1.18.2026 Epiphany 2 Pastor Timothy McKenzie

Isaiah 49: 107; Psalm 40:1-11 1 Cor. 1:1-9; John 1:29-42

"Come and See"

Grace to you, and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

In today's gospel, the life of John the Baptist reaches its climax. Over a two-day period, John points beyond himself to Jesus, saying, "*Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*." We are so used to hearing these words in the Eucharist that their revolutionary character may not always sink in. In calling Jesus, "*the Lamb of God*," John the Baptist is prophetically pointing across the horizon to the in-breaking of God's kingdom in Jesus.

We all know Jesus' own self-description of his work: "*For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.*" Yet these words, reveal the scope of Jesus' work for whole world – all its diverse and varied people. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

In calling Jesus "*the Lamb of God*," John was also referring to the sacrificial system of the temple in Jerusalem in which the sin offering of an unblemished lamb was sacrificed twice daily, in accordance with Exodus 29:38, "*This is what you are to offer on the altar regularly each day: two lambs a year old*." The lambs were offered one in the morning and one in the afternoon. Meant to forgive people of their sins, this daily offering was known as the "continual burnt offering."

In saying, "*Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*," John the Baptist is emphasizing that in the person of Jesus, God is making the sacrifice for sin that we can never completely do on our own. Even if we were to offer a daily "continual burnt offering" of lambs, we could still never atone for our sin. Jesus is the sacrifice whose cross and resurrection forgives us our sins and frees us from death. Jesus is God's forgiveness for the world.

Until Jesus, the physical temple in Jerusalem was the only place of atonement for God's people. John is also saying that Jesus himself is now the temple. In John 2:19, Jesus says, "*Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up*," pointing to the temple of his body, sacrificed on the cross and raised from death. Here we see the world turning from the yesterday of "temple sacrifice" to the today and tomorrow of God's forgiveness for the world in Jesus Christ. Jesus is the lamb provided by God for the sins of the world.

John said, "*After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me"*" John does what very few people today seem capable of doing: pointing beyond himself to someone more powerful than he is. John is pointing to Jesus as the eternal Word made flesh, who was in

the beginning before John and who is the world's future: "*He is before all things, and in him all things hold together*" (Col. 1:17).

In our hyperbolic world of self-promotion, bigger always seems better. Leaders, politicians, influencers, and pundits all practice the modern art of self- amplification. People judge their effectiveness by "likes" and "clicks" and by how much "reach" they have. In contrast, John the Baptist simply says, "*He must increase, but I must decrease*" (Jn. 3:30), revealing that Jesus' influence and reach are greater than our own. Instead, John the Baptist reveals that humility and self-denial are the only real qualities that truly reach the human heart. John shows us what humility in leadership looks like: He pointed his own disciples to Jesus – something unthinkable in today's highly divided and partisan world, where people protect their factions, while paying lip service to Jesus and religion. It seems that increasingly, people work to point, not beyond themselves to the larger picture of human unity; but rather, to themselves, their political parties, and their nations. Yet, for all our human efforts at self-promotion, we will never have the reach of Jesus.

On the next day, John again pointed to Jesus, saying, "*Look, here is the Lamb of God*," and it's here that Jesus speaks for the first time in John's gospel. Jesus asks a question filled with meaning for each of us, "*What are you looking for?*" And so, I ask: What are you looking for in life? What are you looking for in a church? What are you looking for with forgiveness? What are you looking for in Jesus?

The two who followed Jesus, sidestepped directly answering his question, and sheepishly asked, "*Rabbi, where are you staying?*" Jesus replied, "*Come and see*." These two would-be followers represent all of us; they represent the "we" of "*the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen its glory*" (Jn. 1:14). Jesus showed them where he lived and they dwelt with him that day. So again, I ask: How much time do you spend each day with Jesus? Do you invite him to dwell with you daily? When you come into his house, this sacred place, do you rejoice that you are at home dwelling with him? When you come forward with hands outstretched, do you see him in the bread and the wine?

I've told this story before. Last year at Room in the Inn, I prayed with a man who came to into this holy house for a meal and shelter. After we prayed, he said to me, "I am so blessed because tonight I get to sleep in God's house, and tomorrow morning I will awake in God's house." Like Jesus asking, "*What are you looking for?*" this man helped me to come and see anew that Jesus' presence offers us safety, forgiveness, and hope.

Jesus dwelt in this homeless man, and he possessed riches and abundance beyond anything we might ordinarily call wealth – bank accounts, stocks, real estate. Dwelling with Jesus, he

already possessed the treasure of Jesus. Jesus was everything to him.

Jesus continues to ask each of us, "*What are you looking for?*" He continues to say to each of us, "*Come and see*." Come and see the one who dwells with you. Come and see the one whose sacrifice overcomes your sin. Come and see the one whose death will overcome your death with eternal life.

Finally, we can't leave this text today without mentioning Andrew. Andrew took to heart Jesus' invitation to "*Come and see*" by bringing his brother Peter to Jesus. So again, I ask: Who has been like Andrew in your life? Who introduced you to Jesus? Who has made Jesus real to you? Like John the Baptist, Andrew also "decreased" so that Jesus might increase in others. It's interesting where Andrew shows up in the gospel narrative. Andrew brought the boy with five loaves and two fish to Jesus, and with that small lunch, Jesus fed five thousand (Jn. 6:8). In Jerusalem, Andrew brought Greek visitors to Jesus who were eager to meet him (Jn. 12:22). Andrew lived only to bring others to Jesus. Yet imagine if Andrew hadn't brought Peter to meet Jesus. Imagine if he looked at the young boy's simple lunch of five barley loaves and two fish and sent him away, saying, "What are we supposed to do with that?" Imagine if Andrew didn't welcome the foreign visitors, saying, "Go away you foreigners, you're not welcome here." Andrew's ideal for living was *Come and see*; he wanted all people to know Jesus.

Come and see is an invitation to meet the only one who can reach your life, not with intimidation or brute force, but with forgiveness and love. What are you looking for and how might Jesus be using you to bring others to him?

We are saved, not by your own actions or self-promotion, but by the Lamb of God who forgives the sin of the world.

He welcomes you again today. Call upon him, and dwell with him.

He will build a temple of forgiveness in you, so that you might forgive others.

Come and see. Amen.