

Epiphany II 2008

Grace to you and Peace, from God, our Father, and the Lord,
Jesus Christ.

So of you are standing next to John the Baptizer and upon seeing Jesus again he tells you two days running, “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world,” what might you think he’s talking about?” Especially when he says things, like, “This is he of whom I said, `After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me... And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God.”

It’s pretty cryptic talk even for those of us who know the story pretty well. But for two of John’s disciples it made them curious enough to leave John - at least temporarily – and follow this Nazarene named Jesus.

“Then Jesus surprises them by turning and saying, “What are you looking for?” And not really knowing for sure, the best they can come up with is, “Where are you staying?” To which he responds, “Come and see.” By that afternoon Andrew was running to find his brother Simon and declares that he has found the Messiah – and here’s the key thing here, he brings Simon to Jesus who with a few simple words changes Simon, the fisherman to Simon, the Rock and in fact changes his life forever.

Sometimes I think, that we think, we know the stories so well that we barely listen to them as they are being proclaimed each Sunday. We read along in our inserts (I really hate inserts) and the printed word sucks the life out of the story. We listen with a different part of the brain than we use to read, and when we try to do both we lose something.

Usually it's the thing we probably needed to hear the most.

Some of you right now are tempted to look down and see what you might have missed. "Just a minute, father, let me read it again."

Did you miss the breathtaking proclamation of Isaiah,?

"It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."

Might it have reminded you of Simeon's words in the temple upon seeing the baby Jesus? "Lord, you now have set your servant free * to go in peace as you have promised; For these eyes of mine have seen the Savior, * whom you have prepared for all the world to see: *A Light to enlighten the nations*, * and the glory of your people Israel."

Behold the Lamb of God, we read. Ever thought of the implications of that phrase? I say it every Eucharist at the invitation to communion. Ever wonder why? Behold the Lamb of God – sounds nice – rolls off the tongue easily. But what might it mean? How about – Behold God’s sacrifice? Look upon the man who will be sacrificed, like some lamb in the temple, for our sins. Look at the only human spotless enough – not stained with sin – who can be a full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. Might it remind you of Isaiah’s prophecy? “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth... For he was cut off from the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people. They made his grave with the wicked and his tomb with the rich.”

Just a sampling of the weight and meaning behind the simple phrase, “Behold the Lamb of God.” Might you think more deeply now when you hear it or read it?

It meant something to Andrew. It meant enough for him to go and listen to Jesus for only a few hours and then seek out his brother so that he too could have the opportunity to meet this man Jesus – destined to be God’s sacrifice and the light of the World.

This, brothers and sisters, is powerful stuff. We need to lift it off the dry inked up pages of our inserts and carry the Word in our very beings. Reading a page of scripture is not going to send you out to tell someone about Jesus Christ. Even hearing some scripture read to you isn’t going to make it happen. Great sermons – and mediocre ones, might give you a start now and then, but mostly not.

We go out and tell others about Jesus Christ when we – like Andrew – know that we have really found the Messiah, the Son of God, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world. Words won't get you there, but God's grace will. Scripture, and preaching and sacraments are simply the signposts to what really matters in our lives. And that has to be Jesus Christ.

They say that when you are an adult, the most effective way to learn a new language is the total immersion method. You live eat and breathe the language. Nothing is spoken in your own language. You simply keep at it until a breakthrough happens and suddenly you speak like you were born to it.

Christianity is like that. You can buy a book, you can attend a service now and then, you can even serve on a vestry if you have a mind too.

But unless you become fully immersed in a life in Christ you will never run like Andrew, to find someone to bring to Him.

Listen with new ears this morning as Christ invites you to his table. Hold the piece of bread in your hand and feel the one who is the true sacrifice of God, taste the wine that is his Blood poured out for the sins of the whole world. Immerse yourself in Jesus Christ – not simply today, but every day. Give thanks always, as Paul tells us, and at every opportunity tell someone who needs to hear it, “Come and See – I have found the Messiah, I have found the Lamb of God. Amen