declared about Jesus. The first thing.

[12:08] That day, he said, look. The Lamb of God. Who takes away the sin of the world. What does that mean?

We kind of wrestle a little bit with this, maybe. What did John mean when he said this? It's kind of an interesting question. John was a prophet. And as we find out later in the book of John, the apostle John, Jesus being the ultimate prophet, he said, this is how it works.

I speak to you what I hear from God. That's how it worked with the prophets. They heard from God and they spoke. And so in this moment, it's not just John, the baptizer, speaking what he knows.

It's John speaking what he hears from God. He's a prophet. We almost have to take a step back and wonder how much did John understand even of what he was saying.

There's going to come a moment, which we'll get to in the weeks ahead, where John the baptizer even seems to have a moment of doubt about Jesus. And so the question is not so much what did John mean as he declared, behold, the Lamb of God.

[13:35] The question is, what did God mean as he spoke through John about his son, Jesus? Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

What does it mean that he's a lamb, a lamb of God? How does he take away the sin of the world? What is he pointing to with this statement? I think to fully understand this, we have to take a little bit of a journey back into what God has said in the past.

First, we go all the way back to the story of Abraham, which we talked about not too long ago in our sermon series. Do you remember that moment when God tested Abraham? And he commanded him to offer Isaac, his son, as a sacrifice on Mount Moriah.

Of course, he didn't intend for Abraham to go through with it. But he commanded it. And so Abraham had to wrestle with this. God's promise that all this blessing will come through Isaac.

[14:49] And he's also commanded me to kill Isaac. Both. How do I take both of these in faith?

And he came to that moment. Not too long before he put Isaac on the altar where his his son asked him, Dad, where's where's the lamb for the sacrifice?

And in faith, this was Abraham's response. God himself will provide the lamb. For the sacrifice.

My son. It's just a glimmer there. It's a very dim picture. But already God is is is speaking.

He's teaching Abraham a lesson. He's teaching him. To trust that for the sacrifice that he's required to offer, God will provide a lamb.

And he did. Isaac was spared. In a manner of speaking. And there in the thickets was a ram that God allowed to be.

[16:01] A substitute. If you will. An acceptable substitute. Fast forward from there. 400 years.

And Abraham's descendants. The Israelites. They're enslaved. In Egypt. And God. And God.

They've cried out to God for deliverance. And God has sent Moses.

To work his deliverance. And as part of his delivering the Israelites. He he pours out 10 plagues on Egypt. And the 10th is is the the the worst of them.

That final plague. The life of every firstborn son. In every family.

I will take. In the whole land of Egypt. And interestingly enough. In the way that it's stated there. He doesn't distinguish between.

[17:01] Whether they're descendants of Israel or not. The sense is that judgment is coming. And all deserve it. But there is a way.

To escape that. And not suffer the loss of that son. And what is that way? It's God's provision. The special provision that he's given to his people.

You. Take a lamb. Without defect. You kill it. And you take its blood. And you paint it on the doorposts. And when I come through the land.

To execute. My just punishment. Upon the people. And I see the blood on the doorpost. I'll pass over. Your house.

In judgment. You'll be spared. Again. We see this similar lesson. Punishment is deserved.

[18:01] Judgment is coming. But there is a provision from God. By which we. We can be spared. By which we can escape. And that provision is an acceptable substitute.

In this case. A lamb. Not too long after that. The Lord leads them out of Egypt. And they come to Mount Sinai.

And it's at Mount Sinai. That God. Begins to make clear. This. What is this relationship. Between him and these people. He makes them very aware.

Of. The sin problem. That they have. I am holy. He says. I am pure. I am righteous.

I am good. You guys are. Corrupt. You are wicked. In your ways. You are not clean. So we have to keep our distance.

[19:00] And this whole sacrificial system. Is kind of set up around this. And makes it crystal clear. We can only get so close to one another. Because of the sin problem. That you have.

And one of the provisions. That God. Made. In. The law. That was given. Was that if anybody. Became aware. Of a sin. That they had committed. A law.

Of God. That they had broken. This is what they had to do. They must. Bring to the Lord. A female lamb. Or goat.

From the flock. As a sin offering. And the priest. Shall make atonement. For them. For their sin. Leviticus 5. Verse 6. In order for their guilt.

