

Behold the Lamb of God

The gospel for this coming Sunday (Second Sunday after the Epiphany) is John 1:29-42a. This reading includes two narratives: The recognition of Jesus as the “Lamb of God,” and Jesus’ calling his first disciples.

John the Baptist’s purpose (like John the evangelist’s) was to bear witness to who the Messiah would be and then to point him out. This he did in word but, interestingly, through the waters of Baptism as well.

John’s Baptism was one of repentance, making ready for the Gospel and Spirit that came in Jesus. That is, his Baptism was to lead everyone to the Christ as Savior. Now having the Word himself in the water, John saw Jesus revealed as the Savior, by the Spirit in visible form. Jesus reveals himself to us through Word and water by the same Spirit today. This leads us to today’s text.

Following Jesus’ baptism John sees Jesus coming and exclaims “*Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*” (v. 29). *Lamb of God* is an expression found in the Bible only here in v. 36 and in only one other book – about 30 occurrences in Revelation, also written by John.

This phrase has rich OT background and would have been familiar to the original hearers. There was the Passover lamb, whose blood averted the destroyer of the firstborn and who was eaten in an annual sacred meal commemorating God’ deliverance (Ex 12:11-13). There also was the lamb of daily sacrifice (Ex 29:38-42), and the lamb led to the slaughter in Isaiah 53:7 – The Suffering Servant. All these sacrificial lambs foreshadowed this Lamb of sacrifice who would take away the sin of the world.

The great news for us is that Jesus’ sacrifice includes us. In Baptism, Jesus Christ has taken away our sin, and the Spirit daily assures us of His merciful goodness toward us.

We are assured in Isaiah 55:11 that God’s Word is effective when it states “*so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.*”

We see that happening when two of John’s disciples follow Jesus after John has identified Jesus as the Messiah that they had been waiting for. This is followed by Andrew bringing Peter to Jesus as well. We can be confident that Word that is alive in our lives has led others to Jesus and continues to do so as we lived as Baptize children of the Lord.

Prayer: O Lamb of God, send your Spirit with your gracious pardon, and silence my accusing conscience. Amen. (TLSB)

