

**Seeing and Pointing**  
**Second in a Series of Seven Sermons, “A Season of Light”**  
**January 14 and 15, 2023**  
**John 1:29-42**

**The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”**

**The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, “Behold the Lamb of God!”**

Dear Christian Friends

There’s an old joke about a little girl who came up for the children’s message. The pastor asked, “What is small and brown, has a bushy tail, climbs trees, and eats nuts?” The girl answered, “It sure sounds like you’re talking about a squirrel, but I know the answer is Jesus.”

That girl had been taught well. She knew what every faithful pastor knows - that every children’s sermon / every old people’s sermon / and every Divine Service / every Bible class / every Sunday School lesson needs to focus on helping people to see Jesus, the Lamb of God, who takes away the guilt and the power and eternal consequences of our sins.

Our sermons in this Epiphany season are under the theme, “A Season of Light.” As you well know, God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all. Jesus Christ was, is, and ever shall be the Light of the world and has invited His Church to join Him on His mission to shine that Gospel light all over the neighborhoods that are near and far.

Last weekend, our sermon theme focused on “Rising and Shining.” Next weekend, “Following and Fishing.” Today, “Seeing and Pointing.” Two parts to our sermon today. The first explores the question Jesus asked the apostle John and Andrew as they began to follow him - **“What are you seeking?”** And the second explores our Lord’s reply to those disciples who asked Him where He was staying, **“Come and See.”**

### ***1. What are you seeking?***

There are lots of voices preaching lots of sermons in every generation. Lots of folks pointing their boney fingers at this or that or the other thing that promises to take away something we want taken away.

- Behold the perfect diet that takes away that extra 50 pounds.
- Behold the miraculous skin cream that takes away those wrinkles and age spots.
- Behold that 12 pack of Corona Extra or that bottle of rum that takes away anxieties and disappointments.
- Behold that pension plan that takes away all barriers to living happily ever after.

This morning, John the Baptist preaches the one sermon we all need to hear again and again, “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”

Lambs played a big part in the spiritual life of Israel. There was the Passover Lamb, whose shed blood was painted onto the houses of sinful, but believing Hebrews, and when the Angel of Death saw it, he passed over.

There was the daily offering of a slaughtered lamb in the morning and another at twilight, both which were to be eaten at the consecration of priests.

There was the burnt offering of a roasted lamb that was a pleasing aroma to the Lord. There was the peace offering of a sacrificed lamb that made peace with the one true God. There was the sin offering of a butchered lamb that atoned for the son of the one who brought it to the temple. All of the lambs had to be young, male, and without blemish. And then, once a year, there was the grand-daddy of all offerings - the sacrifice of atonement - one slain lamb for the sin of the whole nation. One for all. And then the same high priest who slew that lamb would place his bloody hands over the head of a second lamb and pronounce all the sins of all the people onto the head of this lamb, and the scapegoat would be led into the wilderness, never to be seen again.

And so when John the Baptist pointed out Jesus of Nazareth and declared him to be God’s Lamb who would in fact take away the sins of the world once and for all time, all kinds of people sat up and noticed. A few began to follow and wanted more information.

What are you seeking? That’s what Jesus asked those first two disciples, and that’s what He would ask us in every one of your days.

What are you seeking? This is the first recorded word of Jesus in John’s Gospel. With this question, the Master Teacher invites us to examine our hearts and desires. Are we looking to make a name for ourselves? Or for God’s Name to be kept holy by the way that we teach and live. Are we seeking first the kingdom of God? Or after all the same things that the world is chasing?

My best friends growing up as a North Dakota farm boy were my dogs. One of my dogs named Friskey would spend a fair amount of time running in circles trying to catch his tail. Occasionally he would catch it, bite into it, and then let it go.

In so many ways, we are like Friskey, who was about as happy and carefree and loyal as a four legged creature can be. Some of us are running in circles chasing after shiny new objects, and when we catch them, there's still something missing. Others of us are running hard and fast towards worthwhile goals and achievements, but at the end of the day, none of them bring true and lasting peace. And worse yet, there are a few of us running away from that which is true and lasting.

Like Maria, who ran away from home in small town Brazil to Rio de Janeiro. She lived with her mother Christina. They were poor, and their home was a small one room hut with a dirt floor. Maria hated their drab existence and went looking for something better.

When her mom realized what her daughter had done, she immediately went to a photo booth and took as many photos of herself as she could afford. She wrote the same message on the back of each picture. She boarded a bus for the big city / searched high and low for her daughter / posted her pictures in all the alleys and establishments all over town before going home. Then she waited, and prayed like she had never prayed before.

