

“Behold the Lamb of God”

(John 1:29-41 – Epiphany 2 – January 18, 2026)

John 1:29-34 – ²⁹The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” ³⁰This is He of whom I said, ‘After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me.’ ³¹I did not know Him; but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water.” ³²And John bore witness, saying, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. ³³I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ ³⁴And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.” ³⁵Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples. ³⁶And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, “Behold the Lamb of God!” ³⁷The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. ³⁸Then Jesus turned, and seeing them following, said to them, “What do you seek?” They said to Him, “Rabbi” (which is to say, when translated, Teacher), “where are You staying?” ³⁹He said to them, “Come and see.” They came and saw where He was staying, and remained with Him that day (now it was about the tenth hour). ⁴⁰One of the two who heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. ⁴¹He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which is translated, the Christ).

Dear Redeemed in the name of Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away your sins:

When we think of superheroes who fight evil and save the day, we tend to think of powerful images. There is often a character who is extra strong, or smart, or has some special attribute that empowers him or her to do extraordinary things to save the world. When people come up with a mascot for a team, they tend to think of powerful images like fierce warriors, strong animals, or forces of nature. Under such images of power they will go, fight, and win! But who would ever think of a lamb? The opposing team might laugh, especially if they were named something like the lions. When we think of a superpower who can save the world, who would think of weak and defenseless lamb?

But as John the Baptist prepared people for the coming Savior of the world, who came to fight and win against the powers of evil, this is how he introduced Him: **“Behold! The Lamb of God!”** It is not exactly the image the world looks for in a hero. But as we learn of Jesus, He had just the attributes needed to save us. As we see first, **1) He takes away the sin of the world** – saving us from our worst enemies of sin, Satan, and eternal death. Then, **2) He calls disciples to Himself in faith** – making us share in His victory in the forgiveness, salvation, and eternal life He won for us!

1) He takes away the sin of the world

When Jesus came forth to the Jordan River at the beginning of His public ministry, He did not look like much of a hero. As the Son of Man, as the Lamb of God, He came meek and lowly. Yet as the Son of God, He came with all the power needed to save a world of sinners. Indeed, in Revelation 5, Jesus is described both as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, and as the Lamb who was slain to save sinners (Revelation 5:5, 9).

Let us first consider what we might call His Lion-like characteristics. As God in our flesh, Jesus is almighty. As we hear at the beginning of John 1, He is the Word of God who spoke in the beginning, and by His all-powerful Word all things were made in the universe (vs. 1-3). As God, Jesus is everlasting. He never had a beginning, but He is eternally begotten of His Father. Yet He became flesh and dwelt among us (vs. 14). This is why, even though John the Baptist was born before Jesus, he says of Him here: *“After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me”* (vs. 30).

As the second Person of the Triune God, Jesus is one with His Father and the Holy Spirit. We saw this last week in His baptism, when the Spirit descended on Him in the form of a dove, and the Father spoke from heaven: *“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased”* (Matthew 3:16-17).

So the almighty and eternal Son of God came to dwell among fallen mankind, humbly and lowly as the Son of Man. So hidden were His divine characteristics that John would not have known Him, except by those signs at His baptism. As He says: *“I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God”* (vs. 33-34).

If the eternal Son of God had come into the world the first time as a Lion, revealing all His mighty power and heavenly majesty, who could stand before Him? As sinners, wouldn't we all be devoured in judgment and fear? Yet when Jesus came that first time, He said: *“I did not come to judge the world but to save the world”* (John 12:47).

Therefore, He came forth as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. This had been foretold for many centuries through the prophets. It was foreshadowed by countless sacrifices of lambs in Israel. We think of the Passover lamb, whose blood covered the doors of the Israelites in Egypt when the Lord saved them out of slavery; then all the Passover lambs sacrificed every year in remembrance of this. Or the lambs regularly sacrificed as part of the sin and guilt offerings God commanded. Or the lambs the priests were to sacrifice, every morning and every evening at the house of God. The blood sacrifice of lambs was a very familiar image in Israel, associated with God redeeming His people. He pictured salvation in terms of a coming Messiah, an innocent Lamb who would sacrifice His own life to redeem the world of sinners.

Isaiah had pointed to this coming Savior as a Lamb to be slain for our sins: *“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.... He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth”* (Isaiah 53:6-7).

