

Title: The Lamb of God (John 1:29-34)

I. Introduction

- A. (*LOTR:Aragorn*): As some of you may know, I'm a huge LOTR fan
1. I've read the books several times and watched the movies even more times
 2. If you know the story, you also know that the character of *Aragorn* is first introduced as the ranger *Strider*
 3. *Strider* is described as "a strange-looking weather-beaten man" wearing "mud-caked boots" and a "travel-stained cloak"
 4. All in all, not a pleasant sight, and certainly not the man you would think would turn out to be the long-thought dead heir to the throne of Gondor
 5. In other words, sometimes things aren't as they originally, or outwardly, appear to be
- B. (*Bring it home*) Just as *Strider* did not appear to be the long-awaited king of Gondor, so too Jesus did not look like the long-awaited Jewish Messiah
1. When you think of some of the titles that Scripture uses for Jesus, the people of Jesus' day would not expect them to belong to Jesus of Nazareth
 - a) Son of Abraham, Son of David
 - b) Lion of the tribe of Judah
 - c) King of kings, Lord of lords
 - d) Prince of Peace
 2. Now we're never told in Scripture what Jesus looked like, but we are told that **"he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him" (Isaiah 53:2)**
 - a) In other words, Jesus didn't look like anyone special
 - b) Certainly not the Messiah figure people were expecting
 3. Which makes it all the more surprising that when John the Baptist sees Jesus approaching him, he loudly proclaims **"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world...this is the Son of God"**
 4. The people around John were probably thinking
 - a) "What's gotten into John?"
 - b) "Maybe all the wild locusts and honey have finally driven him crazy?"
- C. (*Lead in to the passage*) As we mentioned at the close of last week's sermon, the Gospel of John opens with a **week of New Creation**
1. John 1:29 starts with the words "the next day," which signals to us that these events happened the day after the events in 1:19-28, in which John has his encounter with the Jewish delegation sent by the Pharisees
 2. As we come to **John 1:29-34**, we're going to look at John's *two-fold description* of Jesus
 - a) **"Behold, the Lamb of God" (vv. 29-31)**
 - b) **"This is the Son of God" (vv. 32-34)**
- D. Big Idea: Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God Who Takes Away our Sin**

II. “Behold the Lamb of God” (vv. 29-31)

- A. The first thing to note about our passage this morning is that this interaction between John the Baptist and Jesus is *unique to the Gospel of John*
 1. None of the synoptic Gospels record this interaction
 2. But John the Evangelist includes this interaction because it plays so nicely with his purpose in writing his Gospel
 3. This interaction also fits into John the Baptist’s ministry
 - a) Last week we learned that John’s baptism was a *baptism of repentance*
 - b) John’s baptism was *preparatory* for the coming of Jesus
 - c) While *John’s* baptism was symbolic, Jesus’ baptism (with the HS) is the *real deal*
- B. Remember what John said of himself in the previous passage
 1. He was **“the voice of one crying in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord.’” (1:23)**
 2. And we looked at the reference from Isaiah 40 in some detail last week
 3. What John is accomplishing in his declaration that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, *is signaling that this is the time of fulfillment*
 - a) **All** of the OT promises of Messiah are fulfilled in His coming
 - b) **All** of the OT imagery finds its completion in Jesus
 - c) **All** of the OT sacrifices, which had to be performed day after day, find their ultimate fulfillment in Christ
- C. Now this **“Lamb of God”** imagery calls to mind several OT themes
 1. We see such imagery in **Genesis 22:8**
 - a) This is where Abraham was commanded by God to sacrifice his son, Issac as a test of his faith in God
(1) Genesis 22:2 (ESV): Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you
 - b) When Isaac asked his father where was the lamb for the burnt offering, Abraham replied...
(1) Genesis 22:8 (ESV): God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.
 - c) And we know that God did indeed “provide the lamb” when they found a ram caught in the thicket
 2. Another notable incident in Israel’s history in which this imagery of a lamb is found is during the exodus in **Exodus 12:3**
 - a) This is the institution of the Passover feast as the Israelites were preparing for the last plague in Egypt
 - b) The Lord, through Moses, instructs the people to “take a lamb” for each household and slaughter it
 - c) The lamb’s blood was then to be “put on the door posts and lintel” of each house (**Exodus 12:3-7**)
 - d) This was to prepare for the final plague, the death of the firstborn
 - e) The Lord was about to pass over the land of Egypt, and whichever household did not have the blood on the door posts, the Lord would strike down the firstborn of that house; where as the homes with the blood, the Lord would *pass over*