To be removed. For them to have forgiveness. Justice had to be done. But God would permit. That it would be done. On an acceptable.

[19:56] Substitute. A lamb. Offered in sacrifice. That would make atonement. For the sin. That they had committed.

Fast forward. Another. Another. 500 years. And the word. Of Isaiah. The prophet. Came to his people.

He spoke. Of. A coming. Servant. Who would suffer. And be rejected. By his people. A coming. A coming servant. Who would. Receive upon himself. Punishment. From God. But not for his own sins. For the sins.

Of God's people. For their transgressions. He would suffer. For. And these are the words. That are used. By Isaiah. To describe. What he saw.

[20:57] In his vision. This. Coming servant. He was led. Like a lamb. To the slaughter. And as a sheep. Before its shears. Is silent. So he did not.

Open. His mouth. The Lord. Spoke. Through Isaiah. That there would be.

One. Who would come. Who would. Suffer. Like a lamb. As an offering. For sin. But not for his own sin.

For the transgression. Of my people. He was punished. All of these. Are pointing towards. This great reality.

That all of us. Are guilty. Before God. Of the sins. That we have. Committed. Against him. And we deserve.

[21:54] Punishment. We deserve. His wrath. And it's just. It's right. That we receive it. But. God.

Will provide. A substitute. A sacrifice. If we look. If we look to him. In faith. This.

Is. All flowing. Towards this moment. Where John. Stands there. In the river. And he declares. This. Provision.

Of God. This. Lamb. Has come. There he is. Right there. See him. This is the one.

He's the lamb. Of God. He's. He's. He's not the lamb. That we would bring. Because we don't have one. That. That would be good enough. One without defect.

[22:52] He's the one. That God. Has provided. For the sacrifice. That's required. To atone. For our sins. The lamb of God.

Look. Behold. The lamb of God. Who takes away. The sin. Of the world. There he is. The one. Who can take away.

Your sin. Your guilt. Before God. Not just the sin. Of. Israel. Or the Jewish people.

The Jewish nation. But the sin. Of the world. The peoples. Of the world. The world. I wonder. What the people. Were thinking.

As they heard. John. Say this. About Jesus. Standing there. Knee deep in water. What was their response?

[23:44] What were they. What were they feeling? I mean. They'd already heard. John. Preaching. That they needed. To repent. That they. Needed to confess. Their sins to God.

To receive forgiveness. Forgiveness. What were they thinking? Perhaps some of them. Were thinking. Yes. I have sinned.

Against God. I need. His forgiveness. This is the one. This is the one. That God has. Provided. So that I can. Have it. Perhaps there were some. Thinking. Sin. Well.

I've been. A pretty good person. I've lived. A pretty good life. I mean. I haven't broken. Any of the ten commandments. And. Those few that I did. I. I offered my sacrifice. And so.

[24 : 38] I'm good to go. What were their responses? What were they thinking? As they heard. John. Proclaim this.

About Jesus. We don't know. Exactly. But more importantly. What is your response? What are you thinking?

And feeling. As you hear. John. The baptizer. Say to you. Look. This one. Is the lamb. Of God. Who takes. Away. The sin. Of the world. Do you feel.

In your heart. Your need. For him. Or have you lived. A pretty good life.

Ah. Sin. Not sure. Exactly. Who that's for. Maybe for those Gentiles. Those unbelievers. John's message.

[25 : 44] To the people. In his day. Is the same message. To every last one of us. If we do not believe. Repent. Turn to God.

Seek his forgiveness. His kingdom is near. Most of us here this morning. Are believers. We've. We've done that. We believe.

One of the things. I was thinking about. As I prepared this. Is just how easily. These. This name. The lamb of God. It's sort of. We get so familiar.

With it. That it kind of loses. It's. It's luster. Sometimes for us. Probably heard. That's. That's saying. Familiarity breeds contempt. There's another guy.

Named William. Haslett. And he said. Yeah. From familiar. Familiarity doesn't. It doesn't always breed contempt. But it takes the edge. Off of admiration.

[26 : 45] And I wonder if that's how we feel. I mean. We've heard this. We've read this. So many times. Behold the lamb of God. Jesus is the lamb of God. Do we have that awe.

