

**The Lamb of God
John 1:29-34 (NIV)**

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!

30 This is the one I meant when I said, 'A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'

31 I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel."

32 Then John gave this testimony: "I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him.

33 And I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.'

34 I have seen and I testify that this is God's Chosen One."

Good Morning my sisters and brothers in Christ, I am glad to be able to stand before you this morning prepared to share the Word of God. During the month of March we will have four sermons from the gospel of John and each lesson is designed to help us to experience the presence of God more fully. Before I begin the sermon, which comes from John 1:29-34 I wish to give you a bit of background about the gospel of John. For the Bible scholars in the room this may be something you already know, but pray with me so that others may hear and be informed.

Each of the four gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John serve a very distinct purpose in the Bible. Each of the gospels emphasizes a different origin of Jesus.

Matthew shows Jesus came from Abraham through David, and demonstrates that He is the Messiah promised in the Old Testament (Matthew 1:1-17).

Mark shows Jesus came from Nazareth, demonstrating that Jesus is a Servant (Mark 1:9).

Luke shows Jesus came from Adam, demonstrating that Jesus is the Perfect Man (Luke 3:23-38).

John shows Jesus came from heaven, demonstrating that Jesus is God.

The first three gospels focus more on what *Jesus taught and did*; John focuses more on *who Jesus is*.

- a. John shows us who Jesus is by highlighting seven signs (miracles) of Jesus. Six of these miracles are not mentioned in the first three gospels.
- b. John shows us who Jesus is by allowing Jesus to speak for Himself in seven dramatic *I Am* statements.
- c. John shows us who Jesus is by calling forth witnesses who will testify about the identity of Jesus. Four of these witnesses speak in the first chapter alone.

John is a gospel written for a specific purpose: that we might believe. A key verse for understanding the Gospel of John is found at the end of the book: ***But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name (John 20:31).***¹

¹ <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/guz/view.cgi?bk=42&ch=1>

A lot happens in the first chapter of John. Unlike the other gospels, the gospel of John does not tell us about Jesus' family tree, he does not tell us about the angel's visit to Mary, he does not even tell us why he is writing until the very end. Instead John begins by telling us that before **there was anything there was God** and **Jesus was with God and was God**. In the midst of this explanation the author stops to point out that there was a man sent from God who's name was John and his job was to bear witness to the light that was coming into the world.

Once the author has introduced and clarified the purpose of John he returns to the narrative and says that the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. John was doing such radical things that the Jews in Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. It is the very next day that Jesus appears and John is able to introduce Jesus to those who had gathered.

²⁹The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

There are several approaches that may be taken to teach this passage. We might focus on the words "Lamb of God" and do an Old and New Testament study about the significance of the lamb. But we know that a lamb was used in Old Testament times as a sacrifice for our sins, but because a lamb would never be enough God sent His Son to be the final sacrifice and Jesus was the perfect lamb – without a spot or blemish, without sin.

Another approach might focus on the word "look" and consider the times in New Testament scriptures that someone asked us to "look" at Jesus. Think about the woman at the well who asked us to come and see a man. Or maybe Philip when Nathanel asked can anything good come from Nazareth and Philip responded "Come and See". But we already know that we are to look to Jesus, for it is Jesus that takes away our sins and Jesus who gives us new life.

So where will we focus this morning? I want us to look at John the Baptist.

I invite you to pray with me and for me as we consider:

THREE THINGS WE CAN LEARN FROM JOHN

SHALL WE PRAY!

Father God, we thank you for your Word. We thank you for your Son. We thank you for a mind to hear, learn and be transformed. We believe that all scripture is from you and is designed to teach and rebuke so that we may become more like your Son. We ask this morning that you allow us to consider the life of John the Baptist and seek to understand what he can teach us. In the name of Jesus the Christ we pray. Amen and Amen.

THREE THINGS WE CAN LEARN FROM JOHN

John was content to be number 2

John the Baptist was the older cousin of Jesus. His father was a priest and his birth was considered a miracle because his parents were so old when he was born. From birth he had been set aside as a prophet and there had not been a prophet in over 400 years. John was first – first born. John was special – his father was a priest. John had a calling – he was a prophet. Not only that but John had a following. There were so many folks coming into the wilderness to hear him that the teachers and priests and Levities became concerned. But John did not let any of this go to his head. John knew who he was – he was second and his job was to proclaim the coming of the one who would be first.

'A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'

(A thought: born first, first prophet in over 400 years, wow, I am large and in charge)

John was content to be number 2.

John listened to God

Although the passage of scripture we are considering this morning does not give us the narrative of Jesus being baptized by John, John makes reference to it when he introduces Jesus.

"I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him ³³ And I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.'

John had to be a praying man and listening man. First of all, he was baptizing Jews. There was one sect of Jews who practiced baptism as a sign of purification, but normally only Gentiles who were converting to Judaism were baptized. John was doing what God told him to do and it was out of the ordinary. So here is his cousin, a lowly carpenter's son and he has come into the wilderness to be baptized by John. Because John listened to God John was able to recognize the Messiah.

(Just a thought – how many of us might have missed our cousin being the Messiah?)

John had a testimony and he gave it

John had many opportunities to declare himself as something that he was not. He could have allowed the priests and Levities to believe he was "The Prophet" the long awaited Messiah. He could have been quiet when asked if he was Elijah. For many knew that the scriptures said Elijah would come again. Instead of seeking glory for himself John declared that he was just a voice crying in the wilderness.

Yet when the time was right John gave his complete testimony.

*"I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him.
³³ And I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.'*

³⁴I have seen and I testify that this is God's Chosen One."

John had a testimony and he gave it

(Thought: When was the last time you gave your testimony?)

Many of you have heard me talk about our Granny. She is not a blood relative and we did not meet her until I was in my early teens. She joined our home church Friendship and she became an active member. She worked in the church office, served on the nurse's board, sang in the choir, made an effort to be a friend and make friends. She became my Mother's friend and my sister Janet's friend first. When I accepted your call to pastor, Granny moved into our family home to help with MacKenzie.

Yesterday we celebrated Granny's 88th birthday. All she asked was that we come and have Thanksgiving Dinner with her. We ate the traditional dinner of Turkey and Dressing, Greens, Corn and Beans. We sang Happy Birthday and gave her our gifts. But as she opened her gifts she began to give her testimony.

Last year we celebrated my birthday in the hospital... I did not hear much more of what she said. I turned my head so she would not see my tears. For I remembered how I had prayed and asked you to pray and sent out prayer requests – because I/we were not ready to let Granny go.

Why do I stop near the end of the sermon to tell you about Granny? Because Granny demonstrates what we can learn from John.

Granny was content to be our second mother. She still sometimes calls us Martha's daughters. Granny lives a life that is clearly **in tune with God**. She is still active in church, she was one of the Divine Divas of Dance, she travels to conferences and still takes CE classes. Granny gives her testimony!!

This week I challenge you to find your place to be like John

**Be content to be #2 and let Jesus be #1
Listen to God
Give your testimony**

Amen.