

John 1:29-42a (Second Sunday after the Epiphany—Series A)

“Behold the Lamb—Make Known the Lamb”

Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer, Enfield CT

January 15, 2023

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

Our text is the Gospel lesson recorded in John 1:

<sup>29</sup>The next day [John] saw Jesus coming toward him and he said, “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. <sup>30</sup>This is He of whom I said ‘a man is coming after me who was before me, because He was first of me.’ <sup>31</sup>And I didn’t know Him, but so that He might be made known to Israel, on account of this I came baptizing with water.” <sup>32</sup>And John bore witness saying, “I saw the Spirit coming down as a dove out of heaven and remain on Him. <sup>33</sup>And I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water, He said to me, ‘Upon whom you see the Spirit come down and remain upon Him, He is the One who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ <sup>34</sup>And I have seen and I bear witness that He is the Son of God.” <sup>35</sup>The next day again, John was standing with two of his disciples, <sup>36</sup>and when he saw Jesus walking, he said, “Behold, the Lamb of God.” <sup>37</sup>And when the two disciples heard him speaking, they followed Jesus. <sup>38</sup>And Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, “What are you seeking?” And they said to Him, “Rabbi,” which says being translated, ‘teacher,’ “where are you staying?” <sup>39</sup>He said to them, “Come and see.” Then they came and saw where He was staying and remained with Him that day. It was about the tenth hour. <sup>40</sup>Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was one of the two who heard from John and who followed Him. <sup>41</sup>He first found his brother, Simon, and said to him, “We have found the Messiah, which is translated, ‘Christ.’” <sup>42</sup>He brought him to Jesus.

Epiphany and its season is one of the oldest in the Church Year dating back to the second century A.D. when it was observed as both a commemoration of Jesus’ birth and His baptism. The word *epiphany* emphasizes Jesus’ manifestation, His being made known, as true God and true Man. We find the root of the word *epiphany* in our text in verse 31 as John the Baptist confessed, “And I didn’t know Him, but so that **He might be made known** to Israel, on account of this I came baptizing with water.” And what we see happening in this text is Jesus being made known as true God and true Man to John, to John’s disciples, and to us so that we might continue to make Jesus known in our day.

John's ministry was to make God's Son in human flesh known to Israel. That is the reason he came baptizing with water, to reveal Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, who is God's own Son made flesh. There is, then, that perplexing phrase, "And I didn't know Him." What did John mean by that? Jesus was John's cousin. There is every reason to think that John had known Jesus personally since childhood. John probably had his own personal convictions about Jesus. Clearly, John was not clueless as to his work as the forerunner of the promised Messiah. John's father, Zechariah, sang about John as he was born, that John will be "called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins" (Luke 1:76–77 ESV). John himself told the priests and Levites who had come to the Jordan River from Jerusalem, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said. . . . I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not know, even he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie" (John 1:23–27 ESV). Since absolute certainty about the person and work of the Messiah comes from the Word of God, in order to make Him known to Israel, the certainty about who and what the Messiah was had to be given by God to John. John "was granted the experience to see and to know who Jesus really was, and through the Baptist this knowledge and certainty was to be communicated 'to Israel.'"<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> R.C.H. Lenski, *John* (Hendrickson, 1998), 131.

And so it was that Jesus, true God and true Man, the Messiah, was made known to John with the certainty of God's Word at our Lord's baptism, which we observed last Sunday. From today's Gospel, "And John bore witness saying, 'I saw the Spirit coming down as a dove out of heaven and remain on Him. And I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water, He said to me, 'Upon whom you see the Spirit come down and remain upon Him, He is the One who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' And I have seen and I bear witness that He is the Son of God.'"

Following our Lord's baptism, John points to Jesus with familiar words to us, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." He points to Jesus, full of the Spirit, who is the Son of God made flesh, who will lift up and carry away all sins. The day following, again John points to Jesus as He was walking along, "Behold, the Lamb of God." John made Jesus known especially to his disciples, one of whom was Andrew. They heard John's proclamation about Jesus as the Messiah, anointed with the Holy Spirit, the Son of God, indeed, the Lamb of God who has come into the world to save sinners. Then, Andrew and another disciple of John followed Jesus and spent the day with Him. Andrew next made known what He had heard from John and Jesus. He told his brother Simon Peter, "We have found the Messiah!" And Andrew brought Peter to Jesus.

