

WHO IS JESUS?
Week Two: Lamb for the Sacrifice
John 1:29-34

Good morning Lake Wylie. If you have a copy of the Scriptures beginning turning to John's Gospel chapter 1:29. If you're using a Bible from the pew rack there in front of you our text is on page 886.

²⁹ *The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"*
³⁰ *This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.'* ³¹ *I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel."* ³² *And John bore witness: "I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him."*
³³ *I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.'* ³⁴ *And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God."*¹

I hope that this past week you got to behold to glory of those Clemson Tigers putting down the evil empire of the SEC in the college football national championship!

In the game Monday night, the Quarterback for Clemson, Deshaun Watson had one of the most stellar games of his career. He threw for 420 passing yards. He completed three passes for touchdowns and had one rushing touchdown. The final touchdown was in the very last second of the game for a come from behind win on the very team that beat them last year. The crowd erupts, the Clemson sideline empties into the field.

And then a sideline reporter runs up to Watson and places a microphone in his face and says, "There's emotion on your face right now. Why is that?"

Now, some things should just be plainly obvious to anyone. You shouldn't have to be a professional counselor to understand why Deshaun Watson is emotional over this win!

If you read the Gospel accounts one thing, **above everything else should be plainly obvious to you.** And here it is:

- **Jesus primary reason for coming into the world was to be a sacrificial offering to God for human sin.**
- Jesus performed miracles, but he didn't primarily come to work miracles.
- Jesus was a great teacher, but he didn't primarily come to teach.
- Jesus identified with the marginalized and neglected in society, but he isn't primarily a social worker.
- Jesus overturned the religious order of the day, but he didn't primarily come to shake up Judaism.
- Jesus spoke truth to and against the power of Rome, but he didn't come primarily to be a political instigator.

In John 1:29 the Apostle tells us the primary, above all else, reason that Jesus Christ come into the world:

²⁹ *The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"*

Two weeks ago we were in the first half of John 1 and in that passage John tells us the essence of who Jesus is: Jesus is the eternal Word who has always existed, who created all things and from which we have our life.

Today, in the second half of chapter 1 tells us not who Jesus is, but the essence of what Jesus came to do: **Jesus came to be a sacrificial offering to God for human sin.** So what we're going to do for the next few minutes. We're going to unpack just verse

¹ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version.* (2016). (Jn 1:29–34).

29. What does it mean that Jesus Christ is the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world? And, we'll do it under three headings:

1. OUR PROBLEM
2. OUR NEED
3. OUR RESPONSE

Let's see first:

1. OUR PROBLEM: THE SIN OF THE WORLD

What is the greatest problem we face in the world today? What is it? What is at the root of it all? What is at the very bottom? What is the greatest problem we face? You might say the greatest problem we face is:

- **Division.** We live in a divided world. People don't naturally come together. They naturally find divisions between one another. They set up opposing camps, separate countries, and fire of shots at one another. Our greatest problem is division.
- **Death.** Many people will say our greatest problem is death. That's why we start hospitals, and have scientists researching cures. That's why we have pharmaceutical companies. That's why we spent loads of money on diet and exercise. We're always trying to stave off death.

When John introduces Jesus, and what he came to do, John tells us that Jesus came to deal with our biggest problem. But it isn't division. It isn't death.

In verse 29 John says that Jesus came to take away **the sin of the world.**

Now, I realize that for some of you the idea of sin sounds so out of touch. It sounds ancient. "Haven't we moved on from such an

archaic word?" Well, let me take a few minutes and tell you what exactly sin is. **Sin is commandment-breaking and relationship-breaking.**

First, sin is commandment-breaking, and this is the definition of sin that everyone is familiar with.

1 John 3:4 says "Everyone that breaks the law sins. Sin is lawlessness."

The Scriptures are clear that God has set up his law, and when we break his commands that's sin. This is the definition that everyone is familiar with.

But that isn't the only Biblical understanding of sin. According to the Scriptures, sin isn't just breaking God's commands. **Sin, at its very root, at the bottom, is breaking our relationship with God. It's not just commandment-breaking; it's relationship-breaking.**

We know that because later in this very same gospel someone asks Jesus, "What is the greatest commandment?" And Jesus responds—now don't miss this—"Love the Lord your God with all your heart"

Do you hear that? Jesus says that the greatest commandment that we should obey—the greatest commandment that we could break is to refuse to have a loving, seeking, desiring relationship with God.

The Bible says that the greatest sin is to love something more than God; to reject a relationship with God as primary and to make something God created into your central desire. Think of it this way:

If you had a child that you loved dearly. You spent years of your life buying and changing diapers, buying food and water.

And let me just tell you, we are in the throes of this right now in the Homesley house! We have two children that we spend a lot of money in food on—and they just won't eat it. Dinner at our house is like a hostage situation. "We'll give you anything if you'll just eat this macaroni!"

