
Last week we focused on the statement in verse 29, “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.” We tied this phrase back to the story of Abraham and Isaac and the miracle at Mount Moriah as well as the prophecy given in Isaiah 53 where it talks about one who would die and would be crushed for our sins – like a lamb led to the slaughter. We will see this week that there were those who absolutely identified with those stories and from that one statement understood the depth of its meaning and responded by instantly acknowledging that Jesus is the Lamb provided by God – the Messiah. Let’s pick up the story in verse 35.

John 1:35-42

Again the next day John was standing with two of his disciples, and he looked at Jesus as He walked, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. And Jesus turned and saw them following, and said to them, "What do you seek?" They said to Him, " Rabbi (which translated means Teacher), where are You staying?" He said to them, "Come, and you will see." So they came and saw where He was staying; and they stayed with Him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. One of the two who heard John speak and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He found first his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which translated means Christ). He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter).

This is the beginning of Jesus ministry and He starts to gather those who would follow; actually, those who will follow are starting to gather to Jesus. John is again busy doing his baptism thing at the Jordan and telling people that they need to repent

for the kingdom of God is at hand. All of sudden he stops and looks over at Jesus who walks by and once again John points out to the crowd that this man is the Lamb that came from God. John's disciples heard him say the same thing the day before and I am sure they had that phrase and all the rich meaning that it elicited mulling over and over in their minds. If John was right, they had to go and follow the Lamb. Sure, John was sent by God, but this was the Lamb of God who was Himself God; the very provision for the required sacrifice. This is the One that was prophesied about. This is the One, the coming of whom all hope of the nation had been placed for centuries. They had to follow.

So who are these first two followers? We are told that one of these guys is Peter's brother Andrew. This guy is interesting, we have only a handful of references to him, but often he is the one that is bringing someone to Jesus. We will see soon that he brings Peter to Jesus, he is also the one who brings the young boy to Jesus, the one who had the 2-fishes and 5-barley loaves, and he brings some Greeks who wanted a personal audience with Jesus. Andrew was a lot like Trist and Jessica, they both seem to always have no problem just inviting people to church or to the events we have going on. Some of us are not nearly as comfortable doing that, it's not the way we have been gifted; but both of them seem to have no problem at all being bold in that way. It is an awesome thing. We got to have our Andrews.

As far as the second guy, I am speculating here, but there is a good chance that the unnamed follower is the Apostle John himself. You will find that all throughout this gospel, John never mentions himself by name. It's as if he never wanted anyone to give him any undue credit or attention. He wanted the full focus of the reader to always to be on Jesus.

Let's stop there for one second. I know that by the time John was writing this gospel he was a pretty mature Christian so we can take that into account, but think

about living in such a way where you are so grounded in who you are in God that you refuse to take credit or grab any attention for yourself. Instead, you are more than comfortable letting Jesus, first and foremost, and others, be the focal point. I believe this kind of selfless way of being is a sign of true spiritual maturity.

Luke 14:8-11

"When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for someone more distinguished than you may have been invited by him, and he who invited you both will come and say to you, 'Give your place to this man,' and then in disgrace you proceed to occupy the last place. "But when you are invited, go and recline at the last place, so that when the one who has invited you comes, he may say to you, 'Friend, move up higher'; then you will have honor in the sight of all who are at the table with you. "For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Sadly, we don't really have selflessness as a core value in what we see displayed in Christian media today. Just turn on the TV or cruise through some Christian Bookstores, it seems everyone has kind of given themselves over to the marketing machine and to self-promotion, which tends to dominate the industry's mindset. Now, I am not saying there is not a proper time and place for effective marketing—sure there is. But I think as a whole the Christian media tends to rely too much on these methods and less on discerning the will of God and how God wants something to be done. As a result, this marketing mindset penetrates down from our churches and from our ministries into our daily living and our interactions with others. Humility and

selflessness are often left out of the equation. I think we can all learn something by what John did not do.

Now, these two followers came up to Jesus and called Him Rabbi or Teacher. Notice that they did not call Him Lord, they did not call Him God, and they did not call Him the Christ or the Messiah. They addressed Him as teacher. I am sure the true reality of what John the Baptist had said was still a little too much to accept. They understood what John was saying but they were not quite ready to come up and say: “Hi, I heard you are God, so umm tell me what’s it like being God? Can you really hear everyone praying at the same time and not get confused?”

Notice the question Jesus asked them—what do you seek? I find it interesting that He did not ask them “who do you seek” but “what.” I think this question in large part reveals that Jesus absolutely understood, without question, what lurked in the heart of man. Few of us come to God on the basis of the “who” but the “what” – what we want and what we think we need. You would think that just being near Jesus would be enough; just knowing Him would be enough; and just having Him give you the time of day and acknowledge your presence would be more than you could ever hope for from the living God. But all of us come to God first and foremost on the basis of need—what we think we want. However, few of us know what we truly need—which is the “who.”

