

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
www.lutheranlccf.org
Second Sunday After Epiphany, January 16, 2022

✠ ✠ ✠

(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 270, 498:1, 421, 507, 512.

Lessons: Isaiah 12:1-6, 1 Timothy 2:1-8, John 1:19-34.

Sermon Text: John 1:35-42.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

John the Baptist appears in the first verses of John's Gospel and his name comes up about 20 more times in the Gospel of John the Evangelist.

John the Baptist pointed to Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God and directed his disciples to Jesus Christ as the one they should follow because Jesus is more important than John. He said of Jesus: ***"This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.'"*** John 1:15 (ESV)

Please listen carefully as

THE LAMB OF GOD EXTENDS AN INVITATION TO FOLLOW HIM

- 1. John the Baptist pointed to the "Lamb of God".**
- 2. Two of John's disciples followed Jesus, and**
- 3. Jesus invites us to follow him.**

John freely admitted he was not the Christ, but had been sent by God to point to the Christ. He was simply a voice preparing the way for Jesus to come, literally into Judea and Galilee, and figuratively to come into the hearts of men.

When ***"The Jews of Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was"*** John 1:19 (NIV) he told them. John had given abundant evidence that he was not the Savior and he plainly pointed to Jesus and said ***"Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! This is the one I meant when I said, 'A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.' I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel."*** John 1:29-31 (NIV)

In our text, John simply says ***"Look, the Lamb of God!"*** He didn't have to tell his followers that this is the one ***"who takes away the sin of the world."*** They would have heard it the previous day, just as you heard it in our Gospel lesson and in the time they had been following John, they had probably heard many times that John was pointing people to the one who takes away the sin of the world. They should know that John was pointing them to the Messiah. It was as if John had said 'Look, there is the man you need to follow. There is the long-awaited Savior. Why are you standing here with me? Go to him – now.' John had not set out to gain disciples for himself but to point people to Jesus.

Immediately two of John's disciples followed Jesus.

Today when we "follow" someone, even in an earthly sense become followers of someone, we have heard his message saying something that is important to us. We think that such a human is someone who is worth following.

But this is more important than simply following an earthly leader. John points us and all men to one who has a consistent message which does not change. He is the one to follow who can lead us all the way to heaven.

They based their decision to follow Jesus on the words of John the Baptist, whom they had been following. They would not have been following him if they didn't believe he had something important to say. What kind of message did Jesus have that would lead these men to follow him?

When they began following Jesus, ***“Jesus saw them following and asked, ‘What do you want?’ They said, ‘Rabbi’ (which means Teacher), ‘where are you staying?’ ‘Come,’ he replied, ‘and you will see.’ So they went and saw where he was staying, and spent that day with him.”***

When Jesus asks the question ***‘what do you want’*** it was perhaps an obvious question to ask of two strangers who suddenly decide to follow a person. Such a question would also get them to think about what they expect from him.

“They said, ‘Rabbi’ (which means Teacher), ‘where are you staying?’” The word Rabbi comes from the Hebrew language and literally means “my great one”. This was a title of honor given to teachers of the Law in their synagogues. John translates it “teacher” for his Gentile readers who may not know the Hebrew term. They expected to learn something from him. They wanted to see what he had to say, to learn from him, to stay with him and gain from him what he had to offer them. They came because John had identified Jesus as ***“the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.”***

These men were the first followers of Jesus identified in the Scriptures. One of them is even named, Andrew, who became one of the twelve apostles. And an apostle is a messenger, a delegate, one sent forth with specific instructions.

Based on what Jesus did at other times with his disciples, you can probably guess that he was teaching them, and they wanted to follow him to learn from him.

They didn’t just listen to him for a short time, but spent all day with him. Most of us have probably spent a whole day learning. In formal schooling today, that may involve a number of different teachers and different subjects. Seminars and conferences that we have attended may involve intense instruction in just one area of life. We can only wonder and guess at what Jesus was talking about during this day. But most certainly it was important matters, not trivial earthly things such as we often talk about when we gather with friends.

We know from elsewhere in Scripture that his message would be centered on the forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation. We even know from Scripture that Jesus did not teach and speak like other religious teachers in Israel at that time. His message was different, because he, true God, was also the source of the message he was delivering.