I read a stat the other day saying that it the average cost to raise a child today is \$273,000 dollars. I'm pretty sure we've spent that on baby wipes.

But then imagine that you raise this child, you pay for the best education money can buy, you pay for their books, room and board. And then, a week after they graduate you get a call, "Mom, Dad, I don't really want to know you anymore. I don't want to talk to you. In fact, I want to forget that you exist. What do you think that child deserves?"

What the Scriptures tell us is that God has given all of us way more than room and board. He gave us more than food. If it weren't for him, we wouldn't exist.

John says this is the sin of the world. Everyone. Religious people, irreligious people.

All of us make a conscious, willful effort not just to break some of his rules—we break off our relationship with him and we go through life saying, "I don't want to know you. I don't want to talk to you. In fact, I'd love to forget that you exist."

And, you know what the Bible says in Genesis 1 and Romans 1 is the result of our desiring other things more than God?

- **Division.** We become entrapped slaves of the things that we have elevated above God and we'll divide from and destroy other people to get them.
- **Death.** When we sever our tie with God it's like cutting the cord to a lamp and wondering why the light went out. We cut ourselves off from the very source of life.

At the very bottom, our greatest problem isn't division, it isn't death. Our greatest problem is that we have cut ourselves off from God. We've traded him, the all-surpassingly beautiful creator, for things that he has created. And, as a consequence we've died. We are people of death and division, because we are sinners.

But God has done something about it! Look now at:

2. OUR NEED: THE LAMB OF GOD WHO TAKES AWAY

In verse 29 John the Baptist tells us,

²⁹ *The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"*

Now, here's the big question you should be asking: **Why a lamb?** Of all the things John could have said when he saw Jesus, why did he say, "Behold the lamb?"

Let me tell you a few things he could have said:

He could have said, "**Behold, the Teacher of God,** come to tell you how to correct your behavior." And Jesus could have done nothing but preach sermons, and tell sinners how to reform themselves. The Gospels could have been nothing but instruction. In fact, they could have just been big checklists. But, as I said at the beginning, though Jesus is a wonderful teacher, he didn't come primarily to be a teacher.

John could have said, "**Behold, the Judge of God** come to bring justice to our rebellion." And Jesus certainly could have come to bring justice to God's rebellious creatures. Jesus could have sat down in a courtroom in Jerusalem and had a line stretched out the door and around the globe of people waiting for him to render judgement.

Why does John say, "Behold the Lamb"? You have to go to the Old Testament to understand why John says, "Behold the lamb."

Now, there are about 300 places we could go in the Old Testament but let me give you one.

In Exodus when the people of Israel were slaves in Egypt and Pharaoh refused to let them go God sent his prophet Moses to deliver his people.

Through Moses God began to work signs and miracles before Pharaoh, basically to say, “Dude, you really want to let these people go.” So God sends darkness over the land. He turns the Nile river into blood. He sends a plague of frogs. Every single time Pharaoh hardens his heart against God and refuses to let the people go.

Finally, after 9 plagues God says, “Tell Pharaoh that a final plague is coming. It’s a plague of death to every firstborn in Egypt, and there is only **one** way to escape death.

Take a lamb and kill it. Then apply its blood to the door posts of your house.

“¹² For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD. ¹³ The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt.”²

What does it mean? Everyone in Egypt was a sinner, which meant that they were all guilty and worthy of death before God!. If God had wanted to he could have snuffed out Egypt and Israel like a candle. They had sinned and their life was forfeit, and what God is doing in this passage is showing them his mercy. Instead of taking their lives he is willing to accept a substitute. A lamb could take the place of the sinner. The death of the lamb could stand in for the death of the guilty.

Now this is just one passage among many, but from Genesis 3 until the dawn of the New Testament, thousands of lambs are killed and their blood is offered to God. Each year the temple in Jerusalem would be drenched with the blood. Each year it was a reminder that when God passed over in judgement and we deserved death God was accepting a substitute.

But there’s one big problem. **A lamb really isn’t a proper substitute is it?** I mean, the little lamb hadn’t sinned. Humans had sinned. The lamb didn’t owe God anything, we did. So how could the death of an animal ever remove the sentence of death because of our sin?

This becomes the chief dilemma of the Old Testament: How can God be both just and merciful? How can God both punish sin, yet forgive sinners?

And after hundreds of years without an answer from God on how these two can be reconciled the New Testament begins with a man named John, the last of the Old Testament prophets, living in the desert, standing on the banks of the Jordan baptizing people, and one day he looks up, and turns to his disciples and says, “Behold, the Lamb of God.” But he doesn’t point to a sheep—he points to Jesus.

