

TRINITY EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
MINOCQUA, WI
SERMON FOR JANUARY 15-16, 2023

²⁹ The next day, John 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").

⁴³ The next day, Jesus wanted to leave for Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." ⁴⁴ Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the hometown of Andrew and Peter.

⁴⁵ Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

⁴⁶ Nathanael said to him, "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?"

"Come and see!" Philip told him.

(John 1:29-46 EHV)

It doesn't take much these days. Economic news, political headlines, culture wars, man's inhumanity to man both at home and abroad, we find ourselves saying, "You've got to be kidding!"

There's a whole lot of incredulity and amazement in our text. It's a familiar account, but there are a whole lot of things that make us scratch our heads and say, "That's no way for God to do things. You've got to be kidding!"

Let's start with John the Baptist. Desert-dwelling, camel's-hair-wearing, locusts-and-wild-honey-eating John the Baptist. This guy picks grasshopper wings out of his teeth at dinner. Hard to believe this guy's an authority on anything, let alone spiritual matters. This is the forerunner of the Christ, the one who prepares the way for the Savior? You've got to be kidding!

Yet there he is, preaching repentance, baptizing and here pointing to Jesus and saying, "**Look! The Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!**" (v. 29) No marketing executive worth his/her salt would ever use a spokesman and approach like this to get an important message out. This is no way for God to do things.

Then there's Jesus, the so-called Lamb of God. Isn't this Mary and Joseph's son, would be carpenter turned wandering teacher? Isn't he from the hill country up north, just another backwards, backwoods Galilean? This is the Christ, the Messiah, the Savior of the world? You've got to be kidding! He's got no connections, lacks the commanding presence of a General Washington, the sheer force of will of a General Patton, the charisma

needed for this media age. This is the Savior of the world? This is no way for God to be doing things. You've got to be kidding!

And look at his disciples, men who will learn from the teacher and one day lead the Christian movement. Have you ever seen such a motley crew of mis-stepping misfits? You've got to be kidding! Andrew and Peter are brothers, more brawn than brains, fishermen (as were many of the disciples), unschooled blue collar workers.

Nothing special about Philip or Nathanael, sitting under a fig tree. But Nathanael does zing Philip with a really good question. Philip is ecstatic at his discovery, "We've found the Savior! ***We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.***" (v. 45) But Nathanael says, "***Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?***" (v. 46a) That's like a big-city dweller from Minneapolis or Milwaukee saying, "Woodruff, Arbor Vitae, Hazelhurst, can anything good come from there?" "Hey, Philip, it's nice that you found the Savior, but you've got a problem. Scripture says he's supposed to come from Bethlehem in Judah, but you've got this guy coming out of Nazareth in Galilee." You and I know the answer – Jesus lived in Nazareth but was born in Bethlehem. All Philip can do is say, "***Come and see.***" (v. 46b)

Add it all up – John the Baptist, Jesus of Nazareth, these disciples – pretty unimpressive. Not the way for God to be doing things. You've got to be kidding!

And then there's you and me – with all of our sins and all of our weaknesses – coming into God's house and acting like we belong. Like we're special. On the contrary, you and I are nothing special spiritually speaking. The sinfulness we drag into this place isn't something we can all get together and laugh about. Sin isn't just something that makes us blush with embarrassment, as if so say, "Oops. Yeah, yeah, you got me on that one."

If you made your parents angry this week, you made God angry. If your love for your spouse wasn't 100% this week, then you love for God wasn't 100%. If you didn't give it your very best at work or at school this week, then you didn't give God your very best. If you complained even once this week – and who of us can stop at just one complaint? – then you told God that he's a lousy provider and that he owes it to you to do a better job of watching out for you. These sins of ours – there are so many more – reek to high heaven. And they drive God into a furious rage. No kidding.

"Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (v. 29) Vivid imagery for 1st century Jews. 1500 years earlier, God called Moses to lead Israel out of Egypt, but Pharaoh refused to let the people go. Ten plagues followed. The tenth was the worst and the one the Jews remembered at Passover. God sent the angel of Death to destroy all the firstborn in Egypt. However, the angel passed over Jewish households where the blood of a lamb had been sprinkled on the door frame.

In every house in Egypt that night, there was either a dead lamb or a dead firstborn. Pharaoh finally relented. This salvation/rescue from the land of Egypt foreshadowed the salvation/rescue/forgiveness/life brought by the Lamb of God

So when John says twice in our text, "Look the Lamb of God," he's saying 1) Jesus is without blemish/sin, 2) Jesus offers us protection from the ultimate effects and guilt of sin, 3) that he will offer himself as the sacrifice for guilt not his own. He's the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Of all the lambs killed at Passover, thousands upon thousands of them over 1500 years, from the very first Passover to the very last Passover Jesus would celebrate the night before his death, only one lamb came back to life – Jesus. Only one can truly give life – Jesus. Look to the Lamb!

Through the word of the apostles and prophets, God leads us to repent of our sins, not just once in a while, but daily. God places forgiveness on our foreheads through the water and Word of Holy Baptism. He places forgiveness in our hands and in our mouths through the bread and wine and Word of Holy Communion.

Through these means he creates faith, strengthens it, keeps us connected us to the sacrifice of the Lamb and gives us life with him now and forever. No kidding!

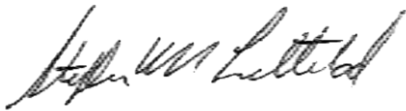
A lowly, unimpressive rabbi, a Lamb, a cross, an empty tomb, the Word of God, faith and forgiveness as free gifts – not the way we'd set out to save the world, but God did it and succeeded. And how do people find out about this wonderful news? Someone needs to tell them. Who? You/Me. You've got to be kidding!

Not at all. This news about the Lamb of God causes John the Baptist to set off a game of divine tag. The second time he points out Jesus he is with two of his disciples, Andrew and probably John the writer of this Gospel. Look, the Lamb of God. Tag, you're it. I told you now you go do something with this.

They did, spent the day with Jesus, and then Andrew one of the two tagged by John the Baptist, went and told his brother Peter. Says here, "The first thing Andrew did" was to go and tell Peter. Peter, as you know, became a leader in the early church and tagged thousands with the Gospel. The tag continues as Jesus finds/tags Philip, says, "Follow me." Philip found/tagged Nathanael.

You and I have been tagged with this good news. We look to the Lamb, to Jesus for forgiveness, strength, and life. This isn't theological theory, it's the fact of what has happened to you and me through faith in Christ. Tag, you're it.

This is what the world needs – not people caught up in the blowback and debris of worldly clutter – politics, materialism, self-centeredness – but people who see clearly and live boldly by looking to the Lamb. Tag, you're it. People will notice. People will be touched by you, tagged with the good news by you. How many opportunities will you have during the next seven days? Keep your eyes open, look to the Lamb, reach out to others, tag them with this, and they will do the same. No kidding. To the glory of the Lamb. Amen.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephen Luchterhand". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "S" and "L".

Pastor Stephen Luchterhand
Minocqua, WI