

Jesus is the Lamb of God

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John 1:19-51

Good Morning. This morning we are continuing in our sermon series on the book of John called “More Than Just A Nice Guy” where we are going to really dig into who Jesus is. Last week, Pastor John introduced the book for us, and this week we are going to finish up chapter 1. So if you have your Bibles, please turn with me to John 1:19-51.

Have you ever had an experience in your life that had such a big impact on you that it changed your life from that point forward? Have you ever met someone that from that moment on your life has changed? Many of you have heard my story, but if you haven’t, about six years ago I moved here to start seminary at Southeastern. I was single but thought the Lord was calling me here to prepare for ministry. I didn’t have a job and needed to get some money, because I was running out quick. My best friend at the time was a waiter at a golf course, making pretty good money. A position at a retirement home helping with activities became available. I remember talking to my dad about these options. He said “I can tell you one thing. If you choose the retirement community, you are not meeting a wife there for sure.” Well, I still took that job. One day on the job I was getting on an elevator, and in the elevator with me was this cute, blond nurse. Little did I know that meeting that cute, blond nurse would change my life. That meeting of that cute, blond nurse turned into a meeting that changed my life forever. That meeting turned into a date, which turned into an engagement, which turned into a marriage, which turned into the family of four that the Maidens are today.

Today’s passage tells us the story of some guys and their meeting with someone who changed their lives forever. As we will see, John the Baptist and his disciples were changed forever the moment that Jesus became a part of their lives. The Witness and life of Christ demands a life change:

1. The Witness of Jesus (John 1:6-8, 15, 19-28)
2. The Arrival of Jesus (John 1:29-34)
3. The Call of Jesus (John 1:35-51)
 - Invitation
 - Transformation
 - Proclamation

The Witness of Jesus

Now this was John's testimony when the Jewish leaders[c] 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." They asked him, "Then who are you? Are you Elijah?"

He said, "I am not."

"Are you the Prophet?"

He answered, "No."

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 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.'"[d]

Now the Pharisees who had been sent questioned him, "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?"

"I baptize with[e] water," John replied, "but among you stands one you do not know. He is the one who comes after me, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie."

This all happened at Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

- John 1:19-28

John the Baptist was beginning to gain a lot of popularity and fame. He was gaining followers and baptizing people. The Jewish leaders did not know who John the Baptist was, so they sent some priests and Levites to check him out. From John the Baptist's response, it was clear right away what they wanted to know. Was John the Baptist the Messiah? Was he the Christ, the "Anointed One," the long-awaited, prophesied, Savior of the world?

In first century Palestine, people were longing and anticipating the coming of a Messiah, God's Anointed Savior and King. They longed for him to come and restore God's Kingdom, so I am sure at every sign they sought out to see if that person had arrived.

John the Baptist responded with an emphatic no. Not the Messiah. Not Elijah, even though he might look and act like him. Not The Prophet, that Moses talks about in Deuteronomy 18. Then who are you, John? What is the point? What are you doing?

As a reader of the book of John, we know that John the Baptist is not the Messiah, because this is not the first time John the Baptist is mentioned in the book of John. If you remember from last week, John the Baptist was mentioned in that passage we read:

There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

- John 1:6-8

(John testified concerning him. He cried out, saying, "This is the one I spoke about when I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'")

- John 1:15

In this passage, we see the word witness “martyria” used many times. It is translated both as “witness” and “testimony: in this passage, but it’s the same word in the Greek. So it is very clear right away who John the Baptist is. He is a witness about Jesus. The word used for witness carries with it the idea of someone giving a testimony in a courtroom. John’s role is to give witness to, to prepare others for, the coming of the true Messiah. Look how John answered himself to the question in 1:23.

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

John is emphatically saying no. It is not me. It is not about me. I am only an instrument preparing the way for the one who really matters, the real Messiah. John then tells them who he is by quoting the Old Testament. As the author John said, from the prophet Isaiah:

“I am the voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way for the Lord.’”

- Isaiah 40:3

The Old Testament Promise: Our children, as they are going through the whole Bible, just finished the story of God’s people, the Israelites, in the Old Testament. The people of God, time and time again disobeyed God to the point that God allowed judgement to come on his people for their sin. They were conquered by the city Babylon and taken captive. Later in Israel’s history, God in His grace allows them to be released from captivity and can go back to their home. Isaiah 40 is a promise by God to deliver his people back home. The voice is Isaiah is saying that roads need to be made to prepare the way for Israel’s salvation as they return home.