Jesus comes as the lamb of God because from the very beginning of the Scriptures, and throughout the Old Testament our greatest need isn’t teaching. Our greatest need isn’t miracles. Our greatest need isn’t someone who can take our broken religions and polish them up a bit. Our greatest need isn’t a shake-up of the government.

We aren’t bad people who need to learn how to be good, we are dead people who need to come back to life!

We owe a debt. We deserve death. Yet God chose to be merciful

² *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version.* (2016). (Ex 12:12–13).

to us, and sent his own Son to be our sacrificial lamb. Because he lived a sinless life, when he died he wasn't dying for his own sin. He was dying for the sin of the world.

This is why we read Isaiah 53 earlier.

*⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have turned—everyone—to his own way;
and the LORD has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.*

*⁷ He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,
yet he opened not his mouth;
like a lamb that is led to the slaughter,
and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent,
so he opened not his mouth.³*

Here is the justice of God—every sin on him was laid.
Here is the mercy of God—God looks on him and pardons us.

Friend the gospel tells you that the same God who had every right to damn you has every intention of giving you pardon.

How do you receive this pardon? How do you come to possess this redemption?

3. OUR RESPONSE: BEHOLD

Here, in one verse, John has told us the entire story of the gospel. Our problem: sin has separated us from God. Our need: a Lamb who can take away our sin. And, finally, our response:

Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

What a simple response! Look! Behold. It almost seems too easy. Look? That's all we have to do? Look? What does it mean to "Behold the Lamb?" I'd suggest it means the same thing in John 1

³ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version.* (2016). (Is 53:6–7). Wheaton:

that it did in Exodus 12.

Remember back to the story of Israel in Egypt. God said, "Apply the blood of the lamb to the door. And, when I pass through in judgement, when I see, when I behold the blood applied I will Passover you, because my judgement has come upon the lamb who was slain. You deserve to die, but because you have applied the blood of the lamb I am accepting the death of the lamb in the place of your death!"

Therefore, when John says, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" he means that you and I, and everyone, we are all to look at Jesus with the trust, the grasping trust that here is one who came to die in my place, when I deserved death. I'm applying the blood of the lamb to the doorposts of my life.

Listen to me, I talk to so many Christian who struggle with their salvation. They want to know if they are really saved. They want to know if they are really forgiven. They ask questions like:

- Was my faith good enough?
- Did I really mean it?
- Did I have enough faith?
- Am I really saved?

Don Carson tells the story of two Jewish men named Steve and Jim. Both, really strong Jewish names. Thousands of years ago in the land of Goshen in Egypt.

Steve says to Jim, "Man, I'm pretty shaken up. All these plague in Egypt, and now this last plague that's coming. I'm kind of worried about it."

Jim says, "What? Scarred? Why would you be scarred? We received instructions from God through Moses. You killed them lamb, right? You applied the blood to the lintel and the door posts,

right?”

Steve: “Well, yeah. I’m not stupid. Of course I did all that.”

Jim: “Then, how could you possibly be nervous?”

Steve: “Well, all this talk of judgement and the death angels passing through the land. I mean, you have Seth and Tim and George as sons. I only have Charlie. He’s all I have.”

Jim says, “I trust the promises of God, bring it on.”

One has strong faith. The other, weak faith. And that evening the death angel passes through. Which one loses a son?

Neither! Because the verdict of death from God does not depend on the strength of our faith, but on the sufficiency of the blood applied.

The answer to the question, “Have I done enough to please God” is always, “No!”

The answer to the question, “Was my faith strong enough to save me” is always, “No!”

But, my friends, the answer to the question, “Is the sinless blood of Jesus Christ who suffered in my place good enough” the answer is a resounding “Yes!”

It’s good enough to forgive all of your sin. 1 Peter 3:18 tells you:

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God⁴

⁴ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (1 Pe 3:18). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

⁵ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (2 Co 4:8–

It’s good enough to lift you out of your guilt and shame:

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

It’s good enough to strengthen and give you endurance through the sufferings of this life:

⁸ We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; ⁹ persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; ¹⁰ always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.⁵

Even when death knocks at the door and threatens to take our lives we can boldly say with Job:

*²⁵ For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth.
²⁶ And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God,⁶*

If you want to know what the Christian life is, from the first to the last it’s John 1:29.

- Are you tired of trying to please yourself and others? Behold Jesus!
- Are you exhausted from the circumstances of your life this morning? Look to Jesus!
- Are you weighted down with sin and shame? Run to Jesus!

Would you pray with me?

10). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

⁶ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Job 19:25–26). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

Other passages to study:

Genesis 3- God kills an animal and uses its skin to cover Adam and Eve's shame.

Genesis 22- Sacrifice of Isaac.

Isaiah 53- The Suffering Servant of God