

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our heavenly Father, through the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

John 1:29-42 (EHV)

²⁹ The next day, John the Baptist 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 was talking about when I said, ‘The one coming after me outranks me because he existed before me.’ ³¹ I myself did not know who he was, but I came baptizing with water so that he would be revealed to Israel.”

³² John also testified, “I saw the Spirit descend like a dove from heaven and remain on him. ³³ I myself did not recognize him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘The one on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, he is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’” ³⁴ I saw this myself and have testified that this is the Son of God.”

³⁵ The next day, John was standing there again with two of his disciples. ³⁶ When John saw Jesus passing by, he said, “Look! The Lamb of God!” ³⁷ The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus.

³⁸ When Jesus turned around and saw them following him, he asked, “What are you looking for?”

They said to him, “Rabbi” (which means “Teacher”), “where are you staying?”

³⁹ He told them, “Come, and you will see.” So they came and saw where he was staying. They stayed with him that day. It was about the tenth hour.

⁴⁰ Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of the two who heard John and followed Jesus. ⁴¹ The first thing Andrew did was to find his own brother Simon and say to him, “We have found the Messiah!” (which is translated “the Christ”). ⁴² He brought him to Jesus.

Looking at him, Jesus said, “You are Simon, son of Jonah. You will be called Cephas” (which means “Peter”).

Dear Heavenly Father, send your Holy Spirit upon us so that we may continue to look in trust to our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Amen.

So, here’s something to ponder...

We all know and believe Jesus was born of Mary, correct?

And we all heard John the Baptist pointing to Jesus as the Lamb of God.

Does this mean that Mary had a little lamb? 😊

Now, whether anyone finds this funny or not, the fact John the Baptist pointed to Jesus as the Lamb of God is a very serious matter which brings much comfort and peace to us as Christians!

One of the first things we might learn from this is that John doesn’t say Jesus is just *A* lamb, but he’s *The* Lamb.

But for us to understand the significance of Jesus being *the* Lamb and what this means for us, we don’t go to a dictionary, Wikipedia, or Twitter, but we look back through Scripture. After all, Scripture interprets Scripture.

When we do this, we discover how Scripture has already described how the sacrifice of lambs often served to bring freedom, forgiveness, and peace between humans and God.

For instance, when the Israelites were enslaved in Egypt calling out for God to take notice of their misery and set them free, God sent Moses to ask Pharaoh to let God’s people go.

As we know, Pharaoh didn’t want to let his cheap labour go, so God taught him ten valuable lessons about who’s really the boss and that the request to let God’s people go wasn’t just a suggestion!

The last lesson is foundational for us to understand how God uses sacrificial lambs to pay the price for

freedom from slavery.

In this case, someone had to pay for the freedom of each family, and the price of freedom was the blood of every first-born male. This wasn't negotiable. It also didn't matter whether the first-born male was a good little boy or not.

But God also gave an important set of instructions about substitutionary atonement for those doomed to die.

If God's people killed a perfect year-old lamb as a sacrificial substitute for the life of the first-born male, and smeared the blood of that lamb over the door frames as a sign the life of the first-born has already been atoned for by the blood of the lamb, death would 'Passover' that family. The lamb would pay the blood-and-life price for the first-born so the family would go free.

Once the people were freed from their slavery in Egypt and arrived in the Promised Land, lambs would continue to pay the blood-and-life price for people's freedom from sin, such as on the Day of Atonement, and many sacrificial meals for their forgiveness and cleansing, which would need to be repeated regularly.

But here John points not just to another substitutionary lamb, but to *the* substitutionary Lamb who would die for everyone's forgiveness, redemption, freedom, and life. John points to Jesus as *the* Lamb who takes away the sin of the world and wants us to fully understand and trust what Jesus does for you and me as *the* Lamb of God.

But you might argue you're not enslaved by anyone. Why would any of you need Jesus, the Lamb of God at all? What on earth did any of you do which would require Jesus to die for you?

After all, most of you might think you're basically good people who can't remember doing any bad things over this last week. If the punishment is supposed to fit the crime, couldn't Jesus just have taken three raps on the knuckle for the few things you've done wrong and called it square?

So, what on earth are all those terrible things you've ever thought, said, or done which demanded Jesus needed to suffer, bleed, and die for you?

Well, this leads us to our next lesson where John pointed to Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the *sin* of the world.

Why didn't John say Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the *sins* of the world?

Now, we might wonder what the difference is between 'sin' and 'sins', and it's not pointing to the difference between singular and multiple sins!

