

Dear Disciples of Jesus,

I want to take you back to the days of Moses. Remember when the Israelites were commanded by Moses to take a one year old male lamb without defect and sacrifice it. They put its blood on the doorpost so that the angel of death would pass over their home and spare the life of the firstborn males. I suppose while the family was preparing for the sacrifice, the lamb got loose, they would have to chase it. You might hear the words, “Follow That Lamb.” After all they weren’t just doing it for Moses, the command had come from the Lord God.

Since you and I don’t celebrate Passover as a command from the Lord, you would think that we would not hear, “**Follow That Lamb!**” But today we do hear that command. It is coming from John the Baptist. He said it to his disciples and he would say it to you and me as well. When John wants us to follow the Lamb, it is not some fluffy creature with four legs. He is pointing us to Jesus. John, the Baptist wants us to follow Jesus. As we look at these words of the Gospel of John, chapter one we can understand why we should follow Jesus.

### **1. John testifies that Jesus is the Lamb of God.**

John, the Baptist was good at testifying. He had just testified to the religious leaders of the Jews that he was not the Messiah. He said that one greater than himself was coming. John was simply preparing the way. Now Jesus walks onto the scene. John confesses faithfully, “Look, this is the one I was talking about, the Lamb of God.” What did he mean by calling Jesus “**the Lamb of God**”? His Jewish audience had a good idea. We need to understand too.

A. For a Jewish person in John’s day “**The Lamb of God**” meant deliverance from death.

1. The Jewish believer knew the story well of how the Israelites had sacrificed a lamb and painted the doorpost of the home with its blood. As a result Moses and the Israelites were spared the death of their first born when the angel of death came through Egypt. The people also regularly brought burnt offerings as well as sin and guilt offerings. In each case a healthy lamb

or goat was sacrificed at the Lord's altar. Sins were forgiven. A person knew that with that forgiveness they did not have to face eternal death.

The people who knew their Scriptures also understood that the Lamb was just a stand in. While the Lord pronounced forgiveness of sins, it was not because the animal could be their savior, but the Messiah was coming. He would make the atonement or payment for sin that counted. When John pointed to Jesus and said, "**The Lamb of God**" he was saying, "*This is the Messiah who has come to take your sin's away and save you from eternal death.*"

2. John goes on to tell the crowd and his disciples that this was the reason that God sent him. He came to reveal Jesus to Israel. The people believed John was a prophet, but many would struggle believing that Jesus was the promised Messiah. John is telling them, "*Even if it is hard to believe, Jesus who was born after me, was before me. He existed before me in eternity.*" This was good testimony.

B. This is not John's testimony alone. God, the Father, had also testified about Jesus.

1. John explains that the Father told him to watch for a dove from heaven coming down and resting on a man. That man is the Messiah, the Savior. This was Jesus. He had come to save people. He had come to pour out God's blessings through the Holy Spirit.

2. As we heard last Sunday, this sign was given at Jesus' baptism. The Spirit came on Jesus and the Father even spoke and testified that Jesus was his Son. John explains that this ordinary looking man, Jesus, is the Son of God.

C. I think the hardest thing is not to believe that Jesus is the Son of God and the Savior, with the blessing of the Holy Spirit we believe that in our head. What I think is more difficult, even with the presence of the Holy Spirit, is to believe in my heart that I am forgiven.

When we have lived a few years, we have sins in our life that we are embarrassed, and would not want to admit to anyone. It might be a DUI, sex before of marriage, enriching ourselves by stealing from someone. Maybe we have secretly loved and wanted someone who is married to someone else, or we were filled with intense feelings of jealousy. Maybe we bullied someone or loathed and hated someone who bullied us. Can we be forgiven for these sins and all the others?

John's testimony that Jesus is the Lamb of God is asking, in fact demanding that we believe our sins are forgiven. Jesus did not die in the temple on the

altar, but his death on cross was a sacrifice for God. Isaiah wrote in his 53<sup>rd</sup> chapter, **“He was led like a lamb to the slaughter.”** (7) Of that lamb Isaiah also said, **“the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”** (6b) Peter states confidently in his first letter, **“For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed...but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.”** (1:18,19) Jesus carried your sins. Jesus removed your guilt.

## **2. John testifies that we should follow Jesus.**

John, the Baptist wanted his disciples to know Jesus. But he points Jesus out again the next day for another reason. John wants them and us to follow Jesus.

A. This happens when John repeats himself the next day, **“Look, the Lamb of God!”** John is doing more than repeating the identity of Jesus. He is basically saying, *“What are you doing staying with me? Follow him.”*

1. A good question is, *“What were the disciples going to do with Jesus?”* It is possible they saw him do miracles. That would reassure them that he was from God. More likely is that they wanted to hear him talk about the Kingdom of God and explain the Scriptures to them. In other words they wanted to do Bible study with Jesus.

2. This is a good question for us as we come to church. What are we coming to do? We would say, *“I am coming to worship.”* That is a good answer, but it is important to realize that at the heart of worship is hearing and digesting the word. We come to listen to God’s word which is about Jesus, our Savior. Listening to that word and taking it to heart is worship. This is what the disciples had done with John and what they would do with Jesus.

B. Let’s note now Jesus’ reaction as he welcomes the disciples.

1. He challenges them with a question, **“What do you want?”** He knows they want to hear him speak and teach. What he wants them to think about is what they want to get out of that teaching. There is a Bible Class entitled, *“The Hard Sayings of Jesus.”* The reason that Bible Class exists is because there are things Jesus says that are hard to understand and there are things that are hard to swallow. One example is that Jesus later would announce his brutal sufferings and death and the disciples struggled. As we follow, Jesus requires that we not only accept his shameful death as something good, but also his teachings of Judgement Day, hell and everything else. That isn’t always easy.

The disciples response indicates that they are ready to listen and believe what he says. So they go and spend the rest of the day with him.

2. After they spend a day learning from Jesus, they are excited because they believe that he is the Savior. We are told that Andrew immediately goes and finds his brother Peter. He informs them that they have found the Messiah. Andrew is telling Peter, because he wants him to meet Jesus and follow him.

C. In our Bible Information Classes at church people will come to learn about Jesus. Very often they are excited by what they hear. I tell them, "If you have family, friends or co-workers might be looking for answers and hope, tell them about Jesus and invite them to come to church or to get more information. That is something all of us can do. We might have to get a little creative if we have invited them in the past. You can tell people that right now we are in the festival half of the church year and pastor is explaining about Jesus ministry and his sufferings and death. In the spring and summer we can tell people that Jesus teaches how we go about living a blessed life.

You and I can be excited because we have seen the Savior. We know that he is the Lamb of God and we trust what he did to save us.

Conclusion: When I was putting together words for a theme to this sermon, the first words were "**Follow That Lamb!**" It felt a little silly when I first wrote it down, but I decided it was memorable. If you tell people that you follow a lamb for your God and Savior, they may look at you a little funny. However, that might give you a chance to explain.

You and I follow Jesus because, as John said, he is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. That isn't funny, that is wonderful. Every one of us needs forgiveness and peace with God. We have it in the perfect sacrifice of Jesus. That's why we follow him. That's why we say, "**Follow That Lamb!**" Amen.