

January 15, 2023

St. John 1:29-34:

“The Great Take Away”

- I. The Lamb.
- II. John’s Understanding.
- III. Jesus’ Baptism.

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St. John 1:29-34

Dear Friends in Christ,

Let's see, from Sunday to Sunday we run through our routines: running, doing, gathering, sometimes struggling, sometimes laughing, sometimes crying, but always pushing on, always aware that we have just so much time. God's Word says, "So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom (Ps. 90:12)." God's Word says, "look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil (Eph.5:15,16)." And the Word says, "Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, make the best use of time (Col.4:5)." It is interesting. Everyone knows there is The End to the time we have. The use of time is often foolish, and The End of time becomes unreal to face, and bitter to the taste.

We pray God strengthen and bless us in this time of . . .

THE GREAT TAKE AWAY

I. The Lamb.

We know that Scripture interprets Scripture. If we listen and study, it answers many of our questions. As the Psalmist wrote, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path (Ps.119:105)." Keep this in mind as we first consider Jesus as "the Lamb" addressed in our text.

Our Text begins with, "The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world (Jn.1:29)." Right off, we're confronted by the word that troubles and is rejected by most: *sin*, defined as lawlessness (1 Jn3:4). We're looking at The Great Take Away - of sin.

As we know, for many, if not most, Jesus' mission has been turned into one that will make this world a better place. However, His mission is clearly defined by Scripture. From St. Matthew 1:20,21: "an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying... '(Mary) will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sin.'" From St. Mark 2:17: "(Jesus) said to them...I came not to call the righteous, but sinners." From St. Luke 1:76,77, the words of Zechariah to his son, John the Baptist: "you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins."

Christ, as the sacrificial Lamb, was pictured, foreshadowed, in the Passover Meal instituted at the time of Moses. God instructed His people through Moses and Aaron to tell His people to sacrifice lambs at the time of their deliverance from bondage to Egypt and to put blood of the lamb on the two door posts and lintels of their homes. He said, "And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike Egypt (Ex. 12:13)."

Around 700 years later, God would say of Christ through Isaiah, "He (the coming Messiah) was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb led to the slaughter, and like a sheep before its shearers so he opened not his mouth (Is. 53:7)." And around 700 years after that Paul wrote, "For Christ our Passover Lamb has been sacrificed (1 Cor.5:7)." His blood covers our sin and delivers us from God's wrath because of sin. He passes over our sin.

II. John's Understanding.

Our text then draws to John's understanding of who Jesus is:

"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 (vv. 30,31)."

Again John says, "I myself did not know him." He will repeat this in verse 33. Commentator Lenski observed, "Twice the Baptist freely admits, 'I knew him not,' which in its connection means (Jesus) in his divine greatness. The Baptist had known Jesus personally since childhood and may have had his own personal convictions regarding who Jesus really was...but certainty must come from a higher source (Lenski, St. John's Gospel, Augsburg Publishing House, p. 131)." God revealed it to John, and we recall that on a day John was baptizing and Jesus walked toward him and John declared, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." John would know who Jesus is.

Please remember that after John declared Jesus the one who *takes away the sin of the world* he stated, "I did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel." While there were gentiles brought to the church of the Old Testament, John's mission was focused on the Jews.

Everything falls within the context of God's time, the context of "But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under law, so that we might receive adoption as sons (Gal.4:4,5)." Such glorious and comforting words for us: Jesus did everything necessary to win our eternal life.

III. Jesus' Baptism.

This brings us to verses 32-34 of our text:

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 born witness that this is the Son of God. (vv. 32-34).

This is quite clear: "I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove." This wasn't a vision. When we think of the dove we think of gentleness, meekness. John knew it was the Holy Spirit. Luther wrote: "God the Holy Spirit comes down in a friendly form, as an innocent dove, which of all birds is the most friendly and has no wrath or bitterness in it; as a sign he would not be angry with us but desires to help us through Christ, that we may become godly and saved."

As we know and must take with us, when Jesus was baptized He visually, publically placed Himself with all sinners. He became the fulfillment of all sacrificial lambs; *The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!* *Whoever believes this will not perish but have everlasting life.* That's always familiar and comforting for us.

The statement about Jesus that "this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit" does not mean that John's baptism was without the Holy Spirit. John's baptism was "a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins." The Holy Spirit is the One who works repentance. In our text, John tells us that Jesus "is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit." Later, after John, Jesus would command, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations (not just Israel, as John was commanded), baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Mt.28:19)." The Holy Spirit would be poured out to all nations to carry on Christ's saving work.

In The Book of Acts we learn of the beginning work of the Holy Spirit into the whole world. In Acts 2:38,39, the Apostle Peter said to those who had gathered together, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins." The baptism "in the name of Jesus Christ" points to the imperative command of Jesus "to baptize all nations in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Peter goes on to say, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (the Holy Spirit who works and sustains faith). For the promise is for you and for your children (there are no age restrictions) and for all who are far off (the whole world and the coming generations), everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself."

IV. The Great Take Away.

And so, again and again, we are brought to The Great Take Away. It takes us back to the words of John: "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world (Jn.1:29)." The sinless Son of God steps into the Jordan. He becomes the worst sinner in the world; not within himself, but because He's taking away your sin and my sin, and every sin of every human into Himself so that all who believe would be forgiven and have the promise of eternal life. He washes and cleanses us in our baptisms. What Ananias said to Paul after Paul was brought to faith speaks to us, "Rise and be baptized and wash away your sin, calling on his name (Acts 22:16)." And, as Paul wrote:

"We were buried therefore by baptism into death (His death), in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in the newness of life.

"For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his (Rom 6:4-5)."

The running, doing, gathering, struggling, laughing and crying in this fallen world will end. That is, our sin, our guilt, our miserable regrets, will end. Time here will end and we will stand in the timeless, face to face love and joy of the Lamb of God who has taken away our sin forever.

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott