

Rev.Kenneth Ferguson-Behold the Lamb of God

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Preacher: Guest Preacher

[0 : 0 0] the tenth hour. John the Baptist was an amazing character, wasn't he? We have references to him in the other Gospels, for example in the Gospel of Mark in chapter one, we find this written clothed with camels hair and with a girdle of a skin about his loins and he did eat locusts and wild honey.

Also the very forthright way that he addressed those who came to hear his sermons, he said to some who came to hear him that they were serpents, they were not appropriate in the way they were coming to see him or to hear him. Who has warned you, he said, from the wrath to come, give proof of true repentance and then of course some were coming and they were being baptized in the River Jordan, confessing their sins. So he had an amazing ministry, albeit a very short ministry, now John the Baptist. But it says here that he came to witness to the light.

We have that in verse seven, the light shines in the darkness it says in verse five and the darkness has not overcome it. Then in verse seven that John came as a witness to bear witness about the light that all might believe through him. He himself confessed he wasn't the light, he wasn't the Messiah that people were eagerly expecting. But he was the one who came with this particular charge from the Lord to point him out, point the Messiah out to people. And we see in this particular chapter on a certain day in verse 29, he saw Jesus coming towards him and said, behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. And then the next day again, John was standing with two of his disciples in verse 36 and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, behold the Lamb of God and two disciples of John heard him say this and they followed Jesus.

And that's what I want to focus on for a short while this evening, if I can. This very short but very commanding text that John the Baptist preached on that particular day and the effect it had upon those who heard him. First of all, the text itself, behold the Lamb of God. Now the Israelites would have been accustomed to the use of lambs in relation to their worship. Think for example of the reference we have in Exodus 12 and 3 regarding the Passover lamb. And that Passover lamb was sacrificed annually at the Passover feast by the Jews and they knew what reference it was making. That it was the lamb that pointed to their deliverance from the land of Egypt during the days of Moses. And then of course, if you look at Exodus chapter 29 and verse 38 and 39 and following you'd find a reference to lambs that were offered or sacrificed as burnt offerings every morning and every evening in Israel.

A lamb was taken and sacrificed as a demonstration of their commitment to the Lord every morning and every evening. And on the Sabbath this was done twice, two lambs in the morning and two lambs in the evening. So when John the Baptist was speaking these words, behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, they had an understanding of what he was referring to. That there was a reference to the taking away of sin through the death of a lamb.

[5 : 0 1] But then when John points to Jesus and says of him, this is the Lamb of God who's taking away the sin of the world. Well the thing was really contextualized in history before their very eyes. John was saying this is the fulfillment of every Passover lamb that was offered since the days of Moses. You see it here in the Persian of Jesus Christ, Jesus of Nazareth.

And every lamb that was sacrificed morning and evening, it showed forth this lamb, Jesus Christ, willingly consecrating himself, dedicating himself to the work of saving his people as he came into the world. And we see here, this is a glorious text.

But seemingly the first day it was preached, we have no account of anybody following Jesus as a result of it being preached that first day. But the next day again, John uses the same text.

And ministers shouldn't be afraid of using the same text, the text of scripture, because the Lord might see fit to bless it on one occasion if he hasn't blessed it even on another occasion.

The word of God is what makes the difference in the hand of the Lord, in the Lord's time and in the Lord's circumstances. And we see here that that's what happened here.

[6 : 37] It was a commanding text, behold the Lamb of God in the Person of Jesus Christ. And then two men were arrested as a result of the preaching of that text that particular day.

Verse 37, the two disciples of John heard him and they followed Jesus.

Isn't that an amazing thing? The power of the word of God on that particular day was personalised to men, two men who had heard John the Baptist preaching often enough probably. Nevertheless, this was their time, this was their moment. And you know the Lord is in control of all circumstances.

He's in control of providence and he brought these two men with an ear shot of what John the Baptist was saying and the Holy Spirit was pleased to take off the word of God and apply it savingly to these two men so that as a result of hearing that text being expounded, they followed Jesus.

Maybe you can identify with this yourself. Many times you came under the preaching of the gospel, maybe in this building or in other churches. Many times you heard appeals to come to the Lord Jesus, commands to repent and turn to the Lord Jesus Christ that you might be saved.

[8 : 18] And it was as if it was water off a duck's back. It wasn't making any impact. But in the Lord's good time, the word was like a sword going right through to your heart. This is what I believe happened in these two men's experience. They heard him say this and they followed Jesus. They followed him.

They stepped out as those who were keen to follow the Messiah. They obviously didn't understand everything theologically about his work as Savior. But they saw the glory of his person and they were drawn to him with the drawings of the Holy Spirit upon their hearts and upon their minds. And they were following him for a reason. They were following him because they wanted to be with him. And it's in that through still people follow the Lord Jesus because they want to know more about him. They want to hear his voice addressing them. They want to understand more of what he has done for sinners such as they are. They want to have clearer views of his finished work on Calvary. They want to understand more and more of who Jesus is and what he has done for sinners. And they followed Jesus. Can I ask you are you following Jesus?

