



Sermon Growth Guide

February 25, 2024

The Lord is Lamb



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All for Love - The Lord is Lamb

John 1:19-34

Key Verse: John 1:29

“The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, ‘Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!’”

Big Idea: God took on flesh in Jesus to become for us the perfect sacrifice.

Foundations

We continue our series **All for Love**. Last week, we learned of Jesus being The Word “who was God and was with God” (John 1). This week, we encounter the testimony of John the Baptist regarding the identity of Jesus - this time being His role as Messiah, the “Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.”

Two overwhelmingly threatening powers are sin and death. Sin skews our relationship to God to where we cannot help but live against the grain of His best. Ultimately, sin has a debilitating affect in that it leads to death. As depraved humans, we are rendered powerless and incapable of remedying the problem on our own. An outside Source is needed.

God took on flesh in Jesus to become for us the perfect sacrifice of atonement. Jesus, the Lamb of God, came to give His life away in order that we might be rescued from sin and death. In His sermon, Tim said, “Jesus destroys death by absorbing it, swallowing it, and returning life.”

Alleluia to Jesus, our sacrificial Lamb!
Jesus made Himself rejected so that you and I might be accepted forever.

Understanding God’s Word

How does John the Baptist’s response to the religious leaders reveal his humility and understanding of his role? (John 1:19-23)
What significance do you see in John the Baptist’s identification of Jesus as the Lamb of God? (John 1:29)

Applying God’s Word

How does Jesus being the Lamb of God impact your understanding of forgiveness of personal sin? Take some time to consider how Jesus’ atoning sacrifice has specifically impacted your personal journey of faith. Share with the group.

Witnessing God’s Word

Read and consider I John 4:11. Ask God to show you one person this week that needs to have God’s love shown to them. Pray for strength and wisdom as you open your hands and heart to be His instrument of love.

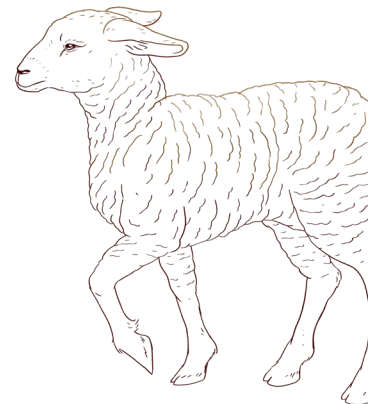
What is love? In the immortal words of Mick Jones and Foreigner, "I want to know what love is; I want you to show me." I danced to that at a few formals. What is love? There is arguably no greater force on earth than love, so what is it? Is it an emotion or is it a commitment? Is it more of a weighty responsibility to devote yourself to or a buoyancy and joy to be celebrated? Is love to feel good in response to another or to act sacrificially on behalf of another? Is it duty or fun, sacrifice or pleasure, reward or devotion? Does it give me everything or does it demand everything? The answer: Yes. It is all these things, and more, and we spend very little time really trying to understand it. Our world today is driven more by hate than by love, I'm afraid. We are constantly pushed apart. Just ask yourself, when is the last time you heard a pundit on the news saying, "And now we will take five minutes to seek to understand the opposing point of view. We would hate to vilify our opponents and walk away failing to recognize our common humanity." It's been a while. But you can't beat hate with more hate. As Martin Luther King Jr. famously said, "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that." Where is love strong enough to overcome hate?

We jump back into John, where we are learning that everything Jesus did, everything about God's plan for salvation, all this story we call the gospel, it was **All for Love**. God came down from heaven and took on flesh. Jesus is God who crossed an infinite distance to enter our lives and our world, even though our lives and our world were infected with hate and sin, toxic poisons. Jesus took on flesh, born in Bethlehem. The Lord Almighty took the place of a helpless infant, squealing among all the lambs that the shepherds of Bethlehem raised for sacrifice in the Temple. If Jesus went that far, by the way, do you think He will stop at the threshold of your life and your problems? He's moving into your neighborhood too. God, in Jesus, took on flesh. Why? We get the answer in this declaration of John the Baptist when he

