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St. John's & Immanuel Lutheran Churches – Kimball, NE & Burns, WY

Second Sunday after the Epiphany (Series A)

January 15, 2017

Text: John 1:29–42a

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

Who is Jesus? The Epiphany season provides answers to that most important question. Thus far, we've heard that Jesus is the Savior of the nations who saves the world by becoming one of us; He takes upon Himself our human nature. In the Jordan River, the divine-human Jesus receives a sinner's baptism and is anointed – marked – by the Holy Spirit to be the sinner-saving Lord of glory and grace.

Today's gospel reading from John 1 provides even more clarity as to who this sinner-saving Lord is. For not only was Jesus numbered among us by becoming one of us, He is anointed to be the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. In other words, the Lord Jesus Christ takes the responsibility for taking away our sins, yea, the sins of the entire world.

John the Baptist declares Jesus to be God's Lamb twice, vs. 29 & 36. When someone asks you who Jesus is or what you believe about Jesus, you can say, with all Biblical authority, that Jesus is God's Lamb who is responsible for taking away the sins of every human being who has ever lived, who is living, and who will ever live.

According to John the Baptist's testimony, God the Father reveals His divinely appointed Lamb to be the one who baptizes people with the Holy Spirit (vs. 33). John's testimony is corroborated by the descent of the Holy Spirit who, in the form of a dove, remains upon Jesus. With the commission of God the Father and empowered by the Holy Spirit, Jesus takes away every sin, every form of evil, every deed of darkness; the divine-human, sinner-saving Lord takes away the sins of the world and baptizes His people with the Holy Spirit by becoming God's Lamb.

That designation – Christ the Lamb of God – is most important. That phrase should be emblazoned upon your heart, mind, and soul. We sing it every time we prepare to receive the Lord's Supper in the Agnus Dei. But we must also understand its full significance too. In the Bible, lambs aren't depicted as cute, cuddly animals raised for 4H projects and county fairs. In large part, they were animals raised either to be

sacrificed as sin offerings burnt on God's holy altar in the Temple. Or they were raised to be slaughtered during the annual Passover festival.

If the lamb was dedicated as a sin offering, it was taken to Jerusalem, to God's holy Temple. Once there, you just didn't drop it off at the door with the priest. Not so. Near the altar – within sight of it – you placed your hands upon the lamb's head and then you killed the lamb; the priest took the slain lamb and offered it upon the altar as a payment for sins committed against God and His people.

If the lamb was dedicated for use during one of the annual Passover celebrations, the lamb was killed in remembrance of how God saved His people from Egyptian slavery. The lamb's blood covered the doorposts and then was eaten with unleavened bread and bitter herbs in celebration of God's grace and mercy. Either way, these lambs of God died for the grace and benefit of God's redeemed people.

All that I just described is now being said of Jesus. He's the Lamb of God that not only takes away the sins of a few people but of the whole world. Jesus will be sacrificed like so many thousands upon thousands of lambs. But His sacrifice is so very different. He is the Holy Spirit-anointed Son of God the Father Almighty. The sacrifice He gives, He gives once for all. He's the perfect Lamb; the perfect payment for your sins and the sins of the whole world. Once Jesus is sacrificed on Calvary's altar, sin is paid for in full! That means your sins are atoned for, covered up, and taken away because of Jesus' death and His glorious resurrection from the dead on the third day. And so today I declare to you, in the name of the crucified and resurrected Lord Jesus, God's perfect lamb, that all the sins you have every committed, are committing, or ever will commit are forgiven.

Therefore leave this service today free from sin's bondage. Repent, turn away, from all sins and be forgiven. Be filled with God's Holy Spirit. For that too is what the Lord Jesus does as the sinner-saving Lamb of God. He baptizes His people with the Holy Spirit (vs. 33). This means that God's redeemed people are covered from head to toe, to the very depths of their soul with the saving grace of the Holy Spirit. So, dear saints of God, you are not only cleansed from sin you are filled completely with the Holy Spirit. That's what the Lord Jesus has done to and for you as the sinner-saving Lamb of God.

But there's something else we see in today's gospel reading. Two of John's disciples hear John's preaching about Jesus. And they start following Jesus! If He's the one

who takes away sin and baptizes with the Holy Spirit, then let's follow Him in faith and obedience. One of those disciples was named Andrew. Notice what he does – he goes to his brother Simon Peter and tells him that they've found the Messiah. Andrew evangelizes his family! He brings his brother to Jesus, to God's Lamb.

That's what we are to do. Tell people about Jesus beginning with your family. Andrew went to his brother, told him about Jesus and took him to Jesus. That's it. Tell your family, friends and neighbor about Jesus – He's the Messiah, the Son of God, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, He baptizes with the Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus is the Savior. Now come with me. Let me take you to Him. He's promised to be found in His Holy Word and Sacraments. That's what Philip did with the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8. He told him about Jesus and baptized him. It's what Paul did with Lydia in Acts 16. Paul told her and her family about Jesus and then he baptized them all.

Today (Immanuel), we especially rejoice that Korbin is being brought by his family to Jesus (St. John's = encouragement to bring family and friends; Sunday School, Bible classes, etc). I'm sure that you will remember and celebrate his birthday, December 9, 2016. Remember this day too with the same zeal and eagerness. For today, January 15, 2017, Korbin was brought to Jesus and baptized with water and the Holy Spirit unto eternal life.

The Lord calls us to share His good news with those we know and love, those whom He brings into our lives: our family, friends, and neighbors. Tell them that Jesus is the Holy Spirit giving Lamb of God who takes away all their sins. Then bring them to Jesus, to the hearing of His Word and the joyful reception of His blessed Sacraments.

The Lord Jesus takes responsibility for you. He takes away your sins and fills you with His Holy Spirit so that you can live with Him in His kingdom in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness. Glory be to Jesus...

✠ In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. ✠ Amen.

Now the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus unto life everlasting. Amen.