

**SERMON AT THE PARISH OF THE SOUTHERN FORESTS (BUNBURY DIOCESE): 15/1/2023:
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EPIPHANY 2:OS 2 (14-20 JANUARY) JN 1:29-42
HERE IS THE LAMB OF GOD WHO TAKES AWAY THE SIN OF THE WORLD**

I wonder if you've ever been in a crowd or at a party or something like that and wondered who all the strangers are? Finally someone you know comes up to you who begins to reveal the identities of those who walk past.

"That's Denis Lille, the great fast bowler,

Or "That's Joe Blogg's new wife- isn't she young!

Or that's Slinky Jack who's never paid back the money I loaned him 20 year ago!

Then I wonder, if that then affects how think about the strangers or how to treat them. Do you attempt to get an autograph off Denis Lillie; do you wonder if Joe Bloggs is a rich womanizer; or do you keep watch over your wallet every time Slinky Jack comes near?

Just a thought.

Well in today's Gospel, John the Baptist, on two occasions, tells his gathered disciples: to behold the lamb of God. He says:

- "Here is the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." (Jn 1:29, NRSV)
- "Look, here is the Lamb of God!" (Jn 1:36, NRSV)

How does John the Baptist know that Jesus is the Lamb of God, and what does it mean?

Well, we need to remember that John's Gospel was compiled around about the year 90AD; some 60 years after Jesus' death and Resurrection. John, the writer, appears to know about

the other Gospels (Mtt, Mk and Lk) but chooses to write his Gospel in a unique way. His Gospel is written in well-polished Greek, includes some items that the others don't have (eg the Wedding at Cana) and leaves other things out. (eg the Birth Narratives).

He depicts Jesus as someone Majestic and more divine than the other Gospel writers do.

This is consistent with what we know about the development of the scriptures. As time passes, the later descriptions of Jesus loose rawness and gain in majesty. So here, in today's late written passage, John is giving us a glimpse of the early church's developing understanding of Jesus. Or to put it another way: "The Jesus of history is evolving into the Christ of Faith."

At the beginning of his Gospel John (the writer) has John the Baptist voicing one of the church's developing claims.

"Look there goes Jesus the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."

It's an evangelistic invitation! The writer is telling the reader (or hearer):

"Keep reading because in this is book you will find out the meaning of "lamb of God". In fact, in this this book, you will encounter this lamb of God....

More than that, if you've ever wondered what these new-fangled Christians are on about - well here's your chance to find out!"

So what does this "lamb of God" mean?

Well in my commentary written by Raymond Brown, at least three meanings are given. I'll read them out and you can decide which one you like best.

- 1) The *Lamb of God* is The mythical lamb who defeats all evil in the dreams of the end times.
- 2) *The Lamb of God* is the one who suffers according to the Suffering Servant Songs found in Isaiah.

(Incidentally we read these during Lent and Holy Week.)
- 3) And *The Lamb of God* is the Passover Lamb sacrificed by the Jewish nation so that the angel of death would pass them by at the time of the exodus.

So which one do you like?

All of these meanings are legitimate, and all of these make an appearance as you read further on in John's Gospel.

Anyway, what sort of *lamb* do you need right now?

- 1) Perhaps you need the mythical lamb that defeats all evil at the end times. With all the violence and evil that flashes across our news bulletins, do we not long for an end to evil. How we long for a mythological beast to banish evil from our lives!

But you know, it's the little evils that catch us out. We may wonder how we can stop the war in the Ukraine, yet at the same time conjure up ways to lie about the mistakes we've made.

2) On the other hand, you might be drawn to the suffering servant. It's such a comfort to know that there is one who suffered and suffers for us.

John the writer, is of course, alerting us to Jesus' trial and crucifixion. How we would love a world where there is no suffering! But maybe we are being warned. Could it be that we are the crucifiers? Could it be that we are agents of suffering?

Yes, but the resurrection calls us to a more noble cause: to co-operate with the one who suffered to alleviate suffering!

3) Now there's the Passover Lamb. This lamb provides the sign and sustenance needed to bring about freedom. The lamb's blood on the doorposts keeps the Angel of death away, and its flesh gives sustenance for the long journey to freedom.

So are you trapped at the moment- are you longing for some sort of freedom?

Perhaps it's financial, maybe you are locked into a toxic job, maybe your thinking is boxed in? If that's the case, then maybe the Passover lamb of freedom is what you need right now.

Now when John the Baptist says "Here is the lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29, NRSV), he is inviting a response.

One response is to keep reading.

Another is to wonder if this person Jesus is the Lamb of God who will destroy evil at the end of time.

Another is to wonder if this Lamb's suffering will have any meaning.

And another is to wonder how this lamb might set us free.

Then to top it all off in just a few verses later, this very lamb of God, says to the curious disciples “Come and see.”

That invitation still stands today.

The lamb of God invites us:

“Come and see.”

Will we go...?

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

REFERENCE

Brown, Raymond, 1966, *The Gospel According to John*, Doubleday: New York, Vol1, pp58-67)