If anyone had reason to boast, it is John the Baptist. He was beginning to gain fame in his day, which is seen in how the Priests and Levites were sent to check him out. The Old Testament even talked about his coming. Malachi foretold of his coming 400 years earlier. Isaiah prophesied about him 700 years before his arrival. John had a miraculous birth, as he was born to older parents who had been unable to have kids. He was related to Jesus, as his cousin. O yeah, he baptized Jesus, the Son of God. But to John the Baptist, none of that mattered. His life was so changed by Christ, all he cared about was pointing others to Him. All of his life was marked by one thing. Pointing others to Jesus.

John is saying that in the same way, he is the voice that is preparing God’s people for salvation. Not a physical salvation, like Isaiah 40 speaks of, but a spiritual salvation that comes through Jesus Christ. Here is a guy who constantly is trying to get the attention of himself and on the Jesus.

I love the pregame events of a football game. The whole point of a pregame is to get you ready for the main event, the game itself. People spend hours on TV before the game talking about the game, the players, the stats, the strategy. They don't spend hours talking about themselves, because their role is to talk about the teams playing, and honestly, no one is watching to hear them talk about themselves. When you go inside the stadium, there is a pregame that is taking place to prepare others for the game. The band comes on the field and plays songs and the cheerleaders come on the field to do cheers to pump up the crowd. All of these takes place to point others to what is about to come, the main event.

God chose John the Baptist to prepare people for the main event. He was not it, but he was an instrument to prepare people for the biggest event in all the world, the coming of the Messiah, the Savior of the world. In the same way, God has called us to be witnesses for him, to prepare others for him, to point others to him. It is not about us. It is not about you or me. It is not about Perry Creek. Our lives are to be marked in such a way that we are to be pointing others to Jesus.

Pastors, preachers, and ministers need to take heed to what is given to us by the example of John the Baptist. As we are preaching and teaching, it is not about us. What a temptation it is to be teaching and hoping people think you are great. We must be pointing others to Jesus as John the Baptist continually pointed others to Him.

But all of us are to be humble witnesses for Jesus? God has chosen to use people as the means to tell others about him.

A few weeks ago, Joel came up and told us about the importance of missions in his life. I love how one of the ways he loved missions was how that is how he himself became a Christian. God chose to use John the Baptist as a witness of Jesus. Then after Jesus came, God chose to use his disciples to tell about him. And then those the disciples told, witnessed about Jesus. Until it came all the way to Joel. God has chosen to use us, to tell others about Him.

"How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

- Romans 10:14-15

The gospel has to be heard to be believed, and for it to be heard someone has to be a witness of Christ. Not only should our words witness of Jesus, but our life should be lived in such a way that points others to Jesus. As we will see in the next section, as soon as John the Baptist saw Jesus, he gave his disciples over to Jesus. His actions and life showed that he is only a witness that points others to the true Savior.

My life should be about making much of Jesus. Whether it is at school as a student, at your job as a teacher, businessman, businesswoman, financial advisor, pastor, salesperson, your family, your friends, your coworkers, make much of Jesus. Point others to Jesus, the main event:

The Arrival of Jesus

John then says, the next day, which is interesting how these events all happened in consecutive days, the day after the priest were asking if John the Baptist was the Messiah, John is hanging out with his disciples, and Jesus started walking towards them. John says:

“Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!” This is the one I meant when I said, ‘A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.’ I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel.”
- John 1:29-31

John could have used a lot of different names to refer to Jesus, the Messiah, the Christ, the one you have been waiting for, the creator, the savior. But he says “Lamb of God.” What does it even mean to be the Lamb of God? This is where it gets really good. You hear a lot at Perry Creek how the Bible is one big story that fits together. This morning you are going to see that really clearly. What I hope you realize is that God had a plan to eternally save His people from the very beginning.

All the way back in Exodus, God’s people were slaves in Egypt. They cried out to God to save them, and God heard their cry. He then raised up Moses to lead his people out of Egypt into a place called the promise land. But Pharaoh liked having the Israelites as slaves, so he refused to let them go, even after nine plagues. Then came the last plague. God was going to come during the night and kill the firstborn male from every household. Then Pharaoh would let God’s people go. But God told the Israelites there way a way that they could be spared from death themselves. They had to kill a lamb and wipe the blood on the doorpost of their homes. That blood, shed from a lamb, would save God’s people from death.