sees Jesus and says, "Behold the Lamb of God." **The Lord is the Lamb.**

John was baptizing people in the Jordan River, encouraging them to prepare their hearts for Jesus. It was a symbolic baptism. An outer baptism. He washed the outside, but he said there was someone coming who could wash the inside too. "Now this was John's testimony when the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, 'I am not the Messiah.'" (John 1:19-20) Who is John the Baptist? Remember, he is a witness. He said, back in John 1:7, he was a witness to the light that dispels the darkness, witness to the life that overcomes death. He was a witness—one who gives testimony. But a witness to Jesus stands out in this world. So this delegation from Jerusalem wanted to know, why are you so different? Why don't you act like we act? Why don't you tremble with fear at the things that make us tremble with fear? What is this hope you have that things will change? They thought he might be the promised Messiah, the anointed one, the Christ. No, John said, I'm just a witness. He is a lot better than me.

They asked if he was Elijah. Malachi had prophesied (Malachi 4:5) that before the Messiah came, Elijah would return. I can't spend a lot of time on this but catch this principle. Did John think he was Elijah, the fulfillment of the Elijah promise? No. But do you know who did? Jesus! "And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come." (Matthew 11:14) Jesus said. You can only see that if you can see it, he said. Whoever has ears to hear, eyes to see. Here's the point: John the Baptist didn't even know how God was working through his witness. Listen, you don't know but the tiniest bit of what God is doing with your faithful witness to Jesus Christ. When you are open, and you don't hide it, you don't fail to confess, you don't deny it, you just say, "Yes, it's Jesus in me. Yes, that's from Jesus," you don't know what God is doing and how many promises God will fulfill through your faithful, simple, honest witness to



Jesus. “Finally they said, ‘Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?’” (John 1:22) Who are you? The follower of Jesus always stands out. So, as Peter said, be ready, “But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.” (1 Peter 3:15)

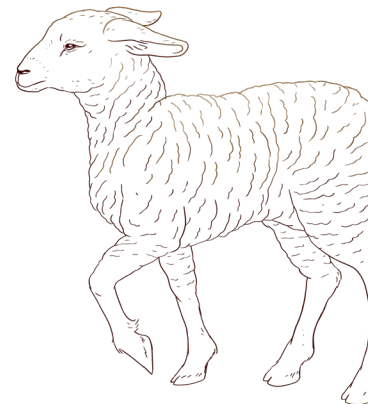
John’s answer is open and honest, and it’s something he pulls right from the Bible. “John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, ‘I am the voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way for the Lord.’” (John 1:23) It’s not about me. It’s about the One who follows me. And here He comes. “The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, ‘Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!’” (John 1:29) Notice what he doesn’t say. He doesn’t say, “Behold, the Lord Almighty come to strike down His enemies.” “Behold, the Messiah, the King on His mount with His sword on His thigh! Bow down.” No. Behold, the Lamb of God. The Lord is the Lamb. Why on earth would God take on flesh in Jesus to become a lamb for sacrifice? The thing to do with enemies is to defeat them, isn’t it? Overpower them and destroy them. You hate me? Well, I hate you more and I crush you like a bug! Where is love to overcome hate? Jesus is doing something different. This is about forgiveness. This is about loving your enemies. This is about atonement.

How does forgiveness happen? We know, don’t we, that God is a God who forgives? It’s God’s job to forgive me. It’s my job to sin, and God’s job to forgive. That’s cheap grace, cost-less forgiveness. That isn’t it. Or, we have these two versions of God, the Old Testament God, a God of wrath and rage who was quick to squash the disobedient like bugs, but now there’s the New Testament God who loves everybody and just forgives; the God who says, “Oh well. I’m tired of crushing

people like bugs. Never mind. It’s okay. Forget about it.” We like this God a lot better! Neither of these is God. John the Baptist says, “Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.”