That sense of preciousness. And wonder. That he is. Or have we. Have we lost it. And if we have. How. How can we get that back. I want to encourage us.

This morning. Perhaps one way. That we can. Come to. To really. Appreciate. This about Jesus. Again. Is just to think about.

Our own lives. To think about. Our own. Failings. The ways that we've. Sinned against God. I mean. Take this past week. As an example. Think about.

All those moments. Where you blew it. We might. Easily think. Well. You know. I don't remember. Doing anything. That was really bad. You know. And even that.

[27 : 47] Right there. Is our own. Tendency. To minimize. Our sin. I was talking to someone. This week. About what is sin. It's more than just.

The big. Outward acts. That we do. It happens. At the level. Of what we say. Our words. It happens. At the level. Of our thoughts.

Even our desires. Are tainted. By. By sin. Our motivations. It's not just. The things that we do. It's the things. We fail to do.

That we ought to do. Jesus. Summed up. What God. Requires of us. What he. He has asked of us. In the. In the. The perfect law.

Like this. You shall love the Lord. Your God. With all your heart. And with all your soul. And with all your mind. And with all your strength. With everything you've got. And you should love your neighbor.

[28 : 44] As yourself. When we think about that. We all fall short. That puts every selfish.

Act. Every selfish thought. Every selfish motive. Every time that we have. Loved something else. More than God. It's all sin. It's all missing the mark.

It's all falling short. God's word. Helps us see that. We fall. So much far shorter. Than we think we do. And so we could take.

The last week. That we've lived. And we could take the stamp. On and put it on the record. Of last week. With the verdict. Guilty. And that would be true.

Beyond just. The last week. We could extend that. All the way back. To our whole lives. That we've lived. Up until this point. We could take that record. And we could take the stamp.

[29 : 43] And put the verdict on it. Guilty. And it would be true. From this present moment. Then we could.

We could look at the days. That we have left to live. Here on earth. And we could do the same thing. John. The apostle. Who writes this.

Will. Will pen a letter. And send it out. And in it. He will say. If anyone. Claims that they do not have sin. They deceive themselves.

And the truth is not in them. We all will continue to sin. In the days ahead. And it's not an excuse. To do it. It's just a reality. That we have.

Sin in us. And we will. We will continue. To fall short. Just because we believe. Does not mean. That we have been made perfect. Yet. And so we could take.

[30 : 37] All of our future days. Here on earth. And put a stamp over that. Record. Already. Guilty. Our whole lives.

Could be summed up. In this. In this true. Judgment. This true statement. Guilty. Before God. There is only one thing.

That can get us out. From under that. There is only one thing. That can come between. The. The. The. Guilty verdict stamp. And the record of our lives. And it's the blood of Jesus. The lamb. Of God. He's the only one. Who can take away. Our sins. And change. That final. Ultimate. Verdict. On our whole lives. From guilty.

To innocent. Every. Breath. That we breathe. Is a gracious gift.

[31 : 38] From God. That was purchased. By the blood. Of the lamb. Of God. Jesus. Every.

Blessing. That we have received. In our lives. Every good thing. Every. Blessing. That we. Are. Waiting. To receive. In the future. From God. Was purchased.

That moment. When Jesus. The lamb of God. Was executed. And offered. Up. As a sacrifice. For us. And so.

Even though. This is something. That is so familiar. To us. Jesus. The lamb of God. Who takes away. The sin of the world. Oh man. Not. Lose. It's preciousness. To us. May we.

Continue. To hold. That reality. In awe. He is the lamb. That we need. So that. Our sins. Our guilt.

[32 : 38] Can be taken away. Forever. What an amazing. Gift of love. God has given. In this one. Behold.

The lamb of God. Who takes away. The sin of the world. Let's pray. Father in heaven.

We thank you. From the depths. Of our hearts. For sending him. Lord. You knew. That we didn't have. A sacrifice to bring. That was good enough. We thank you.

That you sent. Us. One. Jesus. We believe in him. We love him.

We love you. And we thank you. For the forgiveness. And the life. That you have given us. Through him. It's in his name. We pray. Amen.

[33 : 35] Amen. Thank you. Thank you.