

A tourist visited a church in Germany and was surprised to see the carved figure of a lamb near the top of the church's tower. He asked why it was there and was told that when the church was being built, a workman fell from a high scaffold. His co-workers rushed down, expecting to find him dead. But to their surprise and joy, he was alive and only slightly injured.

How did he survive? A flock of sheep was passing beneath the tower scaffold at the time, and the worker landed on top of a lamb. The lamb broke his fall and was crushed to death, but the man was saved. To commemorate that miraculous escape, someone carved a lamb on the tower at the exact height from which the workman fell. The source of that story is unknown, and, whether it is simply legend or truth, it still bears out one fact: we need a lamb for our survival. WE NEED A LAMB!

John the Baptist was the first to call Jesus the "lamb of God." That was a title. Titles are symbols of prestige. For example, not every one can bear the title "Doctor." That's a privilege. A title also describes an individual for good or bad.

Here in Florida our college sporting teams have titles. In Gainesville, we have the Florida Gators. In Tallahassee, we have the Florida State Seminoles. Native Americans, Alligators. Great descriptive titles that speak of Florida and its heritage. But could you imagine if the Villages was able to sponsor a football team, and go against those college kids, and we called ourselves The Village Lambs.. –why, we'd probably be the laughing stock of college football. What can those old timers do against youth?

After all, lambs are helpless creatures. They're born virtually defenseless. Lambs also tend to be awkward and clumsy. They seem to have a knack for getting into trouble. Why in the world would John refer to Jesus as the Lamb of God? Could it be that he was implying that Jesus was weak or unimpressive? No. The opposite is true. This was actually a prestigious title, which John the Baptist had given. To appreciate the significance means we must understand how the Jewish people perceived a lamb.

John called Jesus the Lamb because it was descriptive of what he had come to do – take away the sin of the world. During Old Testament times God had commanded his people to sacrifice lambs (among other animals) for their sins. At the time of the Jewish Passover, a lamb was to be selected that was without spot or blemish. Christ was a Lamb without spot or blemish. His fleece was as white as snow as his life wasn't even smudged by one sin. The lamb was to be one year old, in the prime of life. So Jesus died at the age of 33 year, in the prime of manhood. The lamb was to be slaughtered at three in the afternoon, and so on that solemn Good Friday, Jesus bowed his head in death at that very hour. The lamb was killed as a sacrifice. So Jesus was offered up himself as a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. It is the blood of Jesus, the Son of God, that takes away the sin of the world. Jesus had to do this because the lambs sacrificed during Old Testament times couldn't really pay for the sins of the people. Animal sacrifices were only I.O.U. notes that put off paying the real debt of sin because human sin can only be paid for with human blood. That's why God's Son became Mary's son so that he had the right currency, human flesh and blood, to pay for our sins.

Literally, Jesus rips us off. He actually steals away our collective and individual sins, prying them from us.

I remember a story about a family in Florida whose house was broken into during the daylight hours while they were gone on a vacation week to Siesta Key. Two punks cut out the screen in their bird cage, then broke the glass on their sliding door, and helped themselves to the house; even making a sandwich and leaving the mess on the counter.

When the family came home they were angry. They felt afraid and violated. Their

privacy was invaded, and that eerie feeling loomed over them for some time. We feel the same way about our sins. “This is my business”, we shout, as we hoard away our sins, locking them up in our hearts and minds. We hold all sorts of sin in our hearts and minds – greed, lust, hatred, jealousy, lack of self-control – the list goes on.

As it is, we are born into this world intent on keeping hold of our trespasses and sins. We don’t want to let go of a single one. We treat our sins as if they’re our prized possessions. We’re not willing to hand them over to Jesus. After all, it’s a matter of privacy! How dare God violate us and take away the things we love! And so, Jesus, the Lamb of God – the perfect sacrifice – must come to us and snatch our sins away. He breaks into our hearts and minds and steals away all sin and unbelief.