This seems like something a little extreme and elaborate. Why would God ask his people to do something so strange? He had a plan. Blood and sacrifice then became a means of salvation. This continued to be God’s plan. The killing and sacrifice of a lamb was then set up as we see in Leviticus 4 as a means for the forgiveness of sins.

“If he brings a lamb as his offering for a sin offering... And the priest shall make atonement for him for the sin which he has committed, and he shall be forgiven.”
- Leviticus 4:32-35

Not only is the lamb a sacrifice, it is a substitute. We have a sin problem. It is the greatest problem in all the world. Because we are sinners, we can’t have a relationship with a perfect, holy God. So God made a way to fix our sin problem, but the giving of a sacrifice as a substitute. So the lamb was to serve as a substitute to pay for the sins of others. Our sin deserves death, and that death was paid by the sacrifice of a lamb.

We see that sacrificial system all throughout the Old Testament. That is how God punished sin.

So when John makes this statement that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, John's disciples, his readers, immediately have these images in their mind. Here is the problem: The sacrifices of animals was only a temporary solution to our sin problem. The killing of lambs, in fact, had to happen everyday, twice a day. John the Baptist knew this well, as his dad Zechariah was a priest.

The problem was that lambs were not the perfect sacrifice. They were not enough. Yes, the blood of a lamb provides salvation but was a means ultimately to point to the perfect lamb of God that would come.

"The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves. For this reason, it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. Otherwise, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins. It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

Therefore, when Christ came into the world"

- Hebrews 10: 1-5

Go on to say how Christ changed that. That is why John the Baptist referred to Jesus as "The Lamb of God." Jesus was going to be that perfect sacrifice and substitute for sin. He was going to take on the death and punished man deserved and put it on himself.

"Man of Valor" is a movie written about a man named Michael Monsoor who sacrificed and substituted his life for others. In September of 2006 during "Operation Iraqi Freedom," he was on a rooftop with five others soldiers when all of a sudden a grenade flew and hit Michael in the chest and fell to the floor. Michael immediately jumped on the grenade so that he could absorb the blast that would have killed others around him.

We have the grenade of sin that is much deadlier. Sin has the power of death for all of eternity. Because of our sin, we deserve the wrath of God poured out on us for all of eternity. By being the Lamb of God, Jesus absorbed the wrath of God for us. Now since the wrath and punishment for sin has been paid, we can now be eternally forgiven of our sin. Jesus has come to fulfill the perfect sacrifice. We have a way for our sin to be paid!

The Lamb of God, the Messiah has come! The Savior of the world has come. Do you believe that this morning? Do you believe that the perfect, sinless Lamb of God has come? That he has come to be our sacrifice and substitute? That the wrath of God that we deserve has been taken on by Jesus on the cross?

We do not have to work at all to earn approval or work to pay off the debt we owe to God for our sin. It is gone. It is finished. The Lamb of God has come. Do you believe it? Give Him your life. This is why John the Baptist and us are to point to Him. He is the one who gives life. Jesus is

the one who brings hope. He is the one who brings joy. In Him life is found! Jesus has arrived!
Witness, Arrival, Call

The Call of Jesus

The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!"

When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?"

They said, "Rabbi" (which means "Teacher"), "where are you staying?"

"Come," he replied, "and you will see."

So they went and saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with him. It was about four in the afternoon.

Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus.

Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which, when translated, is Peter g).

The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me."

Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. 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."

"Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked.

"Come and see," said Philip.

When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit."

"How do you know me?" Nathanael asked.

Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you."

Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel."

Jesus said, "You believe h because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You will see greater things than that." He then added, "Very truly I tell you, i you j will see 'heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on' the Son of Man."

- John 1:35-51

In this passage, see that the call of Jesus involves:

1. Invitation
2. Transformation
3. Proclamation

1. The Call of Jesus Involves Invitation

Here are two disciples of John. We know for sure one is Andrew and, more than likely, the other one is John. The author, not the Baptist, not the pastor, not me, John the author. (Yes, it's confusing).

But these guys have been following John the Baptist and have been hearing over and over again that the Lamb of God, the Messiah, the one who has been promised by God to take away the sins of the world is coming. So Andrew and John were anticipating this with John the Baptist. I am sure they had conversations about when he would come, what he would be like, look like. Then the day finally came and they were about to find out.

I anticipated my wedding day. As the day got closer and closer, I got more excited. What was that day going to be like? What would Sarah be like? Look like? Man, I anticipated that day and desiring it till it finally come. Then when that door opened at the house to our wedding venue, that anticipation was over. My bride was here, the day had come, and I was so excited. I can remember her walking down that aisle more beautiful than I had even imagined. I was so excited, happy, joyful, that I began to fight back tears of pure joy.

