

Follow the Lamb (monologue) \* John 1:29-37

March 1, 2020 \* Langford Community Church \* Graham Gladstone

I remember the first time I saw John. He looked like some kind of prophet, straight out of the book of Isaiah. Clothed in camel's hair, leather belt around his waist. All he ever ate was locusts and honey.

He looked like he belonged to some bygone era and I just assumed that what he said did too.

But then I started to listen. And listen not just with my ears but with my heart.

And I quickly realized that what he said made just as much sense for me as it did for the people long ago. 'Repent' he said 'for the kingdom of God is at hand.' 'Turn from sin' he said 'for the Saviour is coming.'

Sure that sounded archaic and old fashioned but boil it right down and it resonated with my heart.

Because I have to admit; I don't always do right. And if I'm honest with myself, I have to confess that sometimes I tell God by my words and deeds that I'm better than He is and that's the essence of sin. And my heart is still sensitive enough to know that that's wrong.

I try to do right, but I have this sinking feeling that my good deeds could never outweigh the bad. I need a Saviour, someone bigger than me to deal with this sin. And there was John saying – the Saviour is coming to forgive all those who turn from sin and turn to Him.

And so that's what I did. I turned from sin and turned to the Saviour and I let John baptize me to show it. And then I hung around to see what more he would say. I became his disciple. Me and a handful of others. Day by day we went back and listened to his teaching. And it was fascinating to listen. This guy knew his Bible. He understood the sacrifices. He understood the covenants. He understood the grace of God and the promises that God had made to save His people.

And some people started to think that he was the Saviour that God had promised. They asked if he was the Messiah, the prophet, Elijah even. They started to think that maybe John was the Promised One, but John kept steadfastly denying it. He'd say – No. That's not me. I'm not even worthy to take off his sandals. It's not me. God has promised a Saviour and He's coming.

And on and on it went. Day after day, people came to John in the wilderness, ready to hear his message to turn from sin and trust in the Saviour... but we all longed to know... who is it? Who is this Saviour? Who is this Saviour and how would He save His people?

Well, wouldn't you know it - The answer came when I was away. I couldn't get away from work that afternoon, but my fellow disciples filled me in later. John's cousin Jesus came out to be baptized and He went down into the water, nothing special. But when He came back up, suddenly the Heavens opened and a dove came down on Him like a Spirit and a voice from the sky said 'This is my Son, in whom I am well pleased.'

This was the Saviour, the one we'd been waiting for.

And John drove that point home, the very next day. We were gathered around as usual, listening to him teach, when Jesus approached. John looked up and stood up and pointed to Jesus and said:

"Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

In an instant, I understood that this was the Saviour. But not only that, I understood how this Saviour would save His people.

See, John was alluding to two very important animals in Israelite culture - the Passover Lamb and the atonement goat. John was saying that Jesus would do for the people what the lamb and the goat had done before.

Now as Hebrew people, we knew exactly what John was saying, but these animals might now be familiar to you, so let me explain it for you.

First, the Passover Lamb. Years ago, our ancestors were slaves in Egypt and Pharaoh refused to let them go. God sent plague after plague to change his mind until finally He sent the big one. The first born in every house would die. But before that happened, God told us this – ‘take a lamb, a perfect lamb, kill it and eat it, but before you do, take some of its blood and smear it on the door posts of your house. When I wreak havoc on Egypt, I will see that blood and know who is mine and I will spare them from the destruction that I am about to work.’

Those lambs died so that our sons would live. And because they died, the people were delivered.

If Jesus was the Lamb of God, then He was the Passover Lamb – the Lamb who would die in His people’s place to deliver them from sin. The wages of sin is death, but Jesus died in our place so that we would live. Jesus is the ultimate Passover Lamb.

And not only that, He’s the ultimate atonement goat. See every year was Yom Kippur – the Day of Atonement – when the priests would cleanse the community and act out forgiveness.

Well, on that day, the high priest would take a goat, and confess our sin onto its head. I never really understood how this worked, but the priests said that our sin went from us onto it. And then they took that sin-ridden goat and kicked it out of the camp and off it went into the desert, carrying our sin.

If Jesus carries our sin away, then He is the ultimate atonement God, taking our sin upon His body and carrying it far far away.

What did the psalmist say? 12 as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us (Psa 103:11-12 NIV).