3. A third notable passage in the OT that contains the imagery of the lamb is **Isaiah 53:7**
 - a) Of course this passage is in the well known *Servant Song* of **Isaiah 53**
 - b) Here we learn of the Servant that...
 - (1) **Isaiah 53:7 (ESV): He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.**
 - c) The ministry of Jesus Christ was like that of a “lamb led to the slaughter”
 - (1) Jesus *willingly*, out of obedience to the Father, went to the cross
 - (2) He did so, as the author of Hebrews says, **“for the joy that was set before Him” (Hebrews 12:2)**
 - (3) Unlike all of the sacrificial lambs in the OT ceremonies, this Lamb went *willingly to His death*
 - d) A couple of verses before this, we learn...
 - (1) **Isaiah 53:5 (ESV): But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.**
 - e) His “being led to the slaughter” was for the *removal of our transgressions*
 - f) Just as John says, Jesus “takes away the sin of the world”
 4. One final image of a lamb is found in **Revelation 5:6**
 - a) The scene is John (the writer of this Gospel) has been whisked away in the spirit to stand in the heavenly throne room as the gathered onlookers wonder who will take up the scroll with the seven seals
 - b) No one is found who is worthy to receive the scroll, and John begins to weep
 - c) That is until one of the 24 elders who are before the throne of God tells John “weep no more”
 - d) Then appears the *Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David* (Jesus Christ), He is the One who has *conquered* and is *worthy*
 - e) But when John looks, what he sees is something very different
 - (1) **Revelation 5:6 (ESV): And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.**
 - f) The *Lion* is also the *Lamb* who was slain
 - g) Slain for what? **Our sins**
- D. All of this to say when John declares that Jesus is the *Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*, these are some of the images that would’ve been brought to mind
1. The One who is coming to *inaugurate* the Kingdom of God does so by preparing the people to *enter* the Kingdom of God
 2. And the only way to enter into the Kingdom of God is by having your sins taken away
 3. That’s what Jesus came to do!

- a) **1 John 3:5 (ESV): You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin.**
- E. Then in vv. 30-31, the Baptist basically repeats what the Evangelist had recorded in 1:15
1. **“After me comes a Man who ranks before me, because He was before me”**
 2. Even though Jesus came after John *in time*, He ranks *before* John because He is the **Eternal Word** who became *flesh*
 3. John saying, “I myself did not know Him,” seems odd; weren’t they cousins?
 4. Yes. John isn’t saying he didn’t know Jesus, but rather that he didn’t know Jesus was the *Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world* until His baptism (which we’ll discuss shortly)
 5. Referring again to his purpose, John says that his ministry was for *the express purpose of revealing Jesus to Israel*
 - a) Remember, John is the “way preparer,” the “straight-way maker”
 - b) His calling was to herald the coming of the **Lamb of God**
- F. **(Application)** What does it mean for us that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world?
1. Simply put, this is an *article of faith* that we, as Christians, are required to believe
 2. At the expense of sounding like a “broken record,” John writes so that we will **believe**
 - a) The Baptist’s ministry is that of *bearing witness* to the **truth** about Jesus Christ
 - b) If you don’t believe that Jesus Christ is the *Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*, then guess what? *You’re still trapped in your sin*
 3. The Christianity that came out of the post-Enlightenment period (18th-19th century) and the Modernist movement of the late 19th-20th century attempted to “de-mythologize” Christianity
 - a) This was an attempt to make Christianity more ‘practical’ and more ‘palatable’ to modern sensibilities
 - b) The reason being was the concepts of *divine wrath* and *substitutionary atonement* were offensive to sophisticated ears
 4. But this is what John (both of them) went to great pains to demonstrate
 5. If you’re a Christian, then this is a truth of **great comfort**
 - a) *Without* the Lamb of God, we’re still on the hook for our sins
 - b) But just like Isaac, or the Israelites enslaved in Egypt, a **lamb** was provided to stand in their place so that they didn’t have to die
 - c) Jesus Christ, as the **unblemished Lamb of God**, stood in our place so that we can be delivered from our sin & misery

