

John 1:29-42

John the Baptist calls Jesus ‘the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.’ How did John know to refer to Jesus as this? He said God revealed it to him, that God revealed his Son would be coming into the world and he would know it was God’s Son because the Spirit rested upon him. Isn’t that a strange way to refer to a person, as the Lamb of God?

We think of the Lamb of God in terms of sacrifice, Jesus being the sacrificial lamb who takes away sin. However, I just learned this week that the Israelites didn’t sacrifice lambs as a sin offering. Sin offerings were goats or full grown sheep; the lamb offering was carried out in remembrance of the Passover, as a reminder of how the blood of a perfect, unblemished lamb was painted over the doors of the Hebrew people in order to protect them from death.

The second time John the Baptist refers to Jesus as the Lamb of God two of his followers begin to follow Jesus. Jesus asks them what they are seeking. Instead of giving Jesus a direct answer, probably because the question took them off guard and they really didn’t know what they were looking for, they asked him where he was staying. His response was “come and see.” Jesus very likely could have explained to them where the place he was staying was located, but instead he gave them an invitation to follow him. Jesus extends that invitation to the two men, and we know that through that invitation Andrew became a disciple, a follower, of Jesus.

Andrew was convinced Jesus was the Messiah and he told his brother, Simon Peter, to come see for himself. When Jesus met Simon he told him he was to be called Cephas, meaning Peter. It is also the Aramaic word for “rock”. We know that Peter also became a disciple, a follower of Jesus.

God called Isaiah to lead his people, he sent Jesus to teach us how to follow, Jesus called his disciples, and Paul was called to bring God’s truth to people. What amazes me is most of Paul’s writings come while he was living imprisoned. Instead of moping, feeling sorry for himself, Paul filled his time with listening to God and sharing God’s message to the young churches. He called people to follow Jesus. God still calls people to follow Jesus. Jesus the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

He rolls it away, he lifts it up, he lightens the burden of sin, taking away the fear of death. There’s a story you may have heard about a man who was sitting in his doctor’s office. The man was fearful of dying, asking his doctor what happens when people die? The doctor’s office was in his house, and a door separated his office from the rest of his home. On the other side of the door there was a dog scratching and whining to come into the doctor’s office, something that he never allowed to happen. He explained to the man, “You hear my dog on the other side of the door? He has never been in this office, he doesn’t know what is in this room. Except he knows I am in here. He is confident he will be safe in here only because I am here. That is what death is like. We don’t know what the other side is like, but we do know what the person who is on the other side is like. That person is Jesus and we know that no matter what we might face on the other side of life, that Jesus is there and because we know Jesus, we will be safe.”

How do we know Jesus? You know the answer. We know Jesus because of the Bible, what Jesus said and did. We know Jesus because we’ve invited him into our heart to live and guide us. We see Jesus in other people when we reach out to build relationships. I think relationships are the key. Why do we hold back from building relationships?

Maybe we are afraid of being hurt. Many of us have been in a position where we thought we could trust a person with our secrets but found out that wasn't the case. Building relationships takes being vulnerable, and when we've been hurt we build a wall to keep from being hurt.

Another reason we may not build relationships is fear. Some people hide behind masks of who they want people to see them as, when inside they are not that person. They don't want another person to see what they are hiding for fear of being judged; for fear of not being good enough.

Or it could be that a person might think so highly of them self that they don't think the other person is good enough to be their friend. They don't want to be associated with "that kind of person".

Jesus came to take away the walls, the fears, the pride. He came to raise up the lowly and to allow us to see everyone as equal in God's sight. I remember a Sunday school song "Red and yellow, black and white, we are precious in his sight. Jesus loves the little children of the world." We can add to that rich and poor, strong and weak, sick and well, Jesus loves us all. And he wants us to follow him, to do what he does by standing against that which harms others. By caring for one another. The best way to do that is to build a relationship with someone who is not like you.

How do you build relationships? You ask people about themselves and allow them to answer without cutting them off. You really listen to what they are saying, not to formulate what you are going to say next, but to hear what they are talking about. Ask open ended questions that require more than just a yes or no answer. Listen and respond in a way that improves mutual understanding, not to prove that you are right and they are wrong, but to understand their point of view. Learn that it is ok to disagree and still be friendly. There's nothing I enjoy more than seeing rival team players start conversations with one another after the game, no matter which team won. Yes, there are evil people whose intent is to harm you, you do have to protect yourself, be careful about where you are and who is around you when you hold a conversation. Make sure you aren't in a position where you can be harmed. I believe there are far more good people than evil, but you won't know if a person is good unless they are given a chance. What if Jesus decided not to give you a chance?

That isn't something we have to worry about. Jesus is the man of not only second chances but third and fourth and more. Jesus is the Lamb of God who came to lighten our load, to remove our sin, and to take away the fear of death.

All glory be to God.