I have found that as we begin our walk in the Lord, God graciously deals with us on the basis of the “what;” however, His goal and intention is to move us to see our need for the “who,” our need for Him. Remember, His ultimate goal is our *oneness*—that there is no separation between us and Him. We may start off very self-focused and our prayers are filled with “me,” “me,” “meeeeee,” but as we grow and mature in the Lord this whole dynamic starts to reverse. We actually start to discover that the

life we seek is found in the “who,” and we become less fixated on the myriad of “what’s” that we think we need.

It is this difference between the “who” and the “what” that explains why things like miracles and signs and wonders never cause people to truly believe and trust God with their lives. It is this reason why the children of Israel had to wonder around the desert for 40-years. It is the reason why people screamed Hosanna one-day and three-days later, “crucify Him.” It is why with one breath we say that Jesus is our Lord and with the next we freak out over what is happening in our lives.

I know many of us have asked God for a miracle and we usually say, “If You do just this one thing then I will follow you completely.” Well, if your experience is like mine, that commitment lasts only as long as your life stays comfortable and without impending doom. For as soon as something happens that causes us concern, we tend to forget about trusting God and resting in His being Lord of our lives, and we go back to the bargaining table asking for more proof that it is going to be ok, more evidence, more miracles.

When we are in deal making mode, we are just fixated on the “me” and we absolutely lose touch with the fact that God is sovereign over our lives and nothing can happen to us without His assent. We also lose touch with the fact that God loves us so much and if He allows something, it is for our good—for the purpose of conforming us into His image.

Yes, God in His mercy asks us what we want, but mark my word, His goal is for us to know Him and realize that He is the answer to every longing in our heart. That is why He is called the “I am” because everything, and I mean everything, that we truly need is found when we surrender—full on—all that we are, all that we want, all that we could ever hope for, to Him and let Him be the Lord and God of our lives.

Going back to the text, it is kind of a funny scene if you think about it. Here John the Baptist just tells these followers that Jesus came from God. So they leave John and start to follow Jesus around. And when they finally get the courage to approach Him, He turns and asks them what they want. I am sure they were totally taken off guard and did not want to come across in the wrong way and so they kind of stammered and what they came up with was, “where are you staying.” I doubt they really wanted to know his address, but whatever—that is what came out of their mouths. The pressure was on.

So He invited them to hang out with Him and I am sure it was an amazing night. We have no record that Jesus did any miracles, but they got to spend time with Him, listen to Him, and hear what He had to say. This is what they truly needed – at least all that Andrew needed – for the next day he went to go find Peter and told Him that he found the Christ, the Messiah. He did not say I found this awesome Rabbi (the way he addressed Jesus when he was first introduced to Him), but that he found the Christ—God incarnate. One night with Jesus and Andrew was convinced, for “what” he truly needed was the “who,” and it was enough!

I still think it is kind of weird that Peter followed Andrew to go meet Jesus. Obviously, this was not some small claim that Andrew was making. All I can say is that the night he spent with Jesus must have made such an impression on him that Peter knew Andrew was dead serious when he said he found the Christ. So Peter came to Jesus who looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter).

I know this whole name thing in the Bible is a bit weird, and it can be a bit confusing, but you got to get used to it; it happens a lot. So here we have Peter’s first introduction to Jesus and Jesus just goes and changes His name. I wonder what Peter was thinking; I am sure he was a taken back. He had come to see this man that

Andrew claimed was the Christ. I am sure he wanted some proof and wanted to see some miracles, see some God stuff in action, and Jesus just says hi and then immediately changes his name. A person's name is very personal; you don't just go and mess with it. It's not like they had been hanging out and Jesus picked a nickname for him like he did for John and his brother James, who were nicknamed "Sons of Thunder." This just comes out of the blue.

However, the re-naming of Simon to Cephas or Peter was not incidental and Jesus was not just poking fun at Simon. It was actually a prophetic event. In effect, Jesus was meeting Peter at the point of his "what"—his need to have some proof that Jesus is the Christ. Jesus wanted to get the "what" out of the way so Peter could then focus on the "who," which is why I believe Jesus instantly prophesies over Peter.

We are going to spend a lot of time with Peter over the next few months and we will see that Peter was a bit impetuous—which at times was a fun thing and he added a lot of drama to the whole gang. If you remember, Peter was the one who walked on water; and, yet, he was also the one who whipped out his sword and tried to take the head off of one of those who were arresting Jesus. His name, Simon, derives from the Hebrew Simeon, who was one of Jacob's 12-sons. Simeon's legacy was that of impulsiveness, anger, and violence and at the end of his life Jacob kind of disowned him and said that Simeon's descendants would be scattered throughout the nation of Israel verses living in their own territory (*Genesis 49:5-7*). Well, it seems that Simon had many traits of his ancestor.