III. “This is the Son of God” (vv. 32-34)

A. As we come to our second point, we see that it begins with John again “bearing witness”
(Read vv. 32-33)

- I. What John is describing here is what we see in the other three *Synoptic Gospels*
 - a) The scene was the baptism of Jesus
 - b) John had already started his ministry of baptism, and sometime during this period Jesus comes up to him to be baptized
 - c) After the baptism, all three Synoptic Gospel writers report what was witnessed by all
 - (1) **Matthew 3:16 (ESV): And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him**
 - (2) **Mark 1:10 (ESV): And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove.**
 - (3) **Luke 3:22 (ESV): and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”**
2. After the baptism of Jesus, the HS “descends like a dove” (Luke adds “in bodily form”), and came “to rest on Him” (John says “descend and remain”)
3. Many commentators understand this to be *Jesus’ anointing*
 - a) In the OT, the HS would often come upon certain individuals to equip them for specific tasks
 - (1) Oholiab and Bezalel were *filled with the Spirit* to accomplish the tasks of designing and building the articles for tabernacle/temple worship (Exodus 31)
 - (2) Many of the Judges (e.g., Othniel, Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson) were *filled with the Spirit* to aid them in accomplishing their tasks
 - (3) The Spirit of the Lord was said to be upon Saul, Israel’s first king and he prophesied, but when Saul angered the Lord, the Spirit left him
 - (4) The OT prophets were all *filled with the Spirit* to enable them to prophesy
 - b) However, in all such cases, the Spirit of the Lord equipped these people to do their specific tasks, and that’s it
 - c) But in the case of Jesus Christ, the Spirit of the Lord *descended and remained* on Him
 - d) John the Evangelist will later say...
 - (1) **John 3:34 (ESV): For He whom God has sent utters the words of God, for He gives the Spirit without measure.**
 - e) Jesus has the Spirit “without measure” (i.e., a limitless supply of the Spirit)
 - f) That’s what the prophet Isaiah says about Jesus
 - (1) **Isaiah 11:2 (ESV): And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.**
 - g) The Spirit comes upon Jesus and “**remains**” on Him; His ministry is a **Spirit-filled ministry** *par excellence*

