

**SERMON 2026-01-18 Epiphany 2 | John 1: 29-42**  
**Written by Rev. Steve Johnston – steve@webfeed.ca**

While our gospel today was scheduled to start at verse 29 of John chapter 1,  
I have added just a little bit from before that verse *(read the verse numbers in RED)*

**v1** In the beginning was the Word **v14** and the Word became flesh and lived among us.

**v19** This is the testimony given by John  
when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him,  
'Who are you?'

**Now we move to today's prescribed verses:**

**v29** The next day he saw Jesus coming towards him and declared,  
'Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!  
This is he of whom I said,  
"After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me."

I myself did not know him; but I came baptizing with water for this reason,  
that he might be revealed to Israel.'

And John testified, 'I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove,  
and it remained on him.  
I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me,  
"He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain  
is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit."

And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God.'

The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples,  
and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed,  
'Look, here is the Lamb of God!'

The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus.  
When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them,  
'What are you looking for?'

They said to him, 'Rabbi' (which translated means Teacher), 'where are you staying?'  
He said to them, 'Come and see.'

They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day.  
It was about four o'clock in the afternoon.

One of the two who heard John speak and followed him  
was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.  
He first found his brother Simon and said to him,  
'We have found the Messiah' (which is translated Anointed).

He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said,  
'You are Simon son of John.  
You are to be called Cephas' (which is translated Peter).

### **THIS IS THE GOSPEL OF OUR LORD**

I remember my first Lutheran Pastor who said some very wise words like:  
We stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before us.  
And:

Maybe faith is more about looking for better questions,  
than finding better answers.

It was St. Anselm of Canterbury's motto that reads, "FAITH SEEKING UNDERSTANDING"  
We do not have to JUST accept what we have been told,  
we can be driven to understand it, maybe never in full,  
but to seek deeper meaning and understand it.

David Ford, in his, Theological Commentary on the gospel of John,  
suggests that there are three questions raised in the first chapter of John  
that will extend and deepen throughout the remainder of the Gospel:

The three questions:

- Who are you? (Verse 19)
- What are you looking for? (Verse 38)
- Where are you staying? (also from verse 38)

Ford also argues that the rest of the Gospel of John  
can be seen as a response to these three questions.

You gotta love the 3 factor rhetorical form:

Stop, drop & roll - as one example  
I came, I saw, I conquered - as a very different one which comes  
from an old Latin phrase attributed to Julius Caesar.

The Gospel of John can be seen to dig into the meaning from these three questions.

- Who are you?
- What are you looking for?
- Where are you staying?

The Gospel of John is very different from the other three  
and it was also written much later than the others.

Those other three gospels  
are often referred to as the SYNOPTIC Gospels - meaning "with one eye".  
They are very similar to each other.

Mark's gospel was the first to be written,  
and Matthew and Luke followed much of the content and sequence  
of events that Mark wrote about.  
They also added some stuff like the birth stories that we just celebrated at Christmas.

In comparison, John's gospel is **less** about telling the story of Jesus' life  
and **more** about the big over arching description  
of WHO Jesus is,  
and about HOW God is acting in the cosmos.

It is the grand thesis that includes Jesus in the creation story,  
his incarnation,  
and then his death and resurrection.

John does **NOT** tell us of Jesus' miracles  
- miraculous things do happen,  
but they are all called SIGNS – and there are seven of them,  
and only seven.

Groupings of seven are also a recurring theme.  
There are seven "I Am" Statements  
There are seven witnesses to who Jesus is:  
starting with the testimony of John the Baptist in chapter 1.

In our gospel reading today,  
John sees Jesus coming toward him and proclaims,  
"Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world."

Do you have an image of Jesus as the Lamb of God?

Have you ever seen a stained-glass window somewhere?  
Or maybe a mosaic or a fresco somewhere?

- Have you ever sung the words, Lamb of God?



Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have mer-cy on us.

