

WHO JOHN SAW

John 1:29-42 Text: 33-34 *"I did not know him, but the One who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the One who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' I have seen and I testify that this is God's Chosen One."*

A man visiting in Germany was surprised to see near the top of a church steeple a figure of a lamb. He asked why it was there and was told, "when the church was being built, a worker fell off a scaffold. His co-workers rushed down expecting to find him dead. But to their surprise and joy, he was alive. Only slightly injured. The man survived his fall." The visitor asked, "How?" "Well, a flock of sheep was passing beneath the tower at the same time he fell. He landed on top of a lamb. It broke his fall. And he lived. But the lamb was crushed to death and died. So, to honor that, someone carved a lamb and had it put up on the church steeple at the exact spot from which the workman fell."

Now, this morning's Gospel lesson tells about John the Baptist describing Jesus *twice*, as *"the Lamb of God."* In verse 29, John was *"at Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, where he was baptizing. Some Pharisees had been sent to ask John who he was. John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, 'I am the voice of one calling in the wilderness, Make straight the way for the Lord.'"* And the next day, *"John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, 'Look, the Lamb of God.'"* The following day John was with two of his disciples when again, he saw Jesus and said, *"Look, the Lamb of God"*. After they heard John say that they followed Jesus. Turning around, Jesus saw them following Him and asked, *"What do you want?"* They said, *"Rabbi", which means 'Teacher', "where are you staying?" "He replied, 'Come, and you will see.'"* It was about four in the afternoon. So, they saw where Jesus was staying. Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and had followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, *"We have found the Messiah"* and he took Simon to see Jesus. Later, Jesus would ask Peter, *"Who do you say I am?"* And Simon Peter would answer, *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."* And Jesus would reply, *"Blessed are you, Simon, son of Jonah! For this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by My Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter (which in Greek means "rock"). And on this rock, I will build My church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."*

And that, my friend, is witnessing! Introducing someone to Jesus! When John called Jesus *"the Lamb of God,"* Andrew and Peter didn't have a clue as to how much Jesus would change their lives. Remember, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was the one who heard what John had said about who Jesus was. He followed Jesus. Then, *"the first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, 'We have found the Messiah'. And he brought him to Jesus."* They both followed Jesus because they wanted to change their lives. You can't blame them. As fishermen, their lives were hard! Any change would be for the better! But they didn't have a clue as to how much their lives were going to change. They followed Jesus until the very end of their lives. Peter was put in prison in Rome, more than *once*, for preaching the Gospel. And tradition says that Peter was executed. The form of his death could have been foretold in John, chapter 21 where Jesus told Peter, *"I assure you: When you were young, you would tie your belt and walk wherever you wanted. But when you grow older, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will tie you and carry you where you don't want to go."* John wrote that after Peter's death to indicate, *"Jesus said this to signify by what kind of death he would glorify God."* So, the idea that Peter was crucified came from John. Tradition says Peter chose to die crucified on a cross upside down in Rome, because he wasn't worthy to die like Jesus. And Andrew? He was martyred in Patras, the third largest city in Greece west of Athens. He too, was crucified. But on an X-shaped cross. They wanted change. They got it!

So, how far are you willing to follow Jesus and make a change in your life? If you decide to follow Jesus, as did Andrew and Peter, your life's personal agenda doesn't matter anymore. The only thing that matters is Jesus' agenda for your life! Moses led the Jews out of slavery in Egypt. He led them to the land God had promised them. They are remembered by Jews every year during the Festival of Passover. On seven or eight days, all leaven, whether in bread or other mixture, is prohibited. Only unleavened bread, called *matzo*, may be eaten. *Matzo* symbolizes the Jews' suffering while in bondage and the haste with which they left Egypt in the Exodus not having time to bake bread. Passover is also called the Festival of Unleavened Bread and is celebrated with great pomp and ceremony when special family meals called *seder* are held. Though the festival of Passover is meant to be one of great rejoicing, strict dietary laws must be observed. Work is restricted at the beginning and end of the celebration. When Jews were slaves in Egypt, Moses asked the heartless Pharaoh free them. He refused! So, God brought ten plagues upon Egypt. The last one was terrible. God sent the Angel of Death to kill the firstborn son of all Egyptians hoping that would persuade Pharaoh to let those slaves go. He didn't! So, God told the Jews, if they spread the blood of a lamb on their doorposts they would be protected from the wrath of the Death Angel. It would pass over them. And that's Passover!