This is how it must be! Christ Jesus must come and rip us off! He has to snatch our sins from us. Just think of how Jesus does this. He doesn’t crush or break us. He doesn’t smash his way into our lives. Jesus snatched our sins from us by sacrificing himself for us. He came into this world to suffer and die on the cross, so that we wouldn’t have to face punishment. Jesus bore the wrath of his heavenly Father in our place. And in doing so, he paid the price for every last one of our sins. He snatched them from us by labeling himself as “Sinner of sinners”, and allowing himself to be nailed to the cross with our all our transgressions. Then he rose from the dead proving that our sins are dead. They no longer count. The price has been paid.

The day after John pointed out Jesus, the Lamb of God, Andrew followed him. You would expect Jesus to be happy to gain a disciple but he turned and asked Andrew: “What do you want?” (John 1:38) That’s a question Jesus asks each of us this morning. What do we want with Jesus? Do we want him to fix our life? Do we want him to make us feel better? Do we want him to make us financially secure? Do we want him to make all our enemies suffer? Do we want him to make us popular? While Jesus can certainly do all these things it’s not the reason he came. He came as the Lamb of God to sacrifice his life for ours. He came to deal with our problem of sin and open the door to heaven. Along with taking care of our greatest need, Christ also gives us a meaningful life. Christ himself says, “I have come that you might have life, and have it abundantly.”

If Andrew was startled by Jesus’ initial question of what he wanted, he quickly got over it when Jesus invited him to spend the day. Boy, what a Savior! There were a million of other things Jesus could have been doing but he took time to be with Andrew, to answer his questions, to show how all the Old Testament promises spoke about him.

Jesus wants to spend time with us too. Through his Word he wants to show what he did for us and point out what he has in store for us. He wants this visit to last a lifetime so that it will be a relationship that stretches into eternity. Unfortunately though don’t we often treat Jesus like a distant uncle? We’ll pop in on him from time to time but only because it’s expected of us. And when we do visit our mind wanders as we think about all the other things we could be doing with our time. Friends, Jesus is not our uncle; he’s our brother who sacrificed his life on the battlefield to win the war against sin, death, and the devil. He’s the brother who was promoted over all things for his heroics and wants to share the benefits of that promotion with us. Why would we not want to spend time with him?

Andrew enjoyed spending time with Jesus but realized that he could not keep this benefit to himself. And so Andrew shared the good news about Jesus with his brother Peter (John 1:41, 42). Isn’t it interesting that it wasn’t to Peter, the never-at-a-loss-for-words, the soon-to-be-leader-of-the-disciples that Jesus first appeared? Peter learned about Jesus from his quiet brother

Andrew. And so we learn something important about mission work. You don't have to be a Type A personality to tell people about Jesus. You don't have to be well spoken or well read.. It means having a love for Jesus and a love for people who don't know about Jesus. It means being able to make an introduction. That was Andrew's outreach tactic. Andrew not only introduced his brother to Jesus he also introduced the boy who had the five loaves of bread and two fish so that Jesus could work the tremendous miracle of feeding over five thousand people (John 6). It was also Andrew, together with Philip, who brought forward a request from some Greeks who wanted to meet Jesus (John 12).

And now we can be the one to make the introductions. We do this when we bring a neighbor to meet Jesus at church, or when we accompany a neighbor to a Bible Information Class, or when we drive a shut-in to church. Yes, it still takes courage to introduce people to Jesus but God will give us that courage as he did to quiet Andrew. According to tradition, Andrew's God-given courage took him as far north as Turkey and possibly even to Russia to introduce sinners to Jesus. That courage kept him speaking about Jesus even while he hung on a cross shaped like an X for the last two days of his life! The only way for us to become like Andrew is to spend time with Jesus. We spend time with Jesus when we meet with him in his Word and the Sacrament, and in our private devotions.

A blind man was taken to a hospital where a missionary doctor removed cataracts from his eyes. The man went back to his home seeing and rejoicing. In a few weeks he came back to the hospital. This time he was holding the end of a rope to which forty blind people were clinging. He had led them to the place where he had received his sight. It was too good a thing not to share it. And so the news of our forgiveness in Jesus is too good to keep to ourselves. Be an Andrew. Make the introduction! Amen.