

**John 1:29, 35-41**

Second Sunday after the Epiphany

**Lessons for the Day: Isaiah 49:1-7; 1 Corinthians 1:1-9; John 1:29-42a**

**What Do You See?**

January 15, 2023

*“The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” “The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God!” The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, “What are you seeking?” And they said to him, “Rabbi” (which means Teacher), “where are you staying?” He said to them, “Come and you will see.” So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which means Christ).”*

Dear Friends in Christ, and fellow redeemed:

Looks can be deceiving. There are people who have held in their hands valuable commodities like rare stamps and coins, but since they looked like any other stamp, or because that nickel just looked like a nickel, they have used them, given them away, or even lost them. But a collector, who looks carefully at these things can see the real value in them, and treasures them.

Looks can be deceiving in the way we view others. A rich man once disguised himself as a beggar to see how his friends and family would treat him as a poor man. People who had fawned over him before now had no use for him, and this man was quick to return the favour when he took off his disguise. But if these people would have looked carefully, they would have recognized him for who he really was.

In some ways, we see this happening in the way people react to Jesus and in their attitude toward Him. Many people do not take a good look at Him to see who He really is and so have little or no use for Him. During his earthly life, some people saw Jesus as nothing more than a poor carpenter from Nazareth. Others thought Him to be a prophet, but no different than the prophets of old. Others thought of Him as a magician. People today do the same thing. They do not look carefully at Jesus and at what the Bible says about Him, so they see Him as nothing more than a good man, a great humanitarian, maybe even a miracle-worker, but they fail to see Him for who He really is.

Today John the Baptist urges all of us to take a really good look at Jesus that we too might recognize Him in our lives for who He really is: our Saviour and Lord. One day, as John saw Jesus on the road, he pointed to Jesus and said: ***“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”*** The next day, John repeated it again for the sake of two of his followers: ***“Behold, the Lamb of God!”*** Look over there! Do you see that man? Do you know who that is? Take a good look at Him, for He is the Son of God. John knew that Jesus was not just a carpenter, not just another man. This was the Son of God Himself, come from heaven to save His people. John said: ***“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 borne witness that this is the Son of God.”*** (John 1:33-34, ESV)

So many people fail to see in Jesus what John saw. There are those cults which acknowledge the existence of Jesus, but they do not recognize Him as the Son of God. The Muslims and the Hindus speak of Jesus as a prophet, but not as the true God of heaven. And I am sure that you know many people who will speak of Jesus as a great teacher, as a miracle worker, but fail to see what is really important, and that is the fact that Jesus is the Son of God. But that's what makes all the difference. All His teaching is meaningless unless He is God. His death cannot save us if He is not God. We have no hope of eternal life if He is not God. But the truth is that He is the Son of God. He is the eternal, omnipotent Lord. Take a good look at Him, and you will see that. Look at the miracles He performed. Look at the difference He continues to make in our world today. Look at the peace He still brings to troubled hearts and the way He lifts the burdens from those who seek Him. Take a good look, and you too will see that Jesus is who John says He is: He is God Himself, come to save His people.

We are in the time of the church, known as the season of Epiphany. The word epiphany means “manifest” or “the light dawns”. The season of Epiphany focuses on who Jesus is, pointing to Him as the second Person of the Holy Trinity—the Son of God and the Saviour of the world. It isn't hard to see Jesus as a man. After all, He was the baby in the manger. He was the boy in the temple. He eats and sleeps and has flesh and blood as we do. But there is so much more to the wonder of who Jesus is. On the day of Epiphany, January 6<sup>th</sup>, we celebrate the coming of the wise men, and see Jesus as the One who has come for all nations. Last Sunday, Jesus was made known by the Father, who declared at Jesus' baptism: ***“This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”*** (Matthew 3:17, ESV) Today, John points to Jesus and calls Him, ***“the Lamb of God”***, the One appointed by

the Father before the foundations of the World to be the perfect sacrifice for sin.

John's words would have had more meaning to the people of his day, people who understood the role of sacrifices in their relation with God. These people would still remember that it was through the blood of a lamb sprinkled on the doorposts of their homes that God had saved them from the angel of death in Egypt. Now John points to Jesus and says, "look at Him, for here is the one who has come to deliver us from a far greater death, and that is eternal death in hell. This is the one that we have waited for, the messiah, the promised deliverer who will save us from sin and death."

Yes, behold the Lamb of God! Take a good look at Jesus and see who He really is. But you should also take a good look at what He does for us. Jesus Himself assure us: ***"For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him."*** (John 3:17, ESV) The Lamb of God came into the world to take away the sins of the world, to take upon Himself all of our sin, to give Himself for us on the cross so that we might be forgiven for every lie, for every selfish act, for every thoughtless word, for every unclean thought. He does not come to condemn you for the things you have done, but to save you from the punishment that you deserve. He comes so that through Him you might know the joy of forgiveness and the fulness of life God has meant for us to enjoy. He comes to give you life as He destroys death through His own resurrection.

Take a good look, and you will also see that He came to bless us in the day to day things of our lives. When John's two disciples came to Him, Jesus asked, ***"What are you seeking?"*** ***And they said to him, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?"*** ***He said to them, "Come and you will see."*** Jesus knew that they also wanted to know more about Him, and why John spoke of Him as the Lamb of God. Jesus does not send them away, but is open and receptive to them and to their needs. Jesus came so that all people could know the joy and peace that comes from knowing Him. He invites them to join Him, to come and see who He is and what He has to offer to them. And Jesus has so much to offer us! In the epistle lesson today, Paul speaks of the blessings we receive through Christ. He speaks of the grace given to us as we are enriched in Him through the knowledge of the truth. He says that we have been given every spiritual gifts, for God has blessed us with every talent, power, and strength that we need to live as His people in this sin-stained world. Best of all, in the Lamb of God we have been given the sure and certain hope of eternal life. We could add the blessings of peace and joy and rest that come to us through the Lamb of God. Take a good look at Jesus, and you will see that He truly does bless those who put their trust in Him.

The prophet Isaiah, speaking of the messiah says: ***"He had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him."*** (Isaiah 53:2, ESV) At first glance, it would definitely seem that there was nothing special about Jesus of Nazareth. But listen to John the Baptist, who declares Jesus is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world. Listen to the voice of the Father. Read what has been said about Him throughout the Scriptures. Now, what do you see? By faith we know and see that He is our Saviour and Lord. Take a good look and you will see all that He has done for you through His death and resurrection. Take a good look at Him, and your life will never be the same. John pointed his disciples to Jesus. He knew that when they took a good look at Jesus they would see He was the Lord of life. And if Jesus was the messiah, then John's disciples needed to follow Jesus and give their lives to Him. John knew that Jesus would change their lives. And in just a few hours the lives of two of John's followers were changed forever, as they began to follow Jesus, the Lord of Life.

All too many people, including people within the church, have not bothered to take a good look at Jesus. They have not yet recognized Jesus as the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. And so they live apart from His guidance, help and salvation. They do what they want. They live for themselves, and miss out on the blessings He so eagerly wants to share with them.

What do you see in Jesus? The Saviour Himself tells us: ***"For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."*** (John 6:40, ESV) If we see Him for what He is, that must change us. And so, like John's disciples we follow Him, giving our lives in service to Him, seeking His guidance for our lives, living as the forgiven and redeemed people that we are by His grace. The more we follow, the more we know the blessings that are ours in the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world—who has taken away our sin and gives us life with Him and through Him! Amen.