

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

My brothers and my sisters in Christ Jesus. Hey, we need cereal. Jacqueline says as they pass by the aisle in the grocery store. Why don't you go and grab some? On it, Tom replies. Looking at the selection, he grabs a box. Ok, this one is new. It seems like it could be good. But then again, I'm not sure if I'll like it that much I've tried something similar to it, but it wasn't that great. I always liked this kind, but I'm not sure if I'm going to be in the mood for it later. You know what? I'm gonna get it anyways. Oh, hold on, buy one get one? But not for this cereal; ok, well, now I'm gonna have to look at these other kinds, one that I like and one that Jacqueline likes. Well, ok, they don't have the one I know she likes, ok. The inner dialogue continues for a while, and all of a sudden, 8 minutes later, Jacqueline's voice comes up behind Tom, saying: “What's taking so long! It's just cereal; you can just pick one. It's not that complicated.”

This story may or may not be inspired by the real events of someone, perhaps a pastor who shall remain nameless, who makes everything way too complicated, even cereal. Much to the annoyance of his wife. But my guess is that even if you are not married to me, you know how easy it is to make things way too complicated. It makes things a lot more complex than they need to be. Looking into a deluge of information that overlaps and intertwines.

And it's not that complexity is bad. The complexities of certain concepts can really be things that are important and have an intense impact. But oftentimes, it can become very easy to start to focus on those little things. And those complexities can sometimes leave your head spinning and stagnant. In those times of confusion, you need something simple, and powerful to be able to run back to.

And in our text for today, we have one of those great confessions, no. I think one of those great sentences in Scripture. It is a single sentence that is so clear and so focused. So simple, yet so profound. So brief, yet so powerful. A single sentence has all of the meaning that we need to know that we need never to forget. It is a message that is spoken of by John the Baptist as he points to Jesus. One that encompasses two great truths that are key and central to Christianity, to faith, to salvation. It is the message of sin and grace, summarized in the words: “Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”

There you have it sin—the sin of the world. There is no hiding it. There is no denying it. There is sin. There is sin in the world. John's words lay it out clearly as the world's sin. Every single one of us has been sinful, no matter how much we might try to avoid it. God's divine law is clearly laid out in the Scriptures, and we have missed the mark. It's

what the word sin means. There is a target that God has laid out, a bullseye to hit, and we have missed it. In our corruption by our words, by our deeds, by the very thoughts that we have in our heads, we have been stained over and over again by these. Sin is a universal problem; every human being has had the target with the bullseye and missed, missed it badly.

And the price for sin is apparent. It is death. Where there is sin, there is death. In the Old Testament, this would have been very hard to ignore. Through the sacrificial system, it would never have been in doubt what the payment for sin required—day after day. Year after year, you would go to the temple. And there at the temple, you would see and bring your sacrifices. You would go there together, and there have to witness an animal being killed. There at the temple, cognizant of your wrongs, you would see as a living thing would be given to a priest. It would be killed. That animal would have to die. Blood would be sprinkled. The carcasses would be burned. Death was all around. Because sin brings death. Sin has to be paid for. And over and over again, you would see that. Throughout your life, from your childhood to your old age, you would see those animals be slaughtered because you were a sinner.

And that price for sin has not gone away. Where there is sin, there has to be payment. Where there is sin, there has to be death. It cannot be otherwise. So what hope is there? What hope is there for the sins of the whole world? When you think of all of the sins that just you have committed, and you magnify and think of all of the sins, all of the transgressions that have taken place for every single person on the earth, and then go further and think of all of the sins that have been committed by everyone who has ever lived on this earth. There is not enough blood in this world that could take these away. There are not enough animals to sacrifice to do away with it.

But there is one lamb who can. It is the lamb of God. The one whom John the Baptist proclaims. It is the lamb that the countless lambs of the Old Testament foreshadowed: Jesus Christ. This lamb is so different from those many thousands of sacrificed lambs. This was God himself. God himself wrapped in human flesh. God so that even from his very conception, there was no hint of sin in him. Jesus was perfect. Holy and blameless, needing no sacrifice, no payment for sins of his own. Having that target of perfection and never once missing it.

And the mission of this perfect lamb of God is clear. All of those sacrifices in the Old Testament point to the necessary sacrifice. All of the words of the Scriptures point to the necessity and the promise of this man. He would be the one who redeems the world from their sins. His blood would be shed. He would be the substitute for the payment of the world's sins. He would take upon himself the burden of sin. He bears the load of sin that no one could ever do.

By his perfect blood that was shed, the death that he suffered, he takes away sin. Not just your sin, not just my sin, but the sins of the whole world. That incalculable number of the sins of every person who lives. Every sin that you have ever committed in your entire life. Every sin that has been committed by anybody from the time of creation to the time when this world ends is taken up and taken away by Jesus' blood that was shed on the cross—taken away—paid for. Gone. Our sins were placed upon Jesus, and his perfection given to us in return.

This is the simple, powerful message of Christianity. Sin is real. Everyone has sinned. The consequences of sin are death. But God sent his son Jesus Christ, who was perfect. And by his blood, all the world's sins are taken away. All those who put their faith in him will be saved.

And did you catch it? “When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus.” No doubt John had done some more teaching in his time with them, but after the simple message of sin and grace, two disciples, Andrew and John, follow Jesus. This simple message has the power to turn hearts to Christ and make followers.

Why does this matter? We know what it means for us and the salvation of our own souls, but many times we can become uncertain of our own abilities to be an evangelist in the world around us. We can get hung up on those complexities. I really can't tell someone about my faith because I'm not sure if I am able to explain all of the complex details about the Bible. There are so many things that I don't know. I won't be able to answer all of the questions they might have, or any objections that they might raise.

But I can promise you. You do know enough. You have everything that is needed to bring the message of salvation to others who do not know it. You have everything that is needed to make followers of Christ. It is that simple message, that sentence that John speaks. It is the simple message of sin and grace.

Brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus, in this world of complexity and confusion. There will always be times that things get more complicated than they need to be, perhaps even in the cereal aisle. But never ever forget that message of John. The message of your salvation. When you can't believe that you fell again you can say simply: “Look, the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. When you have sinned and Satan comes creeping to your side: Say simply, powerfully: “Look the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. When you are on your death bed, ready to meet God, you can simply say: “Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” Amen.