**The Last Prophet: John**

**John Speaks,**

**“Behold, The Lamb of God!**

**John 1:29-41**

Advent 3 Midweek – 12.14.2022

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

We have been looking at John, he is the Advent prophet, and you know that John was baptizing in the Jordan. What was the purpose of John’s ministry? To point to Jesus! As we have heard, John was a man to whom the crowds came in droves. The whole region came to the Jordan to repent of their sins and to be baptized by John. John was a great man in the kingdom.

John could have declared, “look at the wonderful work I am doing in the kingdom of God.” Today, there are people making that proclamation everywhere you turn. I have this ministry. I have that ministry. It seems that everybody has some ministry. So many people are pointing to themselves and proclaiming their wonderful work for the Lord – I’m a minister of music! I’m a minster of church finances! I’m the youth minister!

John, the one spoken of as the Baptizer, points to Jesus and declares, *“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”*

John was preaching and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sin. To a good Jew in those days, everybody knew what had to happen for sins to be forgiven. There needed to be a sacrifice. In the book of Hebrews we read this, *In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.* (Hebrews 9:22) What was it that was sacrificed for sin? Usually a lamb! What kind of lamb? A lamb without blemish or mark, a perfect lamb.

So yes, John has been preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. He was proclaiming the day of the coming of God’s promised One. He was preparing the way for God’s Messiah. He was preaching repentance for the forgiveness of sins. But where would the blood come from to pay the price required for this forgiveness? John points at Jesus and says, *“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”*

Good Jews knew the reference. Passover was the great festival, celebrated every year. It was a remembrance of the events centuries before in Egypt. Before Pharaoh let the Israelites go, the last plague was all about the Passover Lamb which was slain. Was it so that God’s destroyer would pass over, or was it a prophecy about Jesus? Of course, it was a prophecy about Jesus, the Lamb of God.

Jesus is the Lamb of God. His blood was shed to mark the doorposts and lintel of our hearts. He died so that death might pass over us. His life given that we might be freed from our slavery to sin and at last enter the eternal Promised land.

We are all ready to be on with the Christmas hymns. It is only a week and a half away. Come on pastor, get with the program!

Dear friends in Christ, the greatest gift you can receive is what John declares to you.

John saw Jesus and pointed at him. You heard it earlier. *John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, 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 before me, because he was before me.’ I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel.” And John bore witness: “I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.”*

*The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God!” The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus.*

John could have proclaimed, “look how many people throng to listen to me preach, listen to me... Hear me... I have an important message to proclaim to you... No, John says, *“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!*

John, Jesus’ disciple, wrote a couple letters. In his first letter he wrote: *The blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.* (1 John 1:7-10)

John preaches repentance for forgiveness and then points to the price and purchasing power of forgiveness, *“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”*

Dearly beloved of God, What would you like me to do for you as we approach Christmas? Should I talk about the wonderful lights? Maybe the beautiful trees? How about the incredible baking – gotta love a Christmas stollen, right? How about the spirit of giving, and we need to help those less fortunate?

You know what, you do not need me to tell you about those things! You all know it.

John gets it right! There is nothing more important for you to know than what John proclaims and declares to you. It has eternal consequences. It speaks to all your failures in the things that you know you should be doing. John did at the Jordan river, and it is all that God’s prophets, those who bring His Word to His people have to offer. It is incredibly good news.

God Himself has sent His Son to redeem you from your sins. Your sins are forgiven. What we celebrate as wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger is the price that has been paid. John said it so well, *“Behold, the Lamb of God! “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”*

It was shortly after this that, John was arrested. He was imprisoned. He was beheaded for preaching repentance for the forgiveness of sins. People of his day didn’t want to hear they were sinners. They didn’t want to repent. They wanted to hear that they were good, decent, honest people. John called sinners to repentance, *“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”*

John didn’t tell the people how to be better Christians. He preached repentance and pointed and said, *“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”* The One who takes away the sin of the world is none other than God, the Son. The sacrifice to pay the blood price is the Lamb of God.

You want confidence to face each day? You want evidence of God’s love for you? You want to hear good news? *“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”*

You came into this place to be refreshed and renewed for your daily life. Here the message of this entire service, from the Invocation to the Benediction - *“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”*

From beginning to end, our liturgy is nothing else than Christ coming to you. He is the Very Word of God which speaks to you today and brings about the reality they proclaim. Your baptism united you to Christ, marked you with the sign of the cross, and the sign of the cross at the invocation says to you, “*Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”* God is present in our midst.

The confession of sins brings you to your knees, you acknowledge your unworthiness to stand in the presence of God, you confess the sinfulness of the worldly focus you have had as we prepare to celebrate Christ’s first Advent. There is no reason for you to be depressed, the absolution proclaims sins forgiven. Who forgives your sins? Christ is present, *“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”*

This sermon points you to the very love of God, it points you to Christ and the Spirit who works faith through the Word that you hear, *“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”*

In a few moments, you will come to the Table of the Lord. You will eat and drink that which was broken and shed for you – the very body and blood of the Lamb of God for the forgiveness of your sins. Before we kneel at table, we chant the Agnus Dei – O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the world, have mercy on us. With this Word of God you confess what is most true about the meal you will eat – the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world has mercy upon us and grants us peace.

You will come to this table. You will kneel. You will eat and drink. *“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”*

You are blessed to leave this place in God’s peace for the Lamb of God came to you today, He took away your sins and sends you back into the world forgiven, renewed, and refreshed. John is still prophesying, *“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes you’re your sin!”* Amen.