He’s thinking of the system of temple sacrifice. Leviticus allowed people to bring a guilt offering of a lamb to the Temple. The death of the lamb covered over the sins of the donor. Grace. You don’t get what you deserve, the lamb paid. But it didn’t take the sin away. John’s thinking of the Passover Lamb. In Exodus, when the people of God were escaping slavery in Egypt, God said to butcher a lamb and eat it, and take the blood and run it up and down and across the doorposts of the house. Death passed over those homes and the people were saved. Grace. But that didn’t take away death; that didn’t do away with death. Maybe John’s thinking of the silent, sacrificial lamb of Isaiah 53. “We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.” (Isaiah 53:6-7) A lamb who was led to slaughter with our sins on Him, to die for us. “But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.” (Isaiah 53:5) Where is love strong enough to undo hate, to overcome hate? Where is there love enough to turn death around? Not just to cover over sin, or wash the outside of our lives, but to undo it, to root it out and clean it up from the inside out? Where is that kind of power, that kind of love? “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”

What we are talking about here is called atonement. We were separated from God by our sin, but in Jesus, we can be made one again with God. “At-One-ment” pastors sometimes say



(although that has nothing to do with the etymology). We can be reunited with God because Jesus has paid the sacrifice for sin on our behalf. Later on, the same John who wrote this Gospel explained: “This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.” (1 John 4:9-10) What is love? Well, this is love. God so loved us He sent His Son Jesus when we needed Him the most. If you like the courtroom analogy, imagine the judge. You are the defendant. You’ve been caught in a crime and the punishment is coming. The judge doesn’t say, “Off with his head. Crush him like a bug.” The judge also doesn’t say, “Eh, forget about it. Let’s just write this one off. Do-over!” No. That’s not justice. A crime has been committed. What does the judge say? “This crime is serious. The cost to pay is enormous, and you are surely guilty. I will pay the penalty so that you can walk out of here free. I will pay the cost.” Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. The Lord is the Lamb. That’s the only way hate is defeated, the only way sin is atoned, the only way death is turned around—a holy sacrifice. Jesus doesn’t fight back. Jesus destroys death by absorbing it, swallowing it, and returning life. Jesus absorbs hate and returns love.

We are in a slow-drip hate world. Pastor Jon Tyson, in his book *Beautiful Resistance*, talks about George Orwell’s *1984*, this horrible dystopia where the government controls everything, and they make every citizen take part in a daily exercise called the Two Minutes Hate. Every citizen had to stare at the screen while the enemies of Oceania popped up and everyone shouted and yelled and seethed with hatred. Orwell’s character says the most frightening thing about it was not that you were forced to do it, but how easy it was to get sucked in and participate. Rage seeped into your bloodstream. Anyway, Jon Tyson says in *Beautiful Resistance* that we are today suffering a

slow-drip version of Two Minutes Hate. Orwell terrifyingly demonstrated how technology can expand hate. He had no idea. “We are slowly being trained to participate in our own Two Minutes Hate. We are told who is deplorable and who is worthy of respect. We are told who our enemies are and why they present a savage threat to us. Looking at a TV, computer, or phone screen is a micro version of the Two Minutes Hate. Things are not presented to us in a fair, nuanced, or civil way. Hate is being cultivated one social media post at a time. Each fifteen-second sound bite or meme is training us to release our hate on our enemies. The trickle effect over time poisons our hearts, allowing contempt and bitterness to seep in... You cannot show compassion to those you are trained to despise.” Well, that’s a problem for the followers of the Lamb.

During this series, we look each week at a dominating question asked by Generation Z as they try to make sense of the world. Last week it was the question, “Am I safe?” This week, Gen Z asks, “Will I be accepted?” Why wouldn’t they ask that in a polarized, hate-drip world? People get exed out and canceled every minute. Can you see the beauty of what Jesus does? The Lord is the Lamb. He doesn’t rain down blows on His enemies. If He did, who would stand? We’d all be crushed like bugs. He doesn’t strike at hate with hate, or attack death with death. He doesn’t shrug His shoulders and act like nothing happened either. The crime is real, the injustice is real, the wrong is wrong. What does He do? Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. That’s Jesus. Will I be accepted? Jesus made Himself rejected so you could be accepted. That’s Jesus. That’s the new way, the bold and beautiful resistance. And that’s what Jesus calls us to do and be, and be witnesses of, as we follow Him in this world. “Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.” (1 John 4:11) Imagine.

