

Sermon for 1-10-10  
John 1:29-37

Everyone has a beginning with Jesus, because he created life. Yet, Does this beginning become real/personal to us/our friends? Does Jesus become the ultimate authority in our life/those near to us? Why should anyone become his disciples (those who follow in his way)?

The book of John says Jesus is the Word, God, bringer of light and life. That is all very well and good, but it is still abstract. Think of it like this: You receive a greeting card that reads 'I love you' or 'thinking of you'. Fine, that is a good start, but we need to hear a person say it and demonstrate it. So idea can become more real. So we can really be ready to believe it.

The Bible tells us about Jesus. People also need to hear how someone else has come to know Jesus and follow in his way. They need a demonstration that can continue to help them understand how he matters in life. We as individuals share who we believe Jesus is and as a church our actions can help others understand how Jesus matters in life. John the Baptist fills this role in scripture for those who would be Jesus' disciples. John speaks of Jesus and does a sign that points to Jesus.

John declares that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Sin must be taken away to know God in a personal and not just abstract way. (To understand abstract: I drew stick figures to represent our family for my daughter. There is a beginning, but you can't gain much understanding from it. (Yes people have arms and legs, but what do they really look like, what can they do, etc.) You could have a photo, but how do you begin to understand who the people in the picture are.

Lamb of God is a title that adds understanding of how Jesus matters for those familiar with the Old Testament. In Genesis, Abraham was told to take his son, his only son Isaac 'whom you love' and sacrifice him. Isaac wonders where is the lamb for the burnt offering. Abraham says that God himself will provide the lamb. Isaac is saved by God sending a male sheep to be the sacrifice. In Exodus, the nation of Israel is enslaved in Egypt. Each family is told to sacrifice a lamb and put its blood on the doorframe. They are saved from the Lord striking down the first born by the sacrifice/blood of the lamb. This is remembered by the nation of Israel by the celebration of the Passover where a lamb is sacrificed once a year as part of the Passover feast to remember God's salvation.

A lamb is the instrument of salvation in the history of God's people. John says, Jesus is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. In this title sin being taken away is connected to salvation from death. We can now understand

how the image of Lamb reinforces Jesus as savior, but how do we understand sins being taken away.

God directs John to do something concrete to prepare people to understand this. John baptizes with water. I remember coming home from sliding in the mud at college and going straight to the shower to clean me and my clothes. The water took away my dirtiness. Though we are dirty we know we can be clean if we are washed in water.

What was revealed to John, his testimony – Jesus will baptize with Holy Spirit. Jesus' washing will take away our sins. Our baptism today is a sign of how God takes away sin and saves. It is to prepare Isabella to understand that. But it is also Jesus bringing the Holy Spirit into her life. We use the water to begin to understand what Jesus does in our life since Jesus baptizes in a way that cannot always be seen.

John's baptism and message readies one to understand Jesus. Salvation and sin being taken away come to us in Jesus. John's message and baptism are not what make us see Jesus, but help us to understand who Jesus is when we meet him. What John says and does is nothing without Jesus. John twice says I did not know him. John's testimony is that Jesus is revealed by an act of the Spirit, not the achievement of understanding.

John's job is the job of the church. Our ministry, our own existence, our care for each other doesn't bring salvation. We can't make Jesus the ultimate authority in a person's life. However, sharing our encounter with Jesus and demonstrating the reality of it testifies to others that Jesus is revealed to people. Jesus does save. Jesus does take away sins. Jesus does transform peoples lives. What those who follow Christ do is point others to Jesus that we may encounter him. As John says, "I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God." Our witness asks people to look for Jesus and prepares them to follow him.

John's disciples heard (John's testimony). When John saw Jesus he said, 'Look (or Behold) the Lamb of God.' This is who I'm talking about. John repeats 'Lamb of God'. It is most important to draw attention to Jesus as Savior, who deals with the sins of the world. Jesus is the ultimate authority because he takes away our sin so we can know God. He saves us from death by dying. Two of John's disciples hear this and follow Jesus.

Is this witness to Jesus effective? I bet John had more than two disciples. John had prepared his disciples for someone greater to come (see v.30.) Only two followed Jesus after all John's teaching. Shouldn't more have followed? Maybe so, but they would have had to take a risk to change their allegiance to someone they did not understand. Still any witness to Jesus is not without fruit. The Spirit witnessed to John who witnessed to his disciples, who would witness to others, ultimately who would witness to us, so we would witness to others. We can and

must testify with our words and our lives that Jesus fulfills the promise of Baptism with the Holy Spirit. He cleanses us of sin that we might know God/see Jesus.

Is our witness effective? Do we demonstrate that Jesus is the ultimate authority? We as individuals share who we believe Jesus is and as a church our actions can help others understand how Jesus matters in life. We must be clear that only as we follow Jesus can we go deeper into understanding who we were created to be. We can as a church, come to share in the divine glory of Jesus Christ for which we were intended as we share Jesus (talk about, live out Jesus in us). Live together with Jesus as our common ultimate authority. We live as part of his body given to reveal him to the world. This life is revealed to us in scripture in the words and actions of Jesus' life and by the Spirit in each person's life. May we become Jesus' disciples or renew our commitment as his disciples to follow him so others may be asked to look at Jesus and be prepared to follow him.