If not, why not? The scripture is full of proof that he is the Messiah, the Savior of sinners, that he is competent and mighty to save to the uttermost all who come unto God through him, that his blood cleanses from all sin, that he is able to shepherd us safely through the difficulties and the dangers of the wilderness journey on which we are and at last present us fortless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. The scripture is full of proofs of his competence to do what he says to save us from all of our sins. So why aren't you following him?

And then as Jesus sees them following him, he said to them, what are you seeking? What are you seeking? Well, there may be many answers to that particular question if it were asked of every one of us here this evening. What are we doing here this evening?

What are we seeking? What am I seeking? Well, I pray that I'm seeking to glorify God by my being here and seeking to expound the scripture, that I'm seeking to see souls built up in their most holy faith and the name of God glorified through the gospel being preached and so on.

[11 : 46] What are you doing? You want to see more of the glory of Christ? Do you want to see him for the first time? Or are you just happy to be here as a matter of routine to come to church on Sunday evening or sometime from time to time just to be seen or just as the way to stamp your card, to be seen by others? What are you seeking here? The commendation of men or the approval of God?

Are you seeking to worship him? This is what the psalmist and the first item of praise we had this evening. Oh, come, let us worship him. Let us bow down with all and on our knees before the Lord our maker, let us fall. We seek to bow before him and worship him and give him spiritual worship which pleases him and magnifies his name. So Jesus turns and he knows they're following and he asks what are you seeking? He knows our hearts, doesn't he? When you further read down through the chapter and he's talking about Nathaniel and Nathaniel came to him having been invited to come and Jesus said, I saw you when you were under the fig tree. I saw you. What was Nathaniel doing under the fig tree? Was he praying secretly? Was he reading the scripture secretly? Was he there doing business with his Lord? And nobody else knew about it but the Lord himself. One commentator says that there's a view about this that when Nathaniel was born that he was placed under the fig tree by his mother. I don't know if that's accurate or not but even if that were the case the Lord here shows that he knew Nathaniel long before anybody else knew anything about him apart from his parents.

His knowledge of us goes all the way back. He knew us when we were in our mother's womb. He knew us when we walked astray. He knew us in every circumstance of life. And now these two men and they're coming to seek him. Where are you staying they say? I think these words talk to us about them seeking to be with him. Not just to know where he is staying temporarily but that they want to be with him where he is. That they want to spend time with him.

Something like the two on the road to Ameth. You remember the marvelous experience they had after the Lord Jesus's crucifixion and him being buried they left Jerusalem. It's as if the whole world had collapsed around them. They had banked on Jesus being the Redeemer of Israel. But then Jesus threw near and put some light onto their circumstances and onto the scripture for them.

And then as they went on their hearts were warming to hear what he was saying. And when they reached the destination of which they had intended going Jesus made as though he would have gone further.

[15 : 37] And they said no no no don't go any further. Come in with us. It's towards evening and the day is far spent. They pleaded with him to come in and he went in with them. And they knew him in the breaking of the bread. That's the kind of thing that I believe these two men were seeking. That kind of close fellowship with Jesus. They had seen a glimpse of who he was and his glory in the preaching of John the Baptist. And now they want more of it. They had maybe had a drawing of heart into a fellowship with him by the Spirit and they wanted more and more of it. And that's why they're following him and that's why they want to be with him where he is. Where are you staying?

He said to them. Come and see. Where was he staying? Where was he staying? We don't know what house it was. But one thing we know he was in the fellowship of his father and the Holy Spirit.

He was in the fellowship of the Trinity. That's where he was. He was no mere man. He was the God-man mediator. And when they got to know him and when we get to know him by the teaching of his spirit upon us, we realize that he is a person of the Trinity. The same in substance and equal in power and glory with the Father and with the Spirit. And when he came to be a man, he didn't leave a vacancy in the Trinity in heaven. He is still one of the Trinity. And when he says come and see, he means come and see the God-man mediator.

And that's what we are invited to come to see as well. But also when you think of answering this question, where are you staying? Well, he was going to stay in this world for a certain length of time. And he was going to make various stops as it were that I'm going to highlight one or two of them. For example, he was going to make a stop at various sick peoples' bedsides and people with ailments. And he was going to demonstrate his power over sickness and his power over evil spirits. He was going to manifest himself as the almighty one in human nature.

He was going to be on a boat on the Sea of Galilee on a storm. And he was going to say a few words, peace be still. And in the midst of that storm, his power subdued all the waves and stopped the wind.

[19 : 14] He stayed there for a moment. But then he's going to a place called Gethsemane.

And he's going there to wrestle because there's a terrific burden upon his shoulders. And he prays to his father, if it's possible, remove this cup from me. He's looking at the cup of condemnation. He's looking at the cup of God's unmixed wrath against the sins of his people.

But he said, not my will, but your will be done. And he prayed more earnestly at that stopping place in Gethsemane. And he prayed so earnestly that his sweat was as great drops of blood falling to the earth. If it's possible, let this cup pass from me.

Nevertheless, not my will, but your will be done. Where are you dwelling? He dwelt in Gethsemane for a while. And then of course, he goes to Calvary.