Our Saviour Jesus came to be the ultimate Passover lamb, the ultimate atonement goat! He came to take our sin upon His body and carry it away, to die in our place so that we could be forgiven.

Indeed: ‘Behold! The Lamb of God! Who takes away the sin of the world.’

It was all so much to process. This was Him! The Saviour! The Lamb! The one we’d been waiting for! The one that John had prepared us for!

But what about John? I'd learned so much from him. He introduced me to Jesus and led me to life; I couldn't just leave him behind, could I?

I went to him one day, apart from the crowd, and I asked him. 'John' I said. 'You've taught me so much. I can never thank you enough for introducing me to Jesus...' and my voice trailed off. I felt like I was abandoning him.

But John looked me in the eye and knew what I meant and he smiled and said 'then I've done my part. 30 He must become greater; I must become less. (Joh 3:30 NIV).'

And John 1:35 says this:

35 The next day John was there again with two of his disciples.  
36 When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!"  
37 When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus.

I really struggled this week with how to present this. It's so profound and yet so simple.

Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world – that means that Jesus took upon Himself my sin and your sin and the sin of the world – every evil thought, every evil deed that we have ever done and WILL ever do and carried it in His body to the Cross and there He died in our place so that our sin would be forgiven and we would have life.

*5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.*

*6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

That's a powerful truth.

What do we do with it?

Well, first off, let me say this – if you have ever sinned – and I know you have because we've all put ourselves before God and that's sin! – if you've ever sinned – then –

Behold! Jesus! The Lamb, who takes away the sin of the world.

He's the Saviour. He's the one to turn to, to turn from sin and to follow Him, just like our disciple did.

When you confess your sin, Jesus becomes your Passover Lamb, dying in your place, carrying your sin as far away as the East is from the West. It's gone! You are forgiven! Full stop. Own that sacrifice! Hide yourself beneath His blood because you belong to Him.

And realize, that Jesus has carried your sin far, far away. He has carried it with Him on His body and it died with Him there on the Cross. It's gone.

A couple years ago, we had a Q from the Pew saying 'I know God's forgiven me but I can't forgive myself,' well, this is relevant here. Jesus took your sin on HIM like an atonement goat and carried it away and it is gone. Objectively gone. Let it go.

Same with sins that still trip us up even when we are forgiven. Things that we stumble in habitually, even though we're free. Jesus has carried them off too. Let them go! Follow the Lamb and let Him lead you away from sin and into LIFE.

Jesus gave His life to give *you* life; give YOUR life to following Him.

Follow the Lamb.

#### BENEDICTION

26. Rev. 5:12, 13 - Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing! ...To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!  
May you live in the glory of the Lamb. Go in peace.

## Communion

**\*Powerpoint operator – There are three slides quoting Isaiah 53; display one when the papers are collected, one with bread is distributed and one when cup goes out.**

As we turn our attention to the Table, I want to revisit the Passover Lamb and the Atonement Goat. It's one thing to talk about it but another to do it, so here's what I want you to do, to act out all that we've talked about today. You've been given a strip of paper and in your mind, I want you to imagine that you are transferring all of your sin – all that you've done, all that you will do – all of your sin onto that paper. In a sense it is a stand in for Jesus' body. Now I'm going to send around the ushers to collect them and carry them away. Think of Jesus taking your sin upon Himself and carrying it away. Let's pray.

Lord, we admit that we sin. We admit that we fall short of Your glorious ideal. But in Your boundless mercy, You have given us a perfect sacrifice to take away your sin. We surrender our sin to you now and ask you to carry it away. (Collect).

### BREAD

When Jesus met with His disciples at the Table, I'll bet He was starting to feel the weight of the world's sins upon Him. He knew that it would kill Him and yet He bore it to the Cross.

And it makes His words even more significant. This is my body, broken for you.

His body broken for our sins. His life given to win ours back. You will not die because of this. (Rip the paper.) Jesus did instead.

Distribute bread (how deep the Father's love)

Pray and then eat.

WINE When the Passover Lamb died, its blood protected those who hid themselves beneath it.

And Jesus is our Passover Lamb.

His blood protects us, it cleanses us, it promises us an eternal inheritance with God.

All by grace when we believe.

This is Jesus' blood, poured out to seal God's commitment to us, for the forgiveness of sin. Let your heart rejoice.

Distribute

Pray and eat.