Indeed, we all have gone astray in our sinful ways. Ever since Adam and Eve fell to Satan’s lies and ate the forbidden fruit, we as their sinful children are easily tempted to turn from God’s way to our own ways. As the Good Shepherd, the Lord wants to lead us in the way that is good for us. He wants to satisfy our souls in the green pastures and life-giving waters of His Word and truth. But like sheep going astray, how often we have followed the deceitful voice of our own hearts, seeking greener pastures in what is false and forbidden. At times, we have sought a new kind of freedom by throwing off the constraints of God’s Word, rebelling against authority He put over us, and doing what we wanted. At times, we have sought a new kind of fulfillment by indulging the sinful flesh with its lusts, greed, hatred, envy, and all that is selfish and self-serving. At times, we have sought a new kind of acceptance by following worldly friends and ideas that would lead us astray and away from the Good Shepherd.

But how often in turning to our own way, instead of finding fullness of life, we find ourselves feeling empty and unhappy. Instead of finding freedom, we find ourselves enslaved to sin and burdened with guilt. Instead of finding acceptance, we find ourselves feeling lonely and rejected. At times, when we think of all the ways we have gone astray in our own sinful ways, we may wonder how we can ever stand before the almighty God, whose judgment will determine our eternal future in heaven or hell.

This is why we can be so thankful that He came to us, not with the roar of a Lion to fill our hearts with fear, but with the tender voice of a Lamb to comfort our hearts with His forgiveness. *“Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”* Behold the Lamb who was slain, by whose blood you are redeemed from all your sins!

Already from birth, as the innocent Lamb, Jesus had been living the perfect life of obedience to His Father that counts for our righteousness. Already after His baptism, Jesus had begun to defeat Satan for us, resisting all his temptations in the wilderness. Already as John pointed to Jesus, the Lamb of God was bearing all our sins away to the cross. There, He would make the once for all sacrifice that takes away the sins of the world. There, He would crush Satan’s head and deliver us from his power. There, through His death and resurrection, Jesus would conquer the last enemy of death.

Now, having defeated our enemies, the Lamb of God gives us His victory. Jesus has baptized us with the Holy Spirit and given us saving faith. He has washed away all our sin by His blood and clothed us in the white robe of His own purity (Revelation 7:14). Therefore we join all the saints, singing the new song, the joyful song of worship:

“Worthy is the Lamb!” “For You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation” (Revelation 5:12, 9).

Worthy is the blood of the Lamb to cleanse us of all our sin and guilt! Worthy is the Lamb to present us holy and without blemish before the throne of God, that we may live each day in His victory and freedom, and live forever in His heavenly Kingdom!

2) He calls disciples to Himself in faith

As John pointed to Jesus as the Lamb of God and Savior for all sinners, by this Gospel Jesus began to draw disciples to Himself in faith to share in His victory. Two of John’s disciples began to follow Jesus. One of them, Andrew, would share the good news with his brother, Simon Peter saying: *“We have found the Messiah”* – the Christ! (vs. 41) In this way, by His Gospel, Jesus continues to call disciples to Himself in faith.

As the first disciples followed Jesus, He said: *“‘What do you seek?’ They said to Him, ‘Rabbi’ (which is to say, when translated, Teacher), ‘where are You staying?’ He said to them, ‘Come and see’”* (vs. 38-39). Isn’t this our desire too? As Jesus’ disciples, rejoicing in His great sacrifice and salvation won for us, we want to follow Him and remain close to Him as our Savior and Teacher, to know Him better. We want to stay with Him as He comes to us in His Word and Sacrament. Having received His baptism, we want Him to continue teaching us all things in His Word, to strengthen our faith (Matthew 28:20). We want to come to His Holy Supper, where the Lamb of God gives us His true Body and Blood for the forgiveness of our sins (Matthew 26:26-28).

What a great blessing it is to come to Him who is almighty God, yet the meek and lowly Lamb of God who was slain for us. Since Jesus Himself experienced temptation, need, and suffering in our flesh, He understands our weaknesses. He is ever-present to hear our prayers and intercede for us at the right hand of His Father (Romans 8:34). *“Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need”* (Hebrews 4:16).

As His disciples, we can share His Gospel with our fellow sinners: *“Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”* Behold our Savior!

One day, the Lamb of God who has redeemed us by His blood, and gathered us to Himself as disciples in faith, will bring us home to heaven. We will join saints and angels in praising our God and Savior: *“Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever!”* (Revelation 5:13).

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. Amen.