However, despite the legacy, through renaming Simon, Jesus tells him that He is going to change Simon's character and his very base nature and he would become stable and secure like a rock (which is what Cephas and Peter both mean). Sure his *old nature*, his *old man*, was unstable, wild, impulsive, and violent, but Jesus knew that the *new creation* which He was going to imbue within Peter was going to be

absolutely stable and secure. When the Holy Spirit invaded Peter's life, he was going to become someone that others could depend and rely upon, someone that would not crack under persecution and pressure, someone upon whom the early church would be built around. Peter's *new creation* would reflect the following attributes of Christ—strength, stability, long suffering, and endurance.

A little side note, I believe that each of us has a new name that reflects the unique attributes of Christ that are expressed through our life and which define our *new creation*. One day we will know our new names.

Revelation 2:17

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.'

That will be so cool. Maybe we will get American Gladiator type names, Blazer, Tazer, Fury, and Crush, or maybe we will get superhero sounding names like the "Threasher," the "Double-Edge" or "7-eyes." Who knows for sure, but if I catch any of you up there calling me "Ronald," I'm coming after you.

Did you know that Jesus is also going to get a new name? That's right, we are going to know Him and call Him by some new name. He is even going to tattoo it on us or something so we bear His name always.

Revelation 3:12-13

He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write on him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name. 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

I think this is pretty cool, who knows maybe Jesus' new name will be "Ronald." You never know, maybe all of you will have to eat some serious crow.

John 1:43-51

The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Come, follow me." Philip was from Bethsaida, Andrew and Peter's hometown. Philip went to look for Nathanael and told him, "We have found the very person Moses and the prophets wrote about! His name is Jesus, the son of Joseph from Nazareth." "Nazareth!" exclaimed Nathanael. "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" "Come and see for yourself," Philip replied.

As they approached, Jesus said, "Now here is a genuine son of Israel—a man of complete integrity." "How do you know about me?" Nathanael asked. Jesus replied, "I could see you under the fig tree before Philip found you." Then Nathanael exclaimed, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God—the King of Israel!" Jesus asked him, "Do you believe this just because I told you I had seen you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than this." Then he said, "I tell you the truth, you will all see

heaven open and the angels of God going up and down on the Son of Man, the one who is the stairway between heaven and earth."

While all this was taking place with Andrew and Peter, the gospel of Matthew and Mark tell us that John the Baptist got arrested. So Jesus left the area of the Jordan where John the Baptist was doing his work and traveled back up North to the region of Galilee. Jesus then comes across this guy named Philip. John tells us that he was from the same hometown as Peter and Andrew because he wants us to take away that they were likely pretty good friends, which is probably why John did not feel the need to provide a lot of information about this encounter between Philip and Jesus.

What I find remarkable, however, is that Jesus asked Philip to follow and not only did he follow, he immediately went out and started to gather others to Jesus. The take away from this story which I want you to consider is that there are people out there who really want God in a bad way but they really have no one to show them the way and no one to point out Jesus to them. Often we are so shy about telling people about Jesus and it is really just because of our insecurities; it is not because the Holy Spirit isn't working or because there are not those who are in real need. We have to be careful not to let our personal hang-ups about sharing the gospel hinder us when we know the Spirit is leading. When the Spirit moves us, we need to go ahead take the risk, for there are real people out there who are dying to meet God for real.

The other thing that I find remarkable is that there is this group of friends that all seem to be ardent seekers of God. The unnamed follower and Andrew were apostles of John the Baptist, Peter and Philip immediately followed when Jesus asked, and we will see that their other friend Nathanael also was ready to meet Jesus. They all had this desire to know the Messiah.

I want you to stop for a moment and consider your circle of friends and family, whether here at school or back home. Many of them have been trapped in the *religion of Christianity* or many others have just been turned off to God because of their exposure to Christianity, but consider how many of them might truly be hungry to know what it is like to be in relationship with Jesus and experience what it is like to live from the *new creation*. There is a good chance that they have never even really heard or understood even the slightest notion about living by faith through the *new creation*. There is a chance that if they heard they would drop everything and follow. I would encourage you each to pray and see if the Lord puts anyone on your heart who He knows is dying to know the truth.

So Philip found Nathanael and told him that Jesus, from Nazareth, is the One; and after a short encounter with Jesus, Nathanael believed. Nathanael's heart was so sensitive that all Jesus had to say was that I saw you when you were under the tree and Nathanael was convinced that He must be the Son of God—the King of Israel. I think that is beautiful.

Then Jesus makes a very peculiar reference that would have taken these Jewish boys back to the stories of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I am going to read it from the New American standard version instead of the New Living.