So, Jesus is *your* Passover lamb sent to protect you from your sin. Without Him, life ends in eternal separation from God. Eternal death. During that tenth plague in Egypt, just as the Passover lamb died in the place of every first-born Jew, so Jesus died in your place for your sins. John the Baptist made that clear when he said, *"the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world"*. Jesus was the Lamb who would take away the sins of the world! And John is telling us John the

Baptist only knew that Jesus was *"the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"* through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. All John knew was what the Holy Spirit had revealed it to him. And that same Holy Spirit can reveal to you that Jesus is the Lamb of God who will take away your sin.

A popular 1980's TV series was about a group of ex-United States Army Special Forces led by Colonel "Hannibal" Smith, played by George Peppard. *"The A-Team"* was made into a full-length motion picture where Colonel "Hannibal" Smith, played by Liam Neeson, used the Colonel's oft' repeated phrase, *"I love it when a plan comes together"*. It's still ranked as one of the *Top 100 Greatest TV Quotes and Catchphrases* of all time.

And in the last part of Revelation 19 God's final plan is *coming together*. It's the time God's people have been waiting for. It's the time of God's promise in Genesis 3:15 when one day *Messiah would bruise Satan's head*. It's the time when God promised Abraham would be *a blessing to all the people of the world through his offspring*. It's the time God promised David that *one of his descendants would rule permanently in Jerusalem*. It's the time when the Old Testament prophecies would finally be realized. It's the time when the words Jesus spoke to His disciples on the Mount of Olives will be fulfilled. That's when *God's plan comes together!*

Back in the days when most people traveled by train, there was a physically disabled young boy who ran a small newsstand in a railroad station. Each day he sold candy, gum, and newspapers to people passing through the station. One day, two men rushed through the crowded train station to catch a train that was to leave in ten minutes. One man turned a corner, ran into the boy, and knocked him from his seat. Candy, gum, newspapers, and change scattered everywhere. The man spoke harshly to the boy, then went running on. Seconds later, the other man turned the corner and stopped! He gently helped the boy stand up. Made sure the boy was all right. Collected all the scattered things. Took out his wallet and gave the boy some money to cover the expense of any items broken or any money lost in the spill. Then he picked up his suitcase and hurried off to catch the train that was about to depart. As the man hurried away to the train, the boy cupped his hands to his mouth and called, *"Hey, mister! Are you Jesus?"* The man stopped, turned around and replied, *"No son, I'm simply one of His followers trying to do what He would do if He were here."*

See, following Jesus can transform lives. And if it's not happening, then people are not following Jesus. What's that saying to you? Is it, *"Leave what you're doing and follow Me."* Does it mean quit your job, become a minister, or an evangelist, or a missionary? No! God doesn't call everyone into full time ministry. But He does call you to be doing full time *witnessing*. He wants you to become an Andrew at your place of work. In your family. And in your neighborhood. Good Christian men and women are needed at all levels of life leading others to Jesus. If you don't see the need for this in your life, then you need to step back, and prayerfully ask your Heavenly Father, *"Lord, what do you want me to do for You?"* In 1891, Mary Brown wrote a song that answers that question.

"It may not be on the mountain's height,
Or over the stormy sea;
It may not be at the battle's front
My Lord will have need of me;
But if by a still, small voice He calls
To paths that I do not know
I'll answer, dear Lord, with my hand in Thine,
I'll go where You want me to go."

Yes, John saw *"the Lamb of God."* Andrew saw Jesus. Peter preached Jesus. Colonel "Hannibal" Smith said, *"I love it when a plan comes together"*. And our closing hymn 523 says, *"Soon and very soon we are going to see the King"*. So, after you see Jesus, and let Him come into your life, that's *when God's plan comes together!* **AMEN.**