When we really anticipate something and that day finally arrives, it is an amazing feeling. But these guys were anticipating not something life changing, but eternally changing. Can you imagine what they must have felt when their leader finally says “There He is! You know, the guy who I have been talking about this whole time, the guy who is going to save you from your sin? The guy who is going to suffer and die for you, so you can have life? There He is!”

It says that they left John and went to talk to Jesus, asked Him where he was staying. Jesus then invited them to where he was staying, and they spent the rest of the day with Him. Jesus is asking people “Come and See,” to come and “follow me,” the call of Christ. Jesus called them to come and follow Him. Jesus, when he sees Philip, extends the invitation to “Follow Me” as well. Jesus is the only one who is even worthy to be followed. He is the one who paid the ultimate sacrifice for our sins. Once we discover who Jesus is, why would we not follow Him?

2. The Call of Jesus involves Transformation

We are not told what they talked about but, based on Andrew’s response, it must have been an incredible night. Transformation took place that night in the life of Andrew. The author tells us that “The first thing” Andrew did was go tell his brother that he had “found” the Messiah, the King and Savior of the world who had been prophesied about all throughout the Old Testament. He was finally here!

The word “found” here carries with it the idea of looking intently for something and then finding it brings great joy. Andrew was so overwhelmed with JOY. He had found the Messiah! What we see in this passage is that as people begin to follow and surrender their lives to Jesus, it is clear that Jesus has an immediate effect on their lives.

As I began to wrestle with all four of these encounters in everyone single one of these four encounters, Andrew, Simon, Philip, Nathaniel transformation takes places in these men’s lives. When we find Jesus and begin to truly follow Him, he changes all of us.

Jesus transforms, he changes our lives. Just look at some of the ways he does this in this passage:

Their Plans: Andrew and John dropped everything, plans, who they were following, dropped it all to immediately go follow Jesus. They spent the rest of the day with him and their lives were never the same. It changed these disciples plans for their lives, their mission.

Their Belief System: Nathaniel thought there was no way that Jesus could be the Messiah. He didn't fit the box he had put Jesus in. But after meeting Jesus, what he believed about Jesus was completely transformed. He went from unbelief to belief. Nathaniel, it changed to the way he believed.

Their Identity:

Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus.

Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which, when translated, is Peter).

- *John 1:40:42*

When Simon first meets Jesus, Jesus does what seems to be a strange thing. He changes his name. Jesus says that you will no longer be called Simon. It is now Peter, which means "rock". We see God changes people's names all throughout the Old Testament to signify that He is beginning a work in their lives. He is going to transform them and make them something new. He is going to change their identity.

When we follow Jesus, he changes who we are as a person. The significance of this name change given to Peter from Jesus is to show us that Jesus is going to transform who Simon is and who he is going to make him to be.

We don't have to go far in the New Testament to see to see the transformation that Jesus makes in people's lives. Saul was a murderer of Christians. But as soon as he was transformed by Jesus, his life was eternally changed. He went from a murderer of Christians to one himself. And wouldn't you know it, God changed Saul's name to Paul. The author of half of our new testament. When we meet Jesus, it changes everything.

3. The Call of Jesus involves Proclamation

These men were invited by Jesus to follow Him, they were transformed by Jesus, and then they themselves became a witness for Jesus. Andrew goes and tells his brother, Simon. Philip told Nathaniel. Once we are transformed by Jesus we become witnesses for Jesus. Application:

- Invitation: Jesus, just like he invited the disciples, is inviting you to follow Him. No matter who you are, your background, your previous beliefs, your past sins. No matter what he invites you. Jesus is calling you right now. If you are not a follower of Jesus today, Jesus is saying to you come and follow me! All throughout the book of John we will see people who have to wrestled with the question if they will follow Jesus or not. Who will you choose to follow and give your life to?
- Transformation: When we choose to follow after Jesus, he wants us to give us all of ourselves. He desires to transform all of who we are. Jesus wants to transform all of who we are. As you surrender your life to Jesus, he begins to transform you. Meeting Jesus changes you forever, and it changes all of you. Are you giving God all your life? Or is there a part of your life that you do not want Jesus to change?
- Proclamation: We are then called to be a part of the witness to Christ. Who are we proclaiming the name of Christ to?

The Lamb of God changes lives.