- h) Jesus was *anointed* for His task, He was set *apart* and *empowered* for that task
 - i) And in the power of the Spirit, He *completed* that task; namely, **to take away the sin of the world**
- B. John the Baptist goes on to repeat in v. 33, “I myself did not know Him”
1. In other words, he didn’t recognize that Jesus was the Spirit-anointed Lamb of God
 2. But he relays that **“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’”**
 3. We briefly touched upon this last week, but here we see the difference between the baptism of John and the ministry of Jesus
 - a) John baptizes *with water*
 - b) Jesus baptizes *with the Holy Spirit* (and with fire)
 - c) The *water baptism* of John is **symbolic** of the *Spirit baptism* of Jesus
 4. What is “Spirit baptism?”
 - a) It is nothing less that **regeneration, new life, Spirit-indwelling**
 - b) Again, this was anticipated in the OT; consider the following passages
 - (1) **Isaiah 44:3–5 (ESV): For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants. They shall spring up among the grass like willows by flowing streams. This one will say, ‘I am the Lord’s,’ another will call on the name of Jacob, and another will write on his hand, ‘The Lord’s,’ and name himself by the name of Israel.”**
 - (2) **Ezekiel 37:3–5 (ESV): And he said to me, “Son of man, can these bones live?” And I answered, “O Lord God, you know.” Then he said to me, “Prophecy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord God to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live.**
 - (3) **Joel 2:28–29 (ESV): And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit.**
(Fulfilled on Pentecost Sunday)
 - c) The OT predicted a day in which the Spirit would be *poured out* on God’s people and that they would then turn to the Lord and **live**
 - d) Jesus is the One who *administers this baptism of the Holy Spirit* upon God’s people
 - e) He is the One whom Paul says is a **“life-giving Spirit” (I Corinthians 15:45)**
 - f) And we also know that when Jesus speaks to His disciples in the Upper Room Discourse (**John 14-16**), He tells them that He must go back to the Father, but that He would not leave them alone, but would send the Helper, *the HS*
 5. It is this *Spirit baptism* that *incorporates* us into the **body of Christ**
 6. It is what enables us to “receive & believe” in Jesus (**John 1:12-13**)
 7. All of this to turn people who were *enemies of God* into *His adopted children*

8. We were once alienated from God, but God who is **rich in mercy** made us alive *together with Christ*, and now we're members of His kingdom
- C. Finally, John the Baptist closes this section with the words **"I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God"**
 1. John sticks to the script he's been given
 2. His *laser-focused* purpose is to "bear witness" to the fact that *Jesus is the Son of God*
- D. **(Application)** We mentioned it briefly before, but the unbelieving world doesn't want a Jesus who is the Son of God
 1. The unbelieving world doesn't want a Jesus who *takes away the sin of the world*
 2. You know why? Because it would have to admit that
 - a) There is a God to whom they're all answerable
 - b) They have a "sin problem" that needs to be dealt with
 3. When John the Baptist was confronted by the delegation from the Pharisees, they asked him why does he baptize when he's not the Messiah (by his own admission)
 - a) They didn't feel they needed to submit to John's teaching
 - b) They didn't feel, as pious Jews, that they had a sin problem (their observance of the law took care of that)
 - c) They rejected John because he denied that he was the Messiah
 - d) They also rejected Jesus because He challenged their notion of *who the Messiah really was*
 4. That's the problem, isn't it?
 - a) We either *reject* the fact we have a sin problem
 - b) We *refuse* to see Jesus for who truly He is and *submit* to Him
 5. Now this is going to look different in the church, right?
 - a) In the church we don't openly deny the problem of sin, nor do we openly refuse to submit to Jesus
 - b) But think of the subtle ways in which we do this
 - (1) Perhaps instead of denying our sin, we downplay it
 - (2) We compare ourselves with others and feel like we don't come out so bad
 - (3) Perhaps we love Jesus on Sundays, but Monday through Saturday we forget who Jesus is
 - (4) It's easy to be a Christian on Sundays, much harder the rest of the week
 6. The point isn't to guilt trip us into being better Christians, but to get us to see how easy it is to lose focus and fall into the traps of the world, the flesh and the devil
- E. **(Conclusion)** But the *good news* is that even though we sin, *God provided the Lamb who took away our sin!* **His One and Only Son, Jesus**
 1. He took away our sin *by dying on the cross*
 - a) His death satisfied God's wrath for our sin, **AND**
 - b) His death washed away the guilt of our sin
 2. Then to show that Jesus' *once-for-all* sacrifice was acceptable, God raised Him from the dead and seated Him **at His right hand**
 3. And now the same HS that descended & remained on Jesus *has been sent* **by Jesus** *to dwell within us and sanctify us*
 4. "Jesus the Lamb of God takes away the guilt of our sin, and through His baptism with the HS frees us from the power of sin" (Phillips, pp. 91-92)