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WHAT ARE YOU SEEKING?

John 1:29-42a; Epiphany 2A; January 17-18, 2026

Every once in a while, I find myself walking into a room to get something, and I don't remember what I was coming to get. If Deb is in the room, she might ask, "What are you looking for?" And I have to admit, "I don't remember." Sometimes going back to where I started reminds me. "I was here when I had a thought, and I got up to do or get something. What was it?" Of course, this has nothing to do with me getting older.

John the Baptist admitted that before He baptized Jesus, he did not know who it was God had sent him to prepare for. **"I myself did not know Him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that He might be revealed to Israel." And John bore witness: "I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on Him. 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.' And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God."** Now John knew what he was looking for.

A second example of no knowing who Jesus was occurred when John declared to his disciples a second time that Jesus was the Lamb of God. **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!" The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, "What are you seeking?" And they said to Him, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are You staying?" He said to them, "Come and you will see."**

At this point, it appears that the two disciples were not sure if Jesus was the One they were looking for, so they asked where Jesus was staying to spend time with Him to find out. Eventually, one of them, Andrew, was sure. **"One of the two who... followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means Christ). He brought him to Jesus."**

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Jesus' question to Andrew and the other unnamed disciple, **"What are you seeking?"** is the question all of us should consider today. Wherever you and I have come from, we are here to stay a while with our Lord in His house. What are we seeking? What are we looking for? What are we expecting to find?

Most people these days don't go to church, at least, not very often. My guess is that maybe 10-20%, one or two in ten, residents of the Fairmont area are in church on any given weekend. Whatever it is that they are looking for, those who do not belong to a church or don't attend church have decided that they won't find it here. What they feel they need will be found somewhere else.

In our Gospel Reading, John tells us what he found in Jesus and what we should seek in church. **"Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! ... He on whom... the Spirit descends and remains is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit... This is the Son of God."** Andrew told his brother, Simon Peter, what they had found in Jesus. **"We have found the Messiah" (which means Christ).** If we are looking for something other than this, we are in the wrong place and should look for that somewhere else. But we are in the right place if our answer to Jesus' question, **"What are you seeking?"** is, "It is You, Jesus: the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, the Son of God and God's Messiah or Christ."

1. [Jesus: Lamb of God; Son of God]

I was visiting one of our shut-in members last week at Ingleside, and he mentioned that his favorite Bible verse in John 1:29. **"Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"** which I referred to a couple of times in last week's Sermon, something we sing in the *Agnus Dei* – Latin for "Lamb of God" – in the Communion liturgy every week.

There are many references to sacrificial lambs throughout the Bible. Jesus is referred to as our Passover Lamb (1 Co. 5:7) and the Lamb who was slain and now lives and reigns victorious in heaven (Rev. 5:6; 7:17; 14:10; 19:9 etc.), but as far as I can tell, the two occurrences in John one are the only times Jesus is referred to as **"the Lamb of God."**

God sent His Son as a Lamb, as John described, to **take away the sin of the world**. When John refers to “the world” in his Gospel, Epistles, and Revelation, it describes the creation fallen into sin and death. Yet, God loves this broken world we live and die in and sent His Son so we would not perish eternally but be saved by Him (Jn 3:16-17). What does it mean that Jesus, the Lamb of God, **takes away** the sin of the world?

“Taking away” describes a transferring of sin. The world’s sin is placed on the Lamb of God, who takes it away. The church’s use of “**atonement**” or “substitutionary atonement” language describes how this works. Atonement is the language of substituting one thing for another, in this case, God’s sinless Son substituted for the sinful, unbelieving world. This switch of one thing for another is connected to a sacrifice. The sacrifice of the good, sinless One is exchanged for the bad, sinful ones.

The Old Testament’s sacrificial system was based on this. God’s people, the sinners, brought animals – often lambs – to God to be sacrificed. God accepted the suffering and death of those innocent sacrifices instead of requiring the death of the guilty sinners. All of those bloody sacrifices pointed ahead to the coming of the Lamb of God, whose bloody death fulfilled and completed all those earlier sacrifices once and for all. If God had not sent His Son, those earlier sacrifices would have accomplished nothing. They did forgive sins, but only by being connected to the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

We use atonement language when we confess our sins to God: “I, a poor, miserable sinner, confess unto You all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended You and justly deserved Your temporal and eternal punishment. But I pray You... for the sake of the holy, innocent, bitter sufferings and death of Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to be gracious and merciful to me, a poor, sinful being” (*LSB*, DS3, 184).

What we deserved, “temporal (now in time) and eternal (forever) punishment (in hell),” Jesus received instead of us. The Lamb of God took away our sin to His cross and suffered there in our place. The result is that our sins are forgiven for Jesus’ sake. Forgiveness is what we seek when we confess our sins to God.

Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper during the celebration of the last Passover, where a lamb had been slaughtered and roasted for eating. Jesus' words over the bread, "This is My body given for you," and the wine, "My blood which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins," is atonement language. When we eat and drink Jesus' body and blood in faith, Jesus' sacrifice on the cross is substituted for our punishment, and we receive the forgiveness of our sins. Jesus' body and blood for our forgiveness is what we seek when we come to the Lord's Supper.

But, more than just our sins, the Lamb of God takes away the sin of the whole world. This is because Jesus is the **Son of God**, no mere human. The body that Jesus gave to death on the cross is the flesh of God Himself. The blood that Jesus shed is that of the Son of God. This pays for all the sin of every person who has ever and will ever live, but this forgiveness is received only by faith in Jesus. The two disciples who followed Jesus to where He was staying had this faith.

2. [Jesus: Christ/Messiah]

Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, "What are you seeking?" And they said to Him, "Rabbi, where are You staying?" He said to them, "Come and you will see." ... One of the two who followed Jesus was Andrew, who said to his brother, "We have found the Messiah/the Christ."

The language of "**following**," "**finding**," and "**seeing**" is the language of faith in Jesus. The most basic confession of faith is the simple statement, "Jesus is the Christ," or "Jesus Christ is Lord." I asked earlier, "What are we seeking? What are we looking for? What are we expecting to find?" The answer is, "Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." We seek and find Jesus, God's Son, who is here for us as God's promised Christ/Messiah.

The Spirit of God, who descended from heaven and remained on Jesus is the same Spirit who came down and has rested on us since our baptisms into Christ and has given us this saving faith. We don't wander into church and wonder what we're doing here, not knowing what we're looking for. Here we find God's Christ who takes away the sin of the world, our sin, and has saved us. Amen.