Several weeks later, Maria, who by this time was heartsick and disillusioned, saw one of her mom's pictures. With tears streaming down her cheeks, she took the photo down and read the message on the back. It read, "It makes no difference what you have done. I love you. Please come home."

Dear friends, this is the message our dear Savior has asked His Church to deliver to a world that in so many ways is preferring darkness, and more specifically to friends and neighbors and loved ones who have wandered or drifted or even sprinted away from the Christian faith, "It makes no difference what you have done. I love you. Please come home."

Or to say it another way, ***Come and see.***

To John and Andrew in our text for today, Jesus looked them in the eyes and invited. "*Come and see where I am staying. Ask me all the questions you'd like to ask. Understand that I'm on my way to Jerusalem, that the journey isn't going to be easy, and that before there can be glory, there needs to be suffering and death.*"

To those of us here today whose stories are filled with failures and frustrations too numerous to count, He looks us in the eyes and invites, ***“Come unto me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”***

You may remember hearing stories about a law and order sheriff Joe from Arizona. He was famous for doing the opposite of coddling prisoners under his watch. One of his “get tough on criminals” programs was called, “Pedal Vision.” If an inmate at the Phoenix Tent City jail wanted to watch television, he or she would need to get on a stationary bike and generate enough electricity to run the TV. When the inmate’s pedaling generated 12 volts of electricity, the TV would come on. An hour of pedaling allowed for an hour of TV watching. No Pedaling, no TV. It was that simple.

What a relief it is to know that God hasn’t decided to make us earn the privileges of the Kingdom with our own efforts! Instead of taking out His divine wrath upon us, He took it out on His only and beloved Son. At our Elders meeting this past Thursday, our devotional leader (Bernie) asked us to close our eyes. To picture one of our own sons or daughters begging us not to let the soldiers nail us to the cross. Which one of our dads or moms or grandparents could permit what our Father in heaven permitted in the Garden of Gethsemane, at the public trial, and on the old rugged cross?

Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the guilt and the power and the eternal consequences of our sins.

Come to a little town of Bethlehem, dear friends, and see God’s presence / He is with you. Come to a little hill outside of Jerusalem, and see God’s pardon / He is for you. Come to the empty tomb, and see how glorious is His victory / He is out in front of you. Come to the little town of Bethany and see Jesus ascending and being crowned as King and sitting at the right hand of His Father / He is ruling all of heaven and earth on behalf of His Church. And then come to the Festival of Pentecost in a crowded Jerusalem, and see Jesus pouring out His Holy Spirit in superabundant fashion.

Pouring out His Holy Spirit not just so that we can be full of the Holy Spirit, but so that we can be bearing the fruits of the Spirit. Not just so that we can be saved, but that we would have deep and abiding concern for the salvation of others. Not just so that our souls would be content and our hearts at peace, but that we would be on fire for the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

A famous author by the name of Stephen Covey tells a story of traveling by subway from in New York At one of the stops, a man and four unruly children got on the train. The children began to run up and down the aisle. They yelled and they played and they bothered, and the father did nothing to settle them down. One of the children

grabbed a newspaper out of the hands of an irritated passenger. Another child knocked over a sack of groceries. The entire car as chaos as a result of undisciplined children.

Finally Covey couldn't take it any longer. He said, "Excuse me, sir, don't you think you should do something about your children? They are disrupting everyone on the train."

To which the man replied, "I guess you're right. I guess I don't know what to do. You see, we just came from the hospital. My wife, their mother died about an hour ago. I guess we're still in shock. I'm so sorry."

At that moment, everything looked different for this famous author. What he had been thinking had to be re-evaluated in light of new information.

So also in our text for today. John the Baptist had just delivered new information to the Jews, the priests, and the Levites of that day. A rumor was circulating that John the Baptist was the Messiah. But instead, John pointed to Jesus and declared, Behold the Lamb of God - He is the Messiah. That's the One you want to follow. He's the One who needs to increase, while I, John the Baptist need to decrease.

The kingdom of God is like a congregation of believers full of folks who have their bad days, their decent days, and their really good days. On their bad days, unruly children irritate them. And the stories of hurting and broken people are of little concern to them. On their decent days, they make the sign of the cross, they confess their faults and their flaws to God and to others. And as they do so, the grace of God sweeps through their sanctuary, His mercy refreshes their hearts, His truths set them free one more time. On their really good days, they take that grace and that mercy into all the corners of their lives. They listen well, they ask good questions, and they fix their eyes on their Savior. On every one of their days, without exception, they are children of God, dearly loved and precious in the sight of their God. Amen.