

Sermon Text for January 9, 2022

By Rev. Robert K. Bromkema

Exodus 12:1-13, John 1:29-34 ***“Jesus the man baptized by John”***

One of the most powerful experiences that I have had as a pastor didn't have to do with what I did for someone else, but rather what someone did for me that allowed me to experience the presence of the Holy Spirit in a very clear and moving way. We were in the Jordan River, three pastors, John Meck, pastor at Strasburg Mennonite, Jeff Lampl, retired pastor at Community Live Center in New London and me and we were all rededicating or baptizing people each from our respective communities in the actual Jordan River.

The line of people came to an end and like that Ethiopian eunuch who was alongside Philip I looked at John Meck and Jeff Lampl and said what is to prevent me from being rededicated? They took me and dunked me, and we in turn dunked each other and we all rededicated our lives to Jesus Christ right there and then in the Jordan River. John and Jeff and I are now tied together with a bond that is inexplicable and comes straight from the Holy Spirit.

Last Sunday in confirmation by Providence the topic of the sacraments and baptism is what was on the agenda and so talked about baptism being a visible sign of God's invisible and how it is such a powerful example of how God chooses us well before we are able to choose God. Today on our liturgical calendar we are to celebrate the Sunday that is called the baptism of Jesus. It is on this day that we celebrate that John the Baptist baptized Jesus and when he did the heaven's opened and God spoke and said this is my son, the beloved, with whom I am well pleased.

We are still in that sermon series that we have called Jesus the baby...but now that baby has grown into a man and he is being baptized by John. With this Scripture in John we could go so many different directions because it allows us to. We could talk about this title of Lamb of God that Jesus is given by John. We could talk about the dove and the presence of the Holy Spirit throughout this Scripture. We could talk about John the Baptist being able to identify the pre-existence of Jesus from the even before creation.

We are going to focus on that first one, that Jesus is called the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. We have heard that phrase if you come from a Roman Catholic tradition during the eucharist, we see it here in these verses and that we are about to read and in other places in the Bible. What does it mean for us as baptized Christians that Jesus is the lamb

of God who takes away the sins of the world and so by extension has taken away our individual sins as his children. Let's read.

READ

I do hope that you are following along in our 9 month program of reading through the Bible. Very few things have been able to keep me disciplined, and I have to say, so far so good. Please keep me accountable and please continue to follow along. It will be life giving. Did you notice for those of you who are following along that this Scripture was one of the Scriptures that we were supposed to read the second day? Again, I put the sermon series together well before I knew we were going to do this read through the Bible thing. So this Scripture should be somewhat familiar to some of us as we look at it this morning.

What does it mean when John uses this term to call Jesus out as he sees him walking toward him in the distance? What did John mean? There are a lot of options. He could have been describing the conquering lamb that is talked about in Revelation 7 who comes with power and authority and might, but no, that doesn't make a lot of sense. He could be talking about the suffering servant that we have seen in Isaiah 53 who is described as a lamb who is brought to his shearers and doesn't say a mumbling word.

Probably not that either, but more than likely John was describing as the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world as the lamb that we read about in Exodus, the Passover lamb, or what we could call, the paschal lamb. Did you see what took place in Exodus. God calls Moses and Aaron to slaughter a lamb, a lamb that would be sacrificed so that its blood could be put on the doorposts which in turn would save the people of Israel from the angel of death that would pass over. The death of this lamb was necessary so that its blood could be used to save the people from the death that was passing over them.

How is Jesus this lamb of God? In John 19:14 we read that Jesus is declared guilty and condemned to death at noon the day before Passover, which was the only day and time that the lambs in the temple would be slaughtered in order to prepare for the high holy day of Passover. In John 19:29 we read that hyssop was given to Jesus with wine or vinegar on it while he hung on the cross. In Exodus we read that the people were to use hyssop in order to smear the blood on the lintels, or the door posts of the house. In John 19:36 we read that not a bone broken of Jesus, similar to the lamb that the people were supposed to use on the Passover had to be one where not a bone was broken.

Jesus the lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world. In I Corinthians 5:7 we read Paul say: For our paschal, or Passover, lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed. And then even

more to the point we read in I Peter 1:19 that we were redeemed: “with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish.”

When John sees Jesus and calls out to him with the crowds of people watching and everyone hears him say: this is the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, they would have known exactly what that meant. We have someone whom God has chosen to be the one who will liberate us from the bondage and the slavery that we are now in. John meant from the sins that oppress us and keep us from being the people that God wants us to be. The people probably heard a freedom that was much more earthy and tangible and which probably led from being persecuted to being triumphant.

But what does it mean to us today that Jesus is the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world? It certainly ties in with the baby who was conceived out of wedlock. Remember back in Matthew 1:21 when the angel visited Joseph and told him: You shall name him Jesus, why is that? Why would Joseph name this son that was not his Jesus? Someone finish that verse for me. This Jesus who was revealed to us as I John 1:5 states: you know that he was revealed to take away sins.

This Jesus whom we worship. This God made flesh, unlike the paschal lamb, the lamb of the Passover, chose to die so our sins would be washed clean. This Jesus chose to die so that our lives would ultimately be without sin so that when we are face to face with the Father on judgment day we will only be looked at through the lens of an innocent Jesus who has taken all of our sins upon himself.

What impact on your own life does it mean that you are without sin? It is the new year and we just last week recommitted our lives to Christ with the covenant renewal service. But what sin do we still continue to struggle with? Are we unfaithful and it is a secret that is gnawing at us and we don't know how long we can do this? Do we find ourselves unwilling to be disciplined and just have time for ourselves and our own interests above everyone else's? Or maybe we aren't even dealing with sin at all. But we are just overwhelmed. It takes a lot to raise a family these days and maybe you just aren't feeling supported, is the blood of Jesus able to help me out at all?

Or maybe we are drained because our physical bodies seem to suffer one blow after another and we just know that the other shoe is going to drop. What is it in our lives that we need to be redeemed, washed clean, where the blood of the lamb can come and wash us clean and give us new life. Here is what I want you to do. I want you to think about what it is in your

life that is holding you back, that is causing you to live in defeat or death or whatever else it might be.

Put it in the pew holders right there in front of you. We have a great sexton who is doing a wonderful job. He will get rid of it for you. Actually, better yet, the blood of Jesus is going to wash all over what you have left there. It is going to wash it clean so that it simply no longer exists. Whatever you left on that pew, Jesus' blood has washed it away. You need to believe that Jesus loves you so much that even while you were yet a sinner, even while you were overwhelmed with life, even while you were anxious about your health, even while you worried about making ends meet, Jesus died for you, chose to die for you so that you could know the truth, and the truth would make you free. Leave it in the pew, Jesus' blood will wash it away. Now go, live your life free of sin, and worry, and stress, and anxiety, and doubt, and anything else that is not of God.

Amen.