ELW – Page 154 Maybe have your church musician play this. Have someone sing if you can.  
The congregation might join in too.

Sometimes that part of our Sunday liturgy  
is known by the Latin phrase “Agnus Dei\*” (\*pronounced “day”)

- PLAY → Agnus Dei | YouTube | Monks Of The Abbey Of Notre Dame

Play the mp3 file or  
just skip over it

John is alone in the gospels in referring to the LAMB OF GOD.

It is mentioned a few times in the epistles,  
but in book of Revelation  
the “Lamb of God” is mentioned 27 times.  
It is a major theme in the final book of our bible.

But what does John, the Gospel writer, want us to know about the Jesus as the Lamb of God?

The major clue is in the last meal Jesus takes with his disciples.

What is that meal known as?  
The Last Supper, or the Lord’s Supper,  
Jesus would have called it Passover,  
we link that meal to our Sunday meal and call it  
Eucharist: Greek for "thanksgiving," or Holy Communion

The Gospel of Mark, followed by Matthew and Luke, all have Jesus sharing a **Passover** meal.

Remember that is a re-enactment of the first Passover.

It re-calling, re-living and re-telling  
of God’s promise of freedom from slavery.  
That is when the angel of death PASSES OVER  
the houses that have what on their door posts?  
The blood of the lamb.

And what do they eat at that Passover meal?

Roasted Lamb: A year-old male without blemish, roasted whole over fire.

Exodus gives the instructions for the preparation.

That too is re-enacted by the faithful in Jesus' time.

Mark, Matthew and Luke each have the disciples making those preparations.

The meal was on a Thursday evening,  
the lamb would be prepared that afternoon,  
on the day of preparation.

For us, using the Roman method of counting hours and days,  
the afternoon is the same day as the evening and early night time,  
all the way to midnight.

But in Jesus' world, each day **ends** at sundown.  
So when the meal happens, that last supper,  
it is actually a new day  
– it was now the day of PASSOVER.

It is on that day of Passover when Jesus and his disciples ate the slaughtered lamb.  
They also ate the bread, drank the wine,  
and heard the new words spoken by Jesus,  
the same words we still use at communion,  
“Take, eat, drink”.

In John's Gospel those words are **NEVER** said.

In John, **the evening meal** actually happens on the day of preparation,  
that is, the day BEFORE Passover.

In John's account of that last meal  
Jesus washes the disciple's feet  
and gives a lengthy final speech including a new commandment.  
You know the one: Love one another as I have loved you.

When that night is done  
– when Jesus is hauled before Pilate and sent to the cross  
**THEN** the Lamb is slaughtered later that afternoon.

In the Gospel of John,  
Jesus is killed **ON** the day of preparation.

In John's account,  
JESUS doesn't **EAT** the lamb with his disciples at the meal,  
Jesus **IS** the lamb, and is now on the cross on that Friday.

Remember that first question from verse 19 that we added this morning,  
it reads something like this:

This is the testimony of John,  
and when the Jews sent priests and Levites to him from Jerusalem to ask John,  
“Who are you?”  
He said “I am not the Christ. I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness  
to tell of God’s chosen one.”

John is giving his testimony about Jesus – the Messiah – the Christ.  
“Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”

Have you ever testified about Jesus,  
shared your love and passion for him with somebody?

I can’t imagine my testimony to somebody about Jesus **ever** using words like John’s testimony.

In the church we will say or sing words like that in our liturgy;  
Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world, Have mercy on us.

This is a very churchy set of words, don’t you think?.  
You really have to be a church goer to understand it.

Maybe we need to dig into the “sin” part.

I once told someone “I forgive you” ...  
I had just gotten back into the ways of church after 25 years of NOT going to church.

I was rediscovering my connections to God, Church and Jesus.  
I was connecting to the things I had experienced in Sunday School as a little kid,

But now as an adult,  
I was starting to understand that my failings as a good human being,  
were truly and fully forgiven ...  
that I didn’t have to earn a certain grade point average  
for God to love me,  
or for God to forgive my mistakes.