The Season after the Epiphany, Jesus' manifestation as the Messiah, His being made known as true God and true Man, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. That making known continues today. God made known Jesus with certainty to John. John made known Jesus with certainty to the crowd and to his own disciples. Andrew made Jesus known

to his brother Simon Peter. Who has made Jesus known to you? To whom do you make Jesus known as true God and true Man, the Savior of the world?

God's chosen course for making the Savior known to the world is the very pattern we have seen in today's Gospel. God reveals in His Word who Jesus is and what He has done for the world in His perfect life, death, and resurrection. In the holy Scriptures, we behold the Lamb of God. We see His ministry among the people, serving them in love, bringing them to repentance so that they might receive the reign and rule of God that Jesus brings breaking into the world of sin and Satan. Jesus throws out the demons, overthrowing Satan's reign. He heals the sick, the lame, the blind; He calms the sea, multiplies bread and fish, and feeds a multitude as He overcomes the effects and consequences of sin in the world.

In the Word of God, we behold the innocent Lamb, the Holy One of God, led to the slaughter of the cross so that He might bear in His sinless body the sins and fallenness of the world. "So they took Jesus, and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called The Place of a Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them" (John 19:16–18 ESV). Like a sacrificial lamb, without spot or blemish, Jesus gave up His life into death, shedding His holy, precious blood, redeeming everyone from sin, death, and the power of the devil.

Behold, the Lamb of God! Look at Jesus who is nailed to a cross. He suffers the pain and agony of crucifixion, but also much more and much worse. On the cross, Jesus bears the sins of the world. He takes them upon Himself as if they were His own. On the cross, the sinless Son of God becomes the greatest sinner of all history. This Sin-Bearer is so repugnant to God the Father that the Father turns His back on His One-of-a-kind Son as He is covered in

our hatred, our vulgar language, our lust, our greed, our unkindness—all of our sins. The Father removes Himself from Jesus so that He endures hell itself as He bleeds and suffers a God-forsaken death. Behold, the Lamb of God!—His blood poured out on the cross in death to cleanse you from all your sins. His glorious resurrection from the dead in which He left the bloody grave clothes behind in the tomb. Satan is crushed. Sin is forever forgiven. Death has been defeated.

Forgiveness of sins and life everlasting are now gifted to you and to all people by God the Holy Spirit using the Means of Grace. The Word of the Gospel and the Sacraments of Christ, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, deliver to us what Jesus' life, suffering, death, and resurrection won for us. The Good News of "is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (Rom. 1:16 ESV). Through the Gospel Word, the Holy Spirit creates saving faith in a person so that he or she trusts in Jesus' as their Lord and Savior. That saving faith receives from the Gospel the fruits of Jesus' saving work—forgiveness and eternal life. As the apostle writes in Romans 10, "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17 ESV).

The Word and the Sacraments of Christ are God's means of transmitting salvation to us and to all people. It is the Word and the Sacraments that allow us to behold Jesus, the Lamb of God, with the eyes of saving faith, receiving from Him forgiveness of sins and life everlasting in words, water, bread and wine.

And you and I, empowered by the Gospel through the Means of Grace, are called to make Jesus known to others We, like John the Baptist, are the human agents who bring the Good News of Jesus to other people. John witnessed to Jesus and made Him known to the

people. He pointed out the Messiah who would take away their sins, saving them from death and hell. John made Jesus known to his disciples and, Andrew, in turn, told Simon Peter. To whom will you make Jesus, the Lamb of God, known?

By the power of the Holy Spirit, as you and I make use of the Means of Grace, we fulfill the Great Commission of our Lord as disciples are made by baptizing and teaching the Word of Christ. We ourselves who behold the Lamb of God in Word and Sign will make Jesus known as the Savior. Through the Gospel, in baptismal waters, in the eating and drinking of the Body and Blood with the bread and wine, behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! And prayerfully ask, "To whom can I make known Jesus this week?" Amen.