In his omniscience Jesus knew also what was going on in the hearts of these two men and why they were there. In the day they spent with Jesus they surely received instruction in the Word of God.

It was a memorable day for the two men. They were Jesus’ guests and by spending a day with him, they would become acquainted with him and his message of salvation.

One of the men who followed Jesus was Andrew. The other one is not named, but from the details which are recorded, we may guess it was the evangelist John. The Gospel records the time, which, if they spent the whole day with Jesus, would likely be the Roman counting of time, which would be 10:00 in the morning when they began following Jesus. This text seems to be another occasion when John the evangelist writes for a Gentile audience, rather than for Jews.

Then look at what Andrew does: ***“The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, ‘We have found the Messiah’ (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus.”*** Andrew’s heart had been touched by the Word of God which Jesus had been teaching him, and he finds his brother and brings his brother to Jesus because he is convinced that Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ, the one anointed by God as the Savior of the world.

The next thing John records is ***“Jesus looked at him and said, ‘You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas’ (which, when translated, is Peter).”*** Jesus identifies Peter before Andrew even introduces him and addresses him by his name “Simon, the son of John”. He then gives Peter the name “Cephas”, which in Greek is “Peter”, and the name in both languages means rock. But Simon Peter wouldn’t earn this name with his rocklike character. Too often this rock would crumble, as he did when he denied the Lord Jesus. Nevertheless, Peter was to become one of the 12 apostles and as an apostle, a foundation stone of the church. It was through the grace of God that Peter though faith in Christ would be able to make a rock solid confession about Jesus. Matthew records Peter’s confession on one occasion in this way: ***“When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, ‘Who do people say the Son of Man is?’ They replied, ‘Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.’ ‘But what about you?’ he asked. ‘Who do you say I***

am?’ Simon Peter answered, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ Jesus replied, ‘Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven.’” Matthew 16:13-17 (NIV)

Jesus’ invitation to **“Come and see”** John 1:39 (NKJV) still stands – for us and for all men. The Psalmist writes: **“Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in him.”** Psalm 34:8 (NIV)

Every time a worship service is announced you in essence have the same invitation “Come and See”. Come and taste and eat the words of the Lord.

And that is an invitation you have the command to share. God has called you and you are to **“Go and teach all nations.”** Matthew 28:19 (KJV) You are to **“Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.”** Mark 16:15 (NIV)

Right now, it is difficult and uncomfortable for some to gather face-to-face to worship. But our congregations and pastor also offer other ways to “come and taste, eat, devour the Word of the Lord.”

Come and see that the Lord is good. Psalm 119 says it this way: **“How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! I gain understanding from your precepts; therefore I hate every wrong path. Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.”** Psalm 119:103-105 (NIV)

How would we respond to Jesus’ invitation to come? Why do we come? Matthew quotes Jesus in this way: **“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”** Matthew 11:28 (NIV)

How do we respond to his question **“What do you want?”** and to his invitation to come unto him?

What do you want from Jesus? Help coping with daily burdens? Forgiveness of sins and eternal life? If you have preconceived notions about wanting other things, you might feel disappointed.

Come and you will see. And don’t forget your own Bibles! These days of social distancing when many have so much family time together is a great time to consider spending time with the Word of God.

The same eagerness to know Jesus and to hear the Word of redemption should characterize the believers of all times. The lukewarm, lazy “Christianity” which is becoming so prevalent in our days has nothing in common with actual, live, eager discipleship.

For those of us who may have lost some of the spirit of excitement, a good visit with Jesus through the Word will go a long way to restoring it.

The testimony, the witness we give concerning Christ, must always lead to Christ, the Savior of the world and not to the one giving that testimony. In John the Baptist we see again that the important thing is the message, not the messenger. John plainly recognized that. He was just a messenger pointing to Christ. So it is with Christ’s messengers today. The important thing is the message, not the man.

May we never grow weary either in teaching or in hearing the precious news of salvation. John testified of Jesus and on this one day, it led at least two people to Jesus. They heard, and also gave heed to what he was saying. They followed Jesus.

May we strive daily to follow Jesus! Amen.