

Prayer of the Day:

Almighty God, you gave your one and only Son to be the light of the world. Grant that your people, illumined by your Word and sacraments, may shine with the radiance of Christ's glory, that he may be known, worshipped, and believed to the ends of the earth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Verse of the Day:

Alleluia. He said to me, "You are my servant in whom I will display my splendor." Alleluia. (Isaiah 49:3 cf. NIV)

Sermon Text:

Eureka! It's a word that has long been attributed to Archimedes, an ancient Greek mathematician who apparently shouted out the exclamation upon finding a solution to a problem. It literally means, "I found it!" Long after this event, the word can still be heard as people come to some realization or when the light bulb flashes on suddenly in the mind. There is another word for that to in our modern vocabulary. We could say he had an "epiphany".

It's in the season of Epiphany, that we often then find a twofold focus woven throughout the lessons. Certainly, the Magi help us to see that Jesus is for everyone, regardless of age, color, gender or social standing. But it's also a season in which again and again, we have opportunity to rejoice in our own personal epiphanies as God deepens our understanding of who the Child really is and what He has come to do before we see it in all its fearsome detail in the coming season of Lent. That brings us to our Gospel Lesson today. Here, we are invited to join John in His Eureka moment which He then shares with all those gathered at the banks of the Jordan River as He calls out, "**LOOK, THE LAMB OF GOD!**"

Interestingly enough, John says he wouldn't have known Jesus without help. Oh, surely he knew that the whole reason for his birth and work was to prepare the way for this One. In fact, he says as much. And no doubt, he was personally acquainted with Jesus and his mother had told

Text: John 1:29-41

²⁹ The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" ³⁰ This is the one I meant when I said, 'A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.' ³¹ I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel." ³² Then John gave this testimony: "I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him." ³³ I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' ³⁴ I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God." 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. ³⁸ Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?" They said, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?" ³⁹ "Come," he replied, "and you will see." So they went and saw where he was staying, and spent that day with him. It was about the tenth hour. ⁴⁰ Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. ⁴¹ The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). – NIV84

him of the Child born of their relative Mary. But John had not yet apparently fully understood the significance and importance of these events. This needed to be revealed to Him, and it was. John announces that for all to hear, *“I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him.”*³³ *I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’*³⁴ *I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God.”*

This Jesus is the Messiah, the long promised Savior of the World. He’s everything needed to heal a sin sick world, purify the filthy flesh of humanity and send Satan packing. God’s Son, perfection personified, unblemished and undefiled that He might be the Lamb of God, the perfect sacrifice for the sins of all. Sin in Old Testament Israel required slaughter, blood, an unblemished perfect lamb, all a picture of the reality that would take away sin forever. Peter, to whom Andrews runs with this news will later write, ¹⁸ *For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers,* ¹⁹ *but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.* ²⁰ *He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.* ²¹ *Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God (1 Peter 1:18-21).*

You and I need an Epiphany. Born into this world, we are sinners just as our parents and their parents before us. If our fussy attitudes and self centered explosions aren’t enough to prove that immediately to mom and dad, then as we grow so does the sin. Temper tantrums, harsh words, improper thoughts, gossip, idolatries and adultery, it all simply proves that the fruit doesn’t fall so very far from the tree. And sinfulness requires death. *The soul who sins is the one who will die (Ezekiel 18:20)!*

And so we need a sacrifice, a Lamb without blemish or defect. We need the Son of God! Of course in our sinfulness, we would never know him. We would never understand it all. Even if the facts we stuffed into our heads, we would simply reject it as to unimaginable to believe. So the Holy Spirit descends again to illuminate the Savior for sin darkened hearts and minds. He comes to us in simple water connect to a gracious Gospel promise to give us faith which sees Jesus and cries out, ***“LOOK, THE LAMB OF GOD, who takes away the sin of the world!”*** He strengthens us as regularly instructs us in His Holy Word, revealing sin in the Law that we might see our Savior with deepening clarity and ever growing appreciation in the Gospel. He revisits struggling sinners, as that very Gospel touches our lips in Bread and Wine, the very Body and Blood of the Lamb who gave Himself for us, allowing His precious blood to be poured out in place of our own.

Part of the understanding, imparted at Epiphany is our own Christian Life in every since of the phrase. You see we need this Jesus as much as the godless hordes out there. We need Him because we are no different than those whom we so often look down our noses at. We need The Lamb of God, to take away our sin. That’s a realization worth regularly remembering, revisiting as often as I sin, as often as I’m confronted with sin while living in a sinful world. No wonder the writer of the book of Hebrews would urge us to run to the means of grace *all the more as we see the day approaching (Hebrews 10:25).*

However, good news always is accompanied by something else. As the old story goes, upon discovering the answer to his mathematical problem Archimedes leapt from the pool in

which he was bathing and ran home screaming “Eureka” for all to hear. In his estimation, this realization was exciting and needed to be shared, right now!

John the Baptist, is no different. While this message of salvation is important for each of us in our sinfulness, as the Spirit works faith within us, we won’t want to bottle that up. John begins to point everyone to this Jesus who has been revealed as the long awaited Savior from sin. In fact, our lesson is full of these examples. As John points to Jesus, two of his disciples run off to follow Him. Andrew is one (perhaps the other is John) and after spend some time with Jesus, He runs off to tell His brother Peter. Both become disciples, apostles. Peter will even be used by God to record some of the books of the New Testament. This Gospel message of ***THE LAMB OF GOD** who takes away the sin of the world* has its effect on the people of God as the Spirit goes to work within it.

So it remains today. I’m always amazed at how this Gospel goes to work in the lives of the people of our congregation. Every year, more people walk through the door to hear the good news proclaimed here and you know what it’s not because of the golden tongues of the pastors that proclaim it. Instead, it’s usually because a family member, a friend, a co-worker has like John direct their attention to the Lamb, to Jesus, who takes away their sin. No, I don’t think it’s ever been because you stood on the banks of river screaming “Look, the Lamb of God” but in our own ways we been doing the work. It was evident in the quite witness of a loving spouse, the godly attitude of the person at work and so eventually they asked their questions and were directed to look at Jesus. It was there as the friend reached out for help to hear in your comforting words of forgiveness from a loving God. Perhaps we never even saw them at all, but our support of church and synod made it possible for people to be reached none the less and more and more have seen the bright flash of the light of faith, the light of the Word, as the Spirit does His work and calls us to behold the Lamb.

Of late, I’ve heard more and more illustrations which speak of the inhumanity of the Christian who doesn’t evangelize. If I had the cure for cancer and didn’t share it, if I knew someone was going to die and didn’t tell them how to avoid it, if I could prevent some terrible catastrophe and chose not to well then I’d be some monster, right? And certainly, these illustrations present us with a realization of the urgency of Gospel proclamation but perhaps the motivation is a bit off. You see in my sinfulness, I already am a monster. That’s what sin has done to all of us. But that’s why John announces our Savior and urges us to look to Him. It’s a realization worth remembering often. As people given that gift through faith, it’s also worth reporting to others. It needs to be shared. So, in our own ways, may we always be found running through the streets shouting, “***LOOK THE LAMB OF GOD, who takes away the sin of the world.***” Amen!