

06-01-08 – Behold the Lamb of God
First Holy Communion Ceremony
Patchogue Church of the Nazarene

Behold the Lamb of God

John 1:29-34

John 1:29-34 NIV

29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! 30 This is the one I meant when I said, 'A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.' 31 I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel."

32 Then John gave this testimony: "I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. 33 I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' 34 I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God."

Behold – or – Look – The Lamb of God. What does this mean and why is it so important for us to understand? I am going to tell you a story about the Bible. It is a story that will help you understand what the Bible is all about and why it's so important for us to know. For you who received First Communion today, this will help you know what you took part in today. This is your special day, and I want to tell this story just for you. The other children can listen, and we'll even let the adults stay and listen too. This story is just as important for the older people in our church as it is for you.

I am going to start this story the way most stories for kids starts, but not because it is a fairy tale. This is a true story. It is a story about God and His desire for each of you.

So – **ONCE UPON A TIME – IN A LAND FAR AWAY** ... A Land God created ... God created people and put them in a Garden to enjoy each other and to be with God in a perfect relationship. He wanted them to live happily ever after - forever with Him. Then the enemy of God – the Devil, commander of the Dark Side, tricked the people and they disobeyed God. This is called Sin in the Bible. Well – God was heart-broken, because they ruined the perfect relationship, and joined the Dark Side even though they were tricked. They were no longer perfect as God created them. So – God killed an animal – probably a Lamb – and made clothes to cover the people. The word for Cover is Atoned – This is an important word in our story – So God Atoned for their sin by killing the Lamb. The people messed things up for all people who came after them. Everyone would follow in their footsteps and disobey God as some point – and everyone since then has (except Jesus, but we'll get to that in a little while).

Many years later, God's people were slaves in Egypt and prayed for God to save them. He heard their prayer because he always listens when we really pray. He told them to get a Lamb, one year old and perfect. They were to kill it and put the blood on the door posts and top piece as a covering for their home. Then He sent an angel to kill the first born males in all of Egypt, but he would Passover the homes that had the blood on the doorway. They were then allowed to leave Egypt, so God Saved them because of the blood that was spilled by killing the Lamb.

After this, the Law of God was created, and in that law, over and over again, it was required that a Lamb without defect be killed for the forgiveness of the sins of the people. God established something in those early days that we learn in the Bible is the only way for our sin or disobedience to be forgiven or covered (Atoned for). It is that only blood will be acceptable as a covering sacrifice to forgive sin. The writer of the book of Hebrews explains: **Heb 9:22 - *In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.*** NIV

All through History, the people of God remember that Passover when God saved them from slavery in Egypt. They remember the Lamb that was killed instead of them. And that story is celebrated every year even today by Jewish people. You even get off from school because it is so important and such a special holiday.

As time moved forward, God began to promise His people that He would come and complete His plan for them. There would be one very special sacrifice for the sin of all humanity. The Lamb of God will be killed so that His blood would be offered to cover or forgive our sin and disobedience. We would not have to be punished for the things we did that disobeyed God; the Lamb would be punished and give his life in our place. The prophet Isaiah was speaking for God when he said, **Isa 53:5-7 - *But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed ... and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. ... he was led like a lamb to the slaughter ...*** NIV

As we move into the New Testament, Jesus is born and grows up just like God told us it would happen. He comes to John the Baptist and is baptized, and the Holy Spirit comes down upon Him for all to see. John then tells the people what I read in the beginning of our story, **Look, the Lamb of God** who takes away the sin of the world – Jesus is the Son of God – the Messiah.

In **1 Cor 5:7** Paul says, “... *Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.*” He clearly tells us all that Jesus, the Christ is our Passover Lamb. He was sacrificed for our sin so that we would be saved from the punishment we deserve. Peter, the apostle, tells us that we were redeemed “...*with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.*” - **1 Peter 1:19**. Remember that God required that the Lamb that was killed for forgiveness of sins was to be perfect, without defect. Jesus was in the prime of life at age 33 and had no disabilities or deformities. He was a perfect specimen of a human man. He was the perfect Lamb of God who could take away the sins of the world.