And he stays in Calvary. He was crucified upon the cross of shame between the two thieves. And he was there from nine o'clock in the morning till three in the afternoon. And at midday, the sun was blackened. And there was darkness over the whole land between noon and three in the afternoon.

[21 : 03] And who can understand what was being transacted during these hours of great anguish for him? Anguish for him when he said, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

But then he said with triumph, it is finished. Father, into your hands I commend my spirit. So he stayed upon the cross bound to the cross with cords of love to his father and love to his people because they were taunting him. The people were taunting him and saying, if you are the Christ, come down from the cross and we will believe you. But as somebody said, there were bands of love tying him to the cross, love to his father and love to his people, so that he refused to comply to these people who taunted him to come down from the cross.

Where are you staying? He only stayed on the cross until his work there was done. Then his body was taken and lain lovingly in the sepulchre, in the tomb.

And he stayed there. You know, the Westminster Confession puts it this way, that he remained under the power of death for a time, that his burial wasn't the lowest point of his humiliation, but the fact that he remained under the power of death for a time. It was on the third day that he rose.

Where are you staying? Oh, I'm not staying on the cross once my work is done. I'm not staying in the grave because God the Father is to acknowledge publicly his total satisfaction with all the work that I will have done.

[23 : 17] They say that that is God's signature, writ large over the work of Christ, because I am pleased with all that he has done. I am raising him from the dead.

And then he is going up after 40 days and the Father says to him, sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your food stone. Where are you staying?

Jesus, I'm staying in all of these places. Isn't that intriguing? Isn't that our life's delight some work for you to be involved in, to be in Jesus' company, asking him where are you staying and the aspects of his staying at these various points in his life to work of salvation is completed. Get to know more about him, be in his company. Where will you find him? Will you find him in the word? He's staying in the word.

Where will you find him? You'll find him at the throne of grace. Where will you find him? You'll find him in the company of God's people, met together to worship him. He stays there where two or three are gathered together in his name.

There he is in the midst of them. And we see here, come and see, he said, and they came and saw where he was staying. And they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour.

[25 : 12] The tenth hour, according to the reckoning of time during these, that first century, was four o'clock in the afternoon, the day beginning at six in the morning. It was the tenth hour of the day.

And you know, it's very interesting. The tenth hour, I believe, is significant from this point of view, that it was the time of the evening sacrifice, where the lamb of the evening sacrifice was being offered at the temple. They stayed with him. And I'm sure he would have highlighted it. Do you not think he would have? This is the hour that the sacrifice is offered at the temple.

And that is an illustration of me, and what I am going to do, giving myself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice and reconcile my elect people to God. Come and see, he said. And then they went and stayed with him. It was about the tenth hour. One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus and through Simon Peter's brother, they discovered something marvelous, Jesus revealing himself to them. And that's what we need, above anything and everything else, that the Lord reveal himself to us as our Lord and as our Savior. And if he does that, we really cannot keep it to ourselves. Can we? We see this now happening with these men.

One of the two who heard John, heard him speak, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, and he first found his own brother Simon and said to him, we have found the Messiah, which is called the Christ. We have found the Messiah.

You've heard about, was it not Archimedes who discovered something, the displacement of water, and he went out and he started shouting, Eureka, Eureka.

[27 : 43] Well, that's the basic word we have here. When the disciples of John found the Messiah, and they said in verse 41, we have found the Messiah, the Eureka moment, the greatest discovery of our lives. We have found him who is called the Christ.

You know, when the Lord reveals himself to us, we cannot really keep it to ourselves. The nearest is too good to confine to one person, to one mind. And this and that, what happened here. You see the succession of people hearing about Jesus. The next day, Jesus went to Galilee and he found Philip, and Philip was from Bethsaida, and he found Nathaniel and said, we have found the Messiah. Nathaniel was a bit skeptical because he said that Jesus was from Nazareth, and he said, can any good thing come out of Nazareth? Come and see. We found him, and Jesus proved to him on that very moment that he was indeed the Messiah. When you were under the fig tree, I saw you. Oh, he said, you are the Messiah. Nobody saw me there. You must be God, indeed. God, man, mediator. You are the Son of God. You are the King of Israel. And Jesus said, you'll see greater things than these. You'll see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man. What an amazing experience these men had. Jesus revealed himself to them. And now, what about us? We've heard the gospel preached here so, so often.

Invitations to come to Christ. Directives to give ourselves to him. Look to him, and so on.

Are we still the way we were? Are we not at all drawn by the glory of his person and the glory of his work? Well, he says here this evening, in this timeless word, behold the Lamb of God. It's not just set in history. It is something that's appropriate and relevant to us here this evening. We are asked to behold him, to look to him, to give ourselves to him, and to yield our whole lives to his Lordship. May God bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. Help us this evening, O Lord, to be thankful for the words we have been reading together. And we ask that the word which we have sought to expound would be richly blessed to each one of us, that our eyes would be opened to behold the Lamb of God, that our heart be opened to receive him gladly, and that our feet be set in motion by your spirit to follow you and to serve you all the days of our life. We ask that you continue to bless the congregation here. May the word of God dwell in their hearts richly and bear much fruit to the glory of your name. Go before us now and forgive every sin. In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen.