

*29The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! 30This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me.' 31I myself did not know him; but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel." 32And John testified, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. 33I 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.' 34And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God." 35The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, 36and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!"*

*37The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. 38When 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?" 39He 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. 40One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. 41He first found his brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated Anointed). 42He 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).*

Sin.

Definitely a church word – not a take it home with me and use it all week word.

Sin.

Right – wrong; good – evil; even faithful and unfaithful are all words we carry with us and use in our conversations and hear used on TV but sin is a church word.

Sin.

It is a wonder any of us know what to pray when the service says it is time to confess our sins. Or do we? It might be enlightening to listen in on one another as we speak in our mind to God. Well, I will tell you what I am saying to God when I confess my sins: I confess things I did or said that hurt other people. I confess not thinking enough about God and living and acting as if everything depends on me. I confess being too attached to money and the security that I think it buys me. I wonder if that is what God thinks when God thinks about my sin.

Now if someone asks me, “What is sin?” I would turn to the story from the Garden of Eden when the serpent says to the woman, “If you eat of the fruit of the tree you will be like God.” Sin is acting like I am God. Rather than letting God be God I take God’s place and sit in judgement of my neighbors or even myself. I put myself right in the center acting like everyone else is here to make me happy. Me first: my family, my school, my church, my state, my country first – everyone else after that.

“Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” That is what John the Baptist declared as he saw Jesus coming toward him. The lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

If you pay any attention to the news it might not seem obvious that the sin of the world has been taken away. Arson, sexual assault, fraud, wars, theft, lies, deception, rape, murder, gossip – it looks like the sin of the world has not been taken very far away. Even in the church that belongs to this Lamb of God sin seems to be doing just fine – divisions, conflicts, envy, - most any of the sins that we see out there in the world seem to be in here as well – even sexual sins that leaders have hushed up but that now have come to light. The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world?

Now John might have pointed to the Ram of God who clobbers the sin of the world. When I was young we had a ram out in our pasture. Whenever we would drive our green Ford pickup out in the pasture and stop, that ram would come over and attack. With all his power he would butt the pickup with his head. One time, then he would back up and charge the pickup crashing into it again. And again. And again. The Bible says that God tried it like that once – wiping out most all the human race in a flood because humans were hopelessly sinful, but it did no more

good than the ram did with attacking the pickup. Noah and his family soon proved to be no better than all those who had been destroyed.

So God did not send the Ram of God but the Lamb of God to deal with sin. And this is how he did it – he became one of the flooded ones, washed down into death. He was not like Noah, riding an ark over the flood but he was like all the terrible sinners. No, he did not drown – the Lamb of God was crucified – taken down into the death that comes to everyone who sins. As far as God is concerned he took sin with him, all sin for all time carried down into death and left there – dead in death. The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. God raised this Lamb of God out of death, sin and all its power left dead in death but Jesus alive. Forever alive, eternally alive.

In a moment Elle will be joined to Jesus. The waters of the flood will wash over her and death will already be behind her. The life of Jesus will be hers now and forever.

What does God hope for her? That she will live as a loved child of God. That she will call upon God in every time of need. That she will be like Jesus in her love and care for those her life touches. And that she like John will tell others about this Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

God hopes the same for you. Amen.