As we move to the last book of the Bible, Revelation, we read a lot about the Lamb of God. There are 22 chapters in this book and the word Lamb is used over 30 times related to Jesus. In **Rev. 5:6** – John hears a Lion, but when he turns to look, he sees a Lamb – as if it has been killed (I guess all bloody and bruised). The book of Revelation tells us how the entire plan of God for humanity comes together. **Rev. 5:8** – tells us that everyone in Heaven will worship the Lamb. They will sing and shout, “*Worthy is the Lamb who was slain!*” – **Rev. 5:12**. This is why we sing and worship Jesus on Sunday and everyday. We will be doing this forever in Heaven. People will face great trouble in the future, except for those who are washed in the blood of the Lamb (or have received forgiveness by Jesus’ sacrifice personally). The enemy will be causing all kinds of trouble, but believers overcome him by the blood of the Lamb and their profession of faith in Him. (**Rev. 12:11**).

Rev. 13:8 – *all whose names are NOT written in the Book of Life* that belongs to the Lamb, will worship the enemy – Believers worship the Lamb (Jesus) only. This is a very black and white issue, very clear in Revelation. It’s one or the other. Whoever is NOT serving God, is serving the Devil whether you believe this or not, whether you know this or not. It’s in the Bible – it’s true – it’s a major theme for humanity.

Rev. 17:14 – The enemy and all his followers will make war against the Lamb in a last effort to survive – BUT – The Lamb (Jesus) will overcome them because His is Lord of lords and King of kings. Jesus and His followers win the final battle for our souls.

Rev. 19 – a great celebration takes place in Heaven – like a wedding feast. The enemy is thrown into Hell – total separation from God forever and ever. A great judgment takes place – God is the Judge with Jesus. Everyone who ever lived from the beginning of time to the end will be there before the Throne of God. God will separate them all to the right and the left. All those who have followed the enemy, who do not believe in Jesus as God and Savior and Lord, are sent to Hell – separated from God forever.

Heaven is described as a wonderful place where God is King and Jesus – the Lamb of God – is on the throne and is the Light of the World. Everyone whose name is written in the Lamb’s Book of Life enters Heaven and worships God forever together. There is no sickness, sadness, pain, or death there. It is just like in the Garden in the beginning of our story. There they were supposed to live happily ever after, but in Heaven, at the end of the story, all of Jesus’ followers do live happily ever after with God forever.

The facts of this story are accurate and Biblical. This is not a fictional fairy tale. This is the destiny of all people (humanity). We either choose to accept this truth and live, or we can reject this as just a nice story and perish.

How do we get our names written in the Lamb's Book of Life? **John 14:6**, Jesus said, ***"I am the Way and the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."*** God love you and wants you to be with Him in Heaven forever. Matthew Gazzo was right, the only way to get to Heaven is to die, but when we die, how can we be sure that's where we'll end up?

John 3:16 – Jesus said, ***"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."*** We want this now, but that can't happen here. This is a fallen world – a sinful world. Jesus said, ***"In the world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."*** - **John 16:33** He did this by giving His life for yours and taking your punishment in your place. He did this by becoming the Lamb of God who shed His blood for the forgiveness of your sins.

God wants this for every person who ever lived – all that He created. We can't understand God's timing, but He is waiting for you to choose Him. The Apostle Peter wrote, **2 Peter 3:9** - ***The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.*** We are here to find out that we can't solve this problem of sin ourselves. We can be good enough – we can't work hard enough – we can't buy our way into Heaven. In fact the Bible tells us in **Titus 3:4-7** - ***But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.***

This is what we celebrate when we receive Holy Communion together. Eucharist means thanksgiving. We celebrate with gladness because of what Jesus did for us, and we remember His broken and bruised body and His shed blood that He gave for us.

Where are you in this salvation story that I just shared? Children are so cool. They hear and believe completely. Adults have issues – lots of issues – we've seen and heard all kinds of things. That's why Jesus said, "the kingdom of God belongs to little ones like this." - and – Jesus said in **Mark 10:15** - ***I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.***

It's all or nothing. It's not on your own terms, but on God's terms. He's bigger and more powerful. He wins in the end. It's His way or no way. You're a believer or you're not – you're saved or you're not – You will have eternal life or the second death in Hell based on your choice. What will you choose? Jesus – The Way and the Truth and the Life? Or eternal separation from God forever in Hell?