

# “Behold, the Lamb of God”

John 1:26-29

As we begin Lent on this Ash Wednesday, we also begin a sermon series called Witnesses to Christ. And the first person who helps us follow Christ to the cross in John’s Gospel is John—*John the Baptist*. What does John the Baptist say when we’re defensive *about* sin or defeated *by* sin? “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). When it comes to all of our ugly marks of sin, we can be delivered!

“Behold.” *Behold* literally means “see.” The verb can be translated “Look! Gaze! Stare! Take note!” *Behold* means “Here is the whole point of what I’m saying!” John the Baptist says it again in John 1:36: “Behold!”

In both John 1:29 and 1:36, John the Baptist says, “Behold, the Lamb of God!” This isn’t an ordinary Lamb of God. This is the *Passover* Lamb of God. John uses the word *Passover* eleven times in his Gospel—*eleven times!* The entire Gospel is structured to help us behold, see, gaze, and take note of Christ—the Passover Lamb of God.

Exodus 12:5 says that the Passover lamb is a male lamb—perfect, spotless, and without defect. Exodus 12:7 says that Israelites are to place the Passover lamb’s blood on the sides and tops of their doorframes. This blood would set the Israelites free—free from bricks, free from whips, and free from Pharaoh’s tyranny.

“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away.” The verb *takes away* is in present tense. Meaning what? Meaning that when we sing those words in the liturgy, which we do all the time, it is to remind us that Christ still takes away. Today, He takes away. Tomorrow, He takes away. Next week, He takes away the sin of the world.

And that includes our sin. Our ugly sin. Our shameful sin. Our haunting sin. Our every single sin. He takes it all away. Christ not only takes away our guilt—that’s sin done *by* us. Christ also takes away our shame—that’s sin done *to* us. Guilt is what we feel when we’ve done wrong. Shame is what we feel when someone has wronged us.

We all know what public shame feels like. There’s also private shame. We’ve all felt that too. We try to escape it. We go for a long drive. Nothing takes away our shame. Nothing takes away our guilt. Sin has marked us, and that’s that. End of story. That is what Satan wants us to believe.

We can't run away from our sin. We can't work our sin away; explain our sin away; eat our sin away; cry our sin away; or bury our sin away. "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

Our lives are so marred by sin and so many have carried these ugly marks for so long that we can't imagine life without them. Maybe we can't imagine it, but God can. God does. And God does more than just imagine it. He sends John the Baptist, who says, "Behold. Look. See. Gaze. Here is the whole point of what I'm saying! The Lamb of God takes away the sin of the world!" The Passover Lamb of God does it all, for the whole world. The Passover Lamb of God does it all for *you*!

And so we pray this prayer: "Jesus, please take it all away." Tell Jesus what you did. Tell Jesus what you said, what you saw, what you took, how you feel. Tell Jesus what you thought. Confess; repent; Hold nothing back. "I am a poor, miserable sinner." No guilt is too ancient or too recent. No shame is too evil or too insignificant. No marks are so malicious that they can't be completely removed. Confession isn't punishment for sin. Confession names sin so it can be exposed to God's amazing grace. "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world."

Know who you are. We are God's baptized children, and He loves us. We confess that also. Be firm in your confession of sin and your confession of faith.

Satan traffics in guilt and shame. He won't give up without a fight. Say to Satan, "I left my sin with the Passover Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

It's time for a clean start, a fresh slate, a new beginning. That's what Lent is all about. We don't need to be defensive or defeated. Today, we are reminded that we delivered.

And we do that by looking at God's marks. Yes, God has marks on His hands. Behold. *Behold! Look, see, gaze! Here is the whole point of what I'm saying.* "I have engraved you on the palms of My hands" (Isaiah 49:16). Jesus has your name written where He can see it. Your name is on His bloodstained hands.

"Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" Trust these words. Believe these words. Stand below these words, and trust Jesus to take it all away.

Jesus took the nails. On a cross. On a God-forsaken cross, Jesus took the nails. And taking the nails, Jesus takes away all of our sin and shame. He hung there, for us. Jesus still says, "I have engraved you on the palms of My hands." In the end, these are the only marks that matter! These marks on Christ's hands will never be erased!

Behold, the blood of the Passover Lamb of God has rescued you. Amen.