Jesus was doing that for me.  
Not that I have ever stood face to face with the man,  
but I was beginning to understand that the forgiveness bill has already been paid.  
My account of being a good or bad person had been settled through Jesus.

So I shared that re-learned understanding of forgiveness  
with the lady who was soon to be my ex-wife.  
“I forgive you”, I said.  
It didn’t go very well.

Forgiveness seems to also imply guilt and wrongdoing.  
Forgiveness implies fault.  
Forgiveness can imply judgment.  
And as I said, it didn’t go very well.

“Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world,  
Have mercy on us.” Have mercy on me Lord.

It takes a good internal look at your own being,  
to be able to see how you have failed.

There is a spiritual practice call the EXAMEN  
It was started by St. Ignatius  
and was taught to people who wished to spend dedicated time  
reflecting and thinking about how they have seen God in action.

In this practice folks are invited to look back at the past day, or past week,  
and see how the Spirit is moving in each moment of our daily lives.

You are invited to take a magnifying glass to the seemingly ordinary,  
and to look and seek for Divine encounters.

You are invited to encounter God,  
to express gratitude for the **gift** of each day  
and see the gifts **within** each day.

Where was God active in what I did today?  
Where was God active in what I experienced today?

You are also invited consider any mistakes you may have made.  
Who was I unkind to?  
Who did I not listen to?  
What did I **not** do that I could have,  
or should have, done.

Further, you are invited to commit to making up for those mistakes.

One website >> [ignatianspirituality.com](http://ignatianspirituality.com) <<  
has some wonderful guides to doing the EXAMEN prayer.  
As a spiritual director,  
I have found that being lead through this prayer,  
can be very helpful.

Let me share and lead you through this condensed EXAMEN prayer:

This is less about the activities of the past day or week,  
but rather engages in **YOUR** story.  
It focuses on how life has been for you.  
We are all STORIED people.

Read this slowly giving  
time to allow people to  
think. Pause between  
paragraphs. Take your  
time.

We all have an origin story,  
maybe you came from a different country, or society or neighbourhood.  
All of that is you, and your story.

If you feel safe, maybe close your eyes and listen.

**We start with thanksgiving**, and we pause in gratitude to God. {pause}

The Holy Spirit has been at work in every moment of all our stories.  
I place my trust in God, who has brought me to this moment, to this place,  
and will also bring me to the next.  
I imagine God's Spirit hovering over me and whispering,  
"This is my beloved, with whom I am well pleased."

I ask the Holy Spirit to illuminate my life's story.  
Help me see clearly the unique insights, experiences, culture,  
the connections, values, and wisdom that I bring to this moment,  
and to every moment,  
and moments yet to come.

Help me to not to shy away from those places in my life  
that are raw, tender, and in need of compassion and nurture.

With the presence of the Holy Spirit,  
I look at my life's story and maybe just looking the past year,  
or a recent year of particular significance.

I look for the successes, moments of joy and companionship.  
What did I learn about myself?  
What did I learn about **who** I am?  
What did I learn about **whose** I am?

I look, too, for the moments of challenge, sorrow, and frustration.  
What did I learn through those?  
Am I being called to reconciliation and mending relationships?  
Am I being invited to self-improvement through  
taking a long, hard, loving look at my own missteps?

I recognize that making sense of my life story  
—the details and the destinations  
is an ongoing journey.  
I ask God for the grace to continue this discernment.

I recognize that my story - is a pilgrim story  
and that I am moving ever onward into the mystery of God's creation.

**{LONG PAUSE}**

Together let us say a collective AMEN from this EXAMEN prayer ➔ **AMEN**

Having taken a good internal look at our own beings,  
maybe now – I can speak of forgiveness –

maybe now – I can testify like John the baptiser from the wilderness,  
“Come and meet the Lamb of God  
who takes away the sin of the world!”

**AMEN**