

John 1: 35-42

**The next day he saw Jesus coming towards him and declared,
‘Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!’**

This is he of whom I said:

**“After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me
because he was before me.”**

**“I myself did not know him;
but I came baptizing with water for this reason:
that he might be revealed to Israel.”**

**And John testified, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove,
and it remained on him.**

**I myself did not know him,
but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me,
“he on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain,
is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.”**

And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God.”

**The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples,
and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed,**

“Look, here is the Lamb of God!”

The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus.

When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them,

“What are you looking for?”

**They said to him, ‘Rabbi’
(which translated means Teacher),**

‘Where are you staying?’

He said to them,

“Come and see”

**They came and saw where he was staying,
and they remained with him that day.**

It was about four o'clock in the afternoon.

One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.

He first found his brother Simon and said to him,

“We have found the Messiah’ (which is translated Anointed).

He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said,

You are Simon, son of John.

You are to be called ‘Cephas’ (which is translated Peter)

Meditation

**You know, sometimes this job drives me crazy!
Most of the time...I loooove what I do...
but sometimes I find myself really struggling with the
Scripture readings and today is one of those days...**

**Today's reading contains a line which has been misunderstood
with grave consequences for a very long time.**

**It's when John the Baptizer sees Jesus and calls out:
*'Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'***

**Now, I think most of us already know that the ancient Jews
would bring animals to the temple for sacrifice.
They would use goats or doves or lambs...
depending upon the kind of sacrifice the people needed,
including a 'sin offering' for God's forgiveness..**

**And many of us were taught...I know that I was...
that Jesus was crucified because of my sins...
that his crucifixion was the whole reason for his life...
that God sent Jesus to suffer and die on the cross so that I could go to Heaven.**

**So a lot of us were given this deep guilt that can surface when
we hear Jesus being called the "Lamb of God"
because we believe that he was crucified because of my
personal, individual sins...**

Now...did you know that the literal translation of the word 'Gospel' is Good News

I don't know about you...but Jesus being crucified because of my sins does not sound like "Good News" to me.

It is not Good News to believe in a God who needs human sacrifice in order to forgive the sins of humankind....

That's the same old religion, that humanity has practiced from the beginning of time... that is not the radically Good News of Jesus...

Let's just say that once and for all...

So...is there another way to understand what John the Baptist calls out upon seeing Jesus:

'Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'
of course!

Theologian and Biblical scholar John Shea puts it most succinctly...

Shea says: "Sin does not refer to the many individual transgressions of the human race. Rather it points to the fundamental alienation of God from creation. Jesus bridges this basic separation."

The 'sin of the world' that John the Baptizer proclaims is not my personal sins...it's not your personal sins...

it is our common blindness to the sacredness of all of creation....

that is our fundamental alienation that has all of us doing the ugly and ignorant things that we as human being often do...

We have eyes but do not see... the presence of the Kingdom of God..

We have ears but do not hear the presence of the Reign of Heaven on this good, green Earth.

Jesus....if we are open...

opens our eyes,

unplugs our ears..

enlarges our hearts

so that we might see the Holiness in which we literally

live and move and have our being...

If we begin to reflect upon the many miracle stories in scripture

with this understanding of sin...

Not as our personal wrong doings...

but as our universal blindness to God's presence...

Well then...miracles seem so much more...well, not only just possible...

but also so much more real....

Jesus constantly preached, constantly taught that Yahweh

was not a tyrant sitting on a distant throne condemning and judging...

needing to have things or people sacrificed...

But an Abba God...who rushed out to greet the wayward son who was returning home...

a God who would sweep her house clean until she could find the one who was lost....

a God who would set a table full of fine food and invite everyone to the banquet....

a God who loved the lilies of the field and the ravens in the air...

This God was—is-- always waiting for us...

waiting for humanity to return and to see...

which is one of the meanings of the "metanoia".

I know that metanoia is often translated as repent...and that is sad...

because then we beat our breasts and proclaim our unworthiness...

but most of the time it doesn't any good...

we just keep doing the hurtful things over and over

and we keep beating our breasts and feeling guilty

perhaps someone reminds us of God's forgiveness...

and so then we feel better ...

until the cycle begins again.

But.... opening our eyes and our hearts to the see the presence of God everywhere...especially where and in whom we can't imagine God's presence:

Well...it is then and there that we can make a difference.

It is then that we find ourselves feeding the hungry not out of guilt or a desire to make it into heaven...

but because we see their sacredness and we see the injustice of hunger

It is then that we find ourselves seeking and working for justice

in all of its many shapes and faces

for all of God's people and all of God's creation...

Not just for us and ours...

When we see the presence of God radiating from all of God's creation...

we will have seen the Presence of the Kingdom of God...

the Reign of Heaven on Earth..

This is the Good News that Jesus lived for...

and it is the Good News he died for....

His death was not dictated by a distant deity

who demand 'justice' or payback....

So, let us say that clearly...

Jesus refused to deny the unboundaried, unconditional and eternal Love of God...

He refused to take back what he knew to be true...

He was willing to pay the consequences for believing and sharing such

a radically Good News...

His death was demanded by people, human beings...

with closed minds and hard hearts.

**The faith we claim to profess: God's unconditional love, is beautiful
it gives us courage and strength and hope and peace...
but it is also an expectant faith.**

**Our faith expects us to walk in the footsteps of Jesus....
to do as he did,
to love as he did,
to forgive as he did...
he was 100% human just like we are...
His sacrifice wasn't any easier just because we declare him to be the Son of God.**

**Our sacrifice isn't any less possible because we too
are the Daughters and Sons of God...**

**It seems to me that the biggest difference between Jesus and us
is that he took his relationship with the Holy One seriously..
He really believed it and
he really, really lived it!
He really believed that it was as simple and as difficult as that...
So the real question before us this day is:
What is that we really believe?**

amen.