John 1:51

And He said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

We need to venture back to the story of Abraham and Isaac, which we touched on last week, and continue with the story of Jacob. Remember, I said that Isaac was the son of promise and in the same way Jesus is the Son of promise. Let me explain that a little further. God promised Abraham a son through Sarah and then He also promised that through his Seed the nations of the world will be blessed. Isaac was the fulfillment of the first commitment and Jesus is the Seed that came from the line of Isaac that would be the blessing to all nations. Both children are the sons of promise—the sons of a covenant made between God and Abraham. But this whole story also paints a very interesting picture of *creation*, *covenant*, and *blessing*, which are all major themes in the Bible and which are all initiated and fulfilled in, by, and through Jesus.

The books of *Genesis*, *Colossians*, and *John*, tell us that God created all things and He created everything there is out of mere nothingness. But, by the choice of a man, His creation was corrupted and defiled by sin. So God made a covenant with Abraham to bring a remedy for this sin, and the remedy would be in the form of man, the one who is the cause of the corruption in the first place. And the same power that was released at creation would once again be released at the resurrection creating new life from nothingness—life from the dead. So, in effect, Isaac, and as we shall see his son Jacob, represents both the *cause* and the *solution* to the problem of sin that separates man from God.

Now let's take this story down to the next set of players. Isaac had 2-sons, Jacob and Esau. We are told in *Romans 9* that the promise flowed through Jacob and not Esau, even though Jacob was a type or a symbol of the corruption of man. Even Jacob's name makes this point. Jacob means heel catcher, or one who will purposely cause another to fall, or trip, in order to advance his own interests and desires. His name represents the self-seeking, self-obsessed heart of all of mankind. Yet, being the

descendent of a promise which came through a miraculous birth (Abraham was 100 years old and Sarah was 90 when they had Isaac), he also represents the covenant made by God to bring a solution to the sinful condition of man. A covenant which comes through another miraculous birth, a virgin birth, that could only have happened by the power of creation—the very hand of God.

This brings us to a story in *Genesis 28* which Jesus refers to when he makes this reference about the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man. In *Genesis 27*, we are told that Jacob had deceived Isaac and tricked him into giving Jacob the blessing of the first born son that should have been given to his brother Esau. When Esau found out about this trickery he was furious and planned to kill Jacob once his father died. When Jacob found out about Esau's plans he fled the country.

There were no hotels in those days so Jacob camped out in the open air. The conditions were pretty rough and we are told that Jacob had to use a stone as a pillow, a little detail that is not insignificant. While he was sleeping he had this vision of a ladder that extended from heaven to earth and traversing up and down this ladder were the angels of God. At the top of the ladder stood the Lord and he said, "I am the Lord, the God of your grandfather Abraham and the God of your father, Isaac." God went on to make a promise to Jacob about the land and his descendants and said, "All the families of the earth will be blessed through you and your descendants (or in the Hebrew, your Seed—which is in the singular)."

Genesis 28:16-19

Then Jacob woke up and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I wasn't even aware of it." He was afraid and said, "What an awesome place this is! It is none

other than the house of God—the gateway to heaven!” The next morning he got up very early. He took the stone he had used as a pillow and set it up-right as a memorial pillar. Then he poured olive oil over it. He named the place Bethel—“house of God”—though the name of the nearby village was Luz.

There is so much going on here and by Jesus quoting this verse He is saying that He is the very ladder that connects Heaven and Earth. He is the passage way through which the kingdom of God invades our world and the angels of God do their work in our lives. He is the descendant or the “Seed” of man through which the nations of the world are blessed, Jews and Gentiles alike. He is the rock or the stone upon which Jacob and his descendants rest. He is the stone that is lifted up to the top of the pillar (the one that is even greater than John the Baptist), He is the one that will be lifted up on the cross for all to see, and He is the One that is anointed with oil (the presence and power of the Holy Spirit).

The *creation*: God in the flesh. The *covenant*: Jesus is the seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—a man becomes the solution. The *blessing*: He is the very provision for all men to be connected to God, He is the ladder, He is the way, the truth, and the life; and there is no other name under heaven by which men can be saved. None!

In making this reference to Nathanael, Jesus is essentially telling him to buckle up his seat belt, the ride is about to get a bit crazy. The kingdom of heaven is truly at hand and he will soon see and experience things that will blow his mind.

You see, Jesus is the answer to all that stirs in our hearts. I know that many of you have taken great strides in your pursuit of God and the *old man* no longer dominates your being. But remember, God’s love for you is a jealous love. He wants all of you and He wants you to find complete satisfaction and rest in the “who”—in Him. He

wants to be the secure pillow, or the rock, under your head. He wants to be lifted up in your life for all to see. He wants to anoint you and overwhelm you with His Spirit so that you are a blessing to all.

Like Nathanael, I encourage you strap on your seat belt, the story gets pretty action packed from here on out. Next week we will pick up with Jesus' first public miracle.

Let's Pray.