

Daily Discipleship

Second Sunday after the Epiphany (A) – John 1:29-42

Discipleship: *Following the Lamb of God*

Focus Question: *What does it mean to follow an innocent man of God who was sacrificed for our sins?*

word of life

“The next day [John the Baptist] saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, ‘Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!’” John 1:29 (NRSV)

Read John 1:29-42

The accounts of the baptism of Jesus described in the Synoptic Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke are quite similar in their details. The heavens open up, the Holy Spirit descends in the form of a dove, and God’s voice proclaims Jesus to be God’s own Son, the Beloved. Each description takes place at the time of baptism. (See Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22.) In contrast, the Gospel of John describes the baptism through the eyes of John the Baptist as he gives testimony to the scene. Beginning with John 1:19, John the Baptist is established as a forerunner to Jesus and the one who repeatedly offers testimony. (See John 1:19-28.) The testimony in John 1:29-42 does not mention John actually baptizing Jesus.

1. *Compare and contrast the description of the baptism of Jesus found in John 1:29-34 with last week’s lesson, Matthew 3:13-17.*
2. *What can you learn from John’s testimony?*
3. *Does his testimony make you feel like you are at the scene? How so?*

When John sees Jesus he declares, “Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29 NRSV) John repeats that name on the next day when he is with two of his disciples. (See John 1:36) No other Gospel writer uses such a phrase, but it can be found in the Book of Revelation. (See Revelation 5:6; 14:1; 15:3; 19:7.)

Scholars are not certain about the meaning of Lamb of God. Some believe this is a reference to the end of time when a conquering lamb will destroy all evil. This image is found in the literature written in between the Old and New Testaments (known as the Apocrypha) as well as the Book of Revelation. It fits with John the Baptist’s fiery preaching about final judgment.

Other scholars link the Lamb of God with the Passover Lamb. (See Exodus 12:5.) The first Passover involves the Jewish slaves marking their doors with lamb’s blood so the angel of death would “pass-over” their homes. Subsequently, Jews gather each year to celebrate the Passover and God freeing them from bondage. In the first century, there is a Preparation Day when a lamb was slaughtered for the Passover Festival. This Day of Preparation is also the day Jesus is crucified in John’s Gospel. (See John 19:14) Jesus becomes a new Lamb of God, innocent at the time of his death. This sacrificial image coincides with the image of the suffering servant found in Isaiah 53:7-12.

4. *What does the phrase “Lamb of God” mean to you?*
5. *How is describing Jesus as the Lamb of God meaningful for you?*

The next day after the baptism, John finds two of his own disciples and tells them about the Lamb of God. They meet Jesus, but want to know where he is staying. This odd question is met with a simple response by Jesus, “Come and see.” (John 1:39 NRSV) After being with Jesus, one of the men goes to his brother Simon to tell him about Jesus. A chain reaction is begun as people seek the Messiah and tells others about him.

word among us

The congregation had worked very hard on the costumes for their outdoor live nativity. Children, youth, and adults had signed up for a chance to be part of the event. Yet everyone was concerned whether they would have an audience. For weeks, the congregation found ways to invite people to come and see the Live Nativity. They hoped people not affiliated with a church might hear the story of God's love made known at Christmas in rich, meaningful new ways.

Thus, the congregation joined together on a creative publicity campaign. They used the radio, newspaper, Web sites, and posters; but mostly they personally invited people with a simple invitation, "Come and see!"

1. *What is happening at your church to which you would be willing to invite someone "to come and see"?*
2. *What (if anything) do you hope they do not see? (How might you change that?)*

Maya was heartbroken. She had lost all hope. Her good friend went to Maya's home to be with her, but the friend did not know what to say or do. Finally, she invited Maya to come with her to church that night. The friend simply said, "Come and see." Maya agreed, for she was finally ready to try something new. Clearly her current choices were not working in her life.

3. *When have you invited someone to learn more about Jesus Christ?*
4. *Why are those invitations important?*

One thing we know about John the Baptist is his willingness to testify about Jesus. Time after time, he tells the crowds to prepare for the coming of Christ. After the baptism, John tells his disciples about the Lamb of God. They in turn tell others about Jesus, calling him the Messiah. This chain reaction begun two thousand years ago has not stopped.

Disciples who are connected to Jesus tell others about him. They cannot hoard the good news. Instead, they want others to participate in that good news.

5. *Give examples of helping other disciples to grow in faith.*
6. *What is it like to help a new Christian learn about Jesus?*
7. *If you have not had that experience, why not?*
8. *What needs to happen in your life to free you to share with others about Jesus?*

The primary image of Jesus in this text is the Lamb of God. A lamb is considered an innocent animal which still needs protection. Yet, Jesus as God's lamb is freely given in the hands of the enemy to be sacrificed. Jesus dies in order to take away the sins of the world. Those sins include each of our sins.

9. *How is life different knowing Jesus had died for you?*
10. *How is life different knowing your sins are forgiven in Jesus Christ?*

Prayer

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world. Have mercy on us. Amen

Dig Deeper

Isaiah 49:1-7

last word

Take a walk
and ponder what it means to you
for Jesus to have taken away your sins.



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