In this case, 'sins' are all those little thoughts, words, and actions you *do* which don't meet God's standards. But all those sinful thoughts, words, and actions come from a deeper *source* called 'sin'. They come from your *sinful condition*.

You might think of it this way: Your *sins* are the *fruit* which everyone sees. But your *sin* is the *tree* on which those sins hang from.

Another way to put it is your sins are *what* you do, but your sin is the reason *why* you do them.

For example:

Those judgmental words you said to someone in anger? Well, those *words* were sinful because they hurt someone made in the image of God for whom Christ has died. They may have also been untrue because you might often say things based on your own unresearched presumptions.

But what might be the *sin behind the sins* hidden in your heart which only God sees? It could be for many reasons, such as your ‘pride’ where you thought you’re better than them, or your ‘fear’ because you’re afraid they exposed something true or false about you. Your hurtful words are the *sinful fruit* which exposed your *sinful condition* which attempted to enthrone yourself as the king, judge, or god they needed to answer to, which means you’ve tried to unseat God from his throne and replaced him with yourself.

Similarly, that juicy bit of gossip about someone which you gleefully passed onto others without defending them, speaking up for them, or explaining their actions in a kind way? Those *words* broke the 8th Commandment, which are the *sins* people could see and hear, but they came from a deeper *sin within your heart*, such as jealousy, judgmentalism, or hatred.

In fact, every time you have a broken, strained, or unhealthy relationship with those around you as a result of your sinful words or actions, the *sin behind the sins* indicates your own relationship with God is also broken, strained, or unhealthy, after all, whenever you sin against another person, you always firstly sin against God because you’ve tried to replace him with yourself as the one everyone needs to answer to. This means you’re answerable to him, and the price of sin is death. And Jesus came as the Lamb of God to pay the price for your sin.

In this way, Jesus didn’t just come to take away the *fruit* of sin and leave the *root*. He didn’t come just to heal the *symptoms* of your sins, but he came to take away the *cause* of sin. He came to cleanse your *hearts*, where your sin often resides, and renew them – not so you would be sinless from now on (because that won’t happen this side of the grave), but so that you might glorify him in your words and actions, serve others, and grow to become more like him.

You see, this isn’t just a once-off action of Jesus to take away the sin of the world because the third thing we learn from Jesus’ title as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world is that the word ‘takes’ is a present active participle. This means the *taking away of sin is still present and active*.

For this reason, you could argue John is *still* pointing to Jesus as the Lamb of God who *continues* to take away the sin of the world.

So then, have any of you mouthed off at someone this week? Behold the Lamb of God who takes away your sin of impatience and pride!

Have any of you failed to give that word of encouragement and love to your wife, husband, child, or parent? Look at the Lamb of God who takes away your sin of neglecting to love and care for those around you!

Have any of you neglected to meditate on God’s word or pray for those in need? Pay attention to the Lamb of God who has taken away your sin of apathy and indifference!

Have any of you failed to forgive someone for what they did or said to you? Check out the Lamb of God who not only has paid the full blood price for *their* sin, but who also takes away *your* sin of unforgiveness as well!

Have any of you been abused by those around you which now defiles you? Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the uncleanness of sin from you so that you would become pure and holy once more!

In other words, this declaration by John is at the heart and centre of the good news of Jesus Christ; that Jesus removes all the sin which would hinder all the relationships between God and us and the world.

All those who look to Jesus and believe what he offers have exactly what’s promised – forgiveness, freedom, and peace. All those who look to Jesus in faith have their sin taken away so that they’re free to

love and serve as forgiven and cleansed people who belong in his kingdom.

The next time you come forward for Holy Communion, you'll take into yourself the body and blood of the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. When you return to your seat you're confident that not only have your individual sins been taken away, but also your sin residing within you which made you do those things. Of course, you'll sin again, but you'll come back again and again for this good news of your forgiveness and cleansing.

Similarly, when you go from this place with your hearts cleansed and renewed, you also do what John did. You too continue to point all those around you to Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, who takes away their sin as well.

In this way you can forgive your wives, husbands, children, parents, friends, and even your enemies. You can forgive them because in this way you're living out the truth of what Jesus does as the Lamb of God who takes away your sin, and their sin, and the sin of the whole world.

Therefore, brothers and sisters in Christ...

...may the peace of God, which surpasses all human understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Amen.

Pastor Stuart Kleinig
South Burnett Lutheran Parish
2nd Sunday after Epiphany
18th January 2026