**Epiphany 2 23 Jn 1 Look What John is Doing**

Grace mercy and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. Seated

The sermon is titled “**Look What John is Doing**.” Our text is the gospel lesson from John 1. Even though we have just read it, let’s look at it again.

**John 1:29–42a** The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin 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.”

Then John gave this testimony: “I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God.”

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 spent that day with him. It was about the tenth hour.

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 ).

Look at John. Look to where he is pointing. Follow his gaze and his finger to that solitary figure coming toward him. Hear his voice, that prophetic Voice calling in the wilderness. “Look! the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” He’s the One. He’s the One who is greater than John, the greatest born of woman. He outranks John because He was before him even though He was born after him. The younger precedes the elder.
He was before anyone or anything was. He is the Word Incarnate, the Word who was God and with God in the beginning. The Word through whom all things were made. The Word who is the light and life of all. He is the Lamb, the Sacrifice, the Substitute. He is God’s Lamb. No lamb on earth can do what this Lamb does. No lamb on earth can take away the sin of the world. No lamb on earth can atone for sin. This Lamb can. He is the Spotless Sinless One.

John did not know him. And John wouldn’t have known him except that He was revealed in His Baptism. The Spirit descended, the voice of the Father declared Him to be His Son. Only in His Baptism could John be sure enough to point and say with all certainty, “Look! the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.”

He takes away sin. There’s only one way to take away sin. Blood. **His** blood for **your** blood. Read:

**Leviticus 17: 11** For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life.

His life stands in the place of your life under the Law of God. He is judged in your place. He is condemned in your place. He takes away sin by becoming Sin. The sting of Death is Sin. He takes the sting, the poison. He permits it to kill Him and He rises. And in His rising, He becomes the anti-serum, the antidote, the medicine. His Blood, His life, for your blood and your life.

He takes away the sin of the world. **The world**. Hear that in all its inclusive, catholic, universal glory. Jesus is not simply the redeemer of the redeemable or the savior of the salvageable. He’s not the Lamb who takes away the sin of those who have the good sense to believe in Him. He takes away the sin of the world. The whole world. No sin unaccounted for, no sinner left out. He saves the world by becoming the world’s Sin.

Here is the great mystery of our Faith, what sets the Christian faith apart in the world of religion. All religions have sacrifices. Some offer lambs, or used to. **All** but one deal in us making sacrifices to God to atone for our sins. The sole exception is the Christian faith that looks the way of John’s gaze and pointing finger and says, “Look!, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” The Lord will provide, as Abraham said, fully prepared to offer his son on the altar. The Lord will provide the ram, the lamb, for sacrifice. God provides the sacrifice, the Lamb. God becomes the Sacrifice. He sends His Son to be the offering.

In every other religion of the world, we offer sacrifices to God. Here, God offers His only Son. He provides the Lamb. Look! the Lamb of God. In every other religion of the world, man must seek and find God. Here, God seeks and finds us. Like John, we would not have known Jesus for who He is. We would not have known Him walking our streets or taking money out of the ATM or buying wood for His carpenter’s shop in Nazareth. We would not have known Him growing up as a boy in the streets of Nazareth or as the itinerant preacher and miracle worker. God must reveal it with the voice from heaven and the dove descending. His baptism clinches it: This is the Son of God; this is the Lamb of God.

John points for you too. Where does he point? He’s not pointing to the Jordan River, or to Jerusalem, or to the inner recesses of your sinful heart. He’s not pointing to your prayers or to your piety. He’s not pointing off into the sky somewhere or out into space. When John says, “Look!, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world,” he’s pointing in a direction, to a location, to where Christ is there for you as God’s Lamb to take away **your** Sin. He’s pointing to the water of your Baptism, the greater Baptism of Jesus that brings the fire of the Holy Spirit and faith. He’s pointing to the Word preached to your ears. He’s pointing to the Lord’s Table where the fruits of the Lamb’s sacrifice are our food and drink.

John is a witness. A witness doesn’t point at himself and say, “Look at me!” A witness does not speak about himself. A witness testifies to what he has seen and heard. He points to another. He doesn’t talk about his feelings. We don’t know how John “felt” about Jesus. He doesn’t deal in private conversations. We have no idea what John and Jesus talked about, if anything. All we know is what we need to know, what John the witness is telling us and pointing us to: The Lamb. It’s all about Jesus.

When we bear witness, we are being John the Baptist for the world around us. We are that same voice calling out in the wilderness. We point to the same Jesus and we say with John, “Look! the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.” That’s what “witnessing” is all about. It’s not talking about what God has done for me lately. It’s not telling my personal story of how I decided to follow Jesus. It’s not about convincing someone else to follow our example. To witness is to point to Jesus, to point to pulpit and font and altar and say, “Look! the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world including your sin.”

The next day, John did the same thing again. Bearing witness is a daily thing. Each day in the life of a baptized believer is one lived pointing to Jesus and saying, “Look! the Lamb.” John was standing there with two of his disciples when Jesus walked by, and he pointed and said, “Look!, there He is! The Lamb of God!” And at that moment, John lost a couple of his disciples. They went off and followed Jesus, which is exactly what John wanted. When people pointed out to John that he was losing ground to Jesus, and Jesus was drawing disciples away from John, John rejoiced and said, “Good! That’s the way it has to be. He must increase, and I must decrease.”

One of the two was Andrew, Peter’s brother. The first thing Andrew did was go and get his brother. He had to find him and tell him the news: “We have found the Messiah,” which actually may be taking a bit too much credit for things. In truth, the Messiah found him and John pointed the way. But you have to make a few allowances for excitement here. What matters is the last sentence of our reading: “He brought him to Jesus.” Now the story doesn’t end there, but goes on to tell how Jesus gave Peter a nickname and how Phillip found Nathaniel and brought him to Jesus. And there’s a pattern that develops here. John points others to Jesus. “Look! the Lamb of God.” And they, in turn, point and bring others to Jesus, including friends and family. Perhaps especially friends and family. Phillip finds his friend Nathaniel. Andrew gets his brother Simon Peter. They couldn’t wait to bring them the news. “We have found the Christ, the Messiah. Come and see.” They brought their friend, their brother to Jesus.

Disciples make disciples. That’s how it works. Jesus could have done it all Himself, but He didn’t. He died and rose and took away the Sin of the world. He called a handful of disciples Himself and then He told them “You go and make disciples of all nations.” Disciples make disciples by baptizing and teaching with the promise that in the baptizing and teaching, Jesus is with them always to the end of the age.

Corporations and organizations have mission statements. The church needs no mission statement other than the mission Jesus has given the church: Make disciples. That’s the mission of the church. Make disciples. We may feed the hungry, but the church has no mandate to end world hunger. We may care for the poor, but the church has no mandate to wipe out poverty. We may speak on behalf of the defenseless, but the church has no mandate to establish social justice. We may take up causes, some of them even “righteous causes,” but the church has no mandate to transform society. One thing the church is charged with by the Lord: Make disciples by baptizing and by teaching. Everything the church does should be measured against the Lord’s mission for the church. Does it teach? Does it bring to Baptism? Does it point to Jesus in witness and say, “Look! the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world?”

You didn’t come to Christ on your own. No one ever does. God works through means and instruments. Not even Peter, the foremost of the apostles. His brother brought him. Someone brought you. Who was Andrew for you? Who was John the Baptist for you? Who pointed you to Baptism and to the Supper? Who brought you to the church? Who took you by the hand and said, “Come and see”? It’s one of the greatest perks and privileges of being a pastor that you can be the teacher and baptizer and pointer like John to so many. But it’s not the exclusive privilege of being a pastor. It wasn’t just John who pointed; it was Andrew for his brother Peter, and Phillip for his friend Nathaniel. It’s the fathers and mothers who bring their little ones to Baptism. It’s Grandma and Grandpa who urge their grandchildren to the Lord’s Supper and to the Word. It’s the friend who invites you to church. It’s the Sunday school teacher who keeps teaching about Jesus even when the kids are bored of hearing about Jesus. It’s the church in mission, disciples making disciples by baptizing and teaching.

For Andrew, the important thing lies in what he did. “He brought him to Jesus.” If you want a simple sentence to define what making disciples by baptizing and teaching means, it’s this: bringing people to Jesus. That’s what Jesus wants His church to be busy with. Bringing people to Him. Making disciples.

This is how the church decides what to do, what programs to have, how to use its resources, how to expend its energies. Does it bring people to Jesus? Does it make disciples of the nations? Are people being baptized and taught? If the answer is “no,” then anyone can do it. It is said it “takes a village to raise a child,” but it also takes a church to make disciples. Disciples make disciples by baptizing and teaching.

Sometimes we tend to think of disciple making only in terms of official programs or institutions so that our role in disciple making is to give money so others can make disciples on our behalf. And while it’s true that missionaries need support and pastors need to be paid, God has scattered and located each of us in our own little neck of the woods to be an Andrew for our brother Simon Peter, to be a Phillip for our friend Nathaniel, to be John the Baptist for the people around us and say, “Look! the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”

It’s also a mistake to think that more is better when it comes to disciple making, or that God has us on some quota system like salesmen out in the field. Of the whole world for whom Jesus died, of the whole world from whom Jesus took away Sin by His dying and rising, Jesus made only 120 disciples. Twelve in the inner circle, and one of them went bad and had to be replaced. You may expend an entire lifetime making disciples of only a few. Your friend or brother may not be nearly so curious or willing as Simon Peter or Nathaniel. But God has located you as His not-so-secret agent to point to Jesus in Baptism, Word, and Supper and say, “Look! the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world,” to extend the hand of invitation and say, “Come and see.”

That’s out in the world. That’s you in your vocation, your calling, your place. Here you are gathered by the Spirit not to make disciples but to be disciples. Here, I have the privilege and office to say to you, “Look! the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” Look! the Lamb who comes to you in His Word, His Body and Blood. You have found the Messiah. And He has found you.

Amen.

May the peace of God which surpasses all understanding guard you hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.