John 1:29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”

 I’m going to start this sermon by looking at three separate verses here and just asking some basic questions. It is just one of those sections that give some deep pause for thought. The verses are: 31: **“I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel.”** Verses 33-34: **“I would not have known him, except 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.’ I have seen and testify that this is the Son of God.”**

 Now why do I bring those verses up? Because in my mind they settle a question of theology for me. The question is this, “Is John’s baptism a means of grace?” In other words did John’s baptism do the same for the soul as Jesus’ baptism? We are aware of the fact that in the book of Acts (19) Paul in Ephesus came upon a group of John’s disciples and rebaptized them. Why? I believe our verses hold the answer.

 Notice what John says, not once but twice: **“I baptize with water.”** Now we commonly agree, as those who work in the Greek language, that the word “baptize” means “to apply water.” We point out that it does not tell you how to apply that water, whether by immersion, pouring, sprinkling or other way, but we insist and persist in saying that the word baptize means “to apply water.” So why does John here, twice say, **“I baptize with water.”** I believe it is because the Holy Spirit is revealing something to us, revealing that John’s baptism was just a ritual, a good intentioned ritual meant to convey your sorrow over sin but that it was not the same baptism of Jesus which is a means of grace. There is no other reason for John to be so redundant in what he says here, unless he is making a clear distinction between what he does and what Jesus will do.

 Because note that he also (again remember, this is the Holy Spirit speaking) points to Jesus and very specifically says, **“The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.”** Not only would Jesus send the Holy Spirit at Pentecost but Jesus would also give the command to baptize and with that baptism we are being told the Holy Spirit will become ours. That’s a means of grace. In our Catechism we ask the question: *Why is baptism able to offer and give such great blessings?* The Answer: *Baptism is able to offer and give such great blessings because the Holy Spirit is at work in baptism.”* John’s baptism is just a water baptism, but Jesus’ baptism is one in which the Holy Spirit works to bring us the blessings of Jesus.

 Why do I point all of this out? Well, really two reasons. To show you how we are to use Scripture to interpret Scripture, to work hard to make sure you have all the nuances of this wonderful work of God understood. When we do that I believe Scripture is always clear in what is says. And secondly to get you already thinking about and marveling at Jesus. See how John points to Jesus. John knew he was to diminish and Jesus was to be the focus. But Jesus is more than just another religious teacher. He is not just another guy filled with human ideas but he is more than that, as John clearly testifies: **“This is the Son of God!”** Let’s you and I focus on that wonder. Our theme: **THIS IS THE SON OF GOD. 1st. He is revealed by God. 2nd. He is the Lamb of God!**

 The first thing you need to grasp is that our text leaps us 30 years into the life of Jesus. What has happened is that for quite a number of years already a fellow by the name of John the Baptist has shown up in the wilderness and his teaching and presence is rattling the known Jewish world. John has the appearance and attitude of the Old Testament prophets, the likes of which have not been seen for 400 years among the people of God. John’s message is startling. It is not the “I’m Jewish therefore I am holy and God loves me because I am so good” message of the religious elite. John’s message is, **“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.”** John spoke of sin and the devastation of sin. John spoke of the need of salvation and that he was the one spoken of in prophecy, **“A voice of one calling in the desert, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord.”** John clearly called himself the forerunner, the one who would prepare for the revelation of the Christ of God!

Ultimately and finally then, John’s message became, **“Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”** John pointed out Jesus. John literally says that Jesus is the One, the promised of God and the Savior of the world. But first, let’s grasp how John knew this.

 If you would, remember that John’s birth was also surrounded by special circumstances. Born to Zechariah and Elizabeth in their old age, born after an announcement by an angel regarding his life, born with the promise that **“He will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth”** (Lk 1:15) it is clear John is special. And then John began his ministry. He rattled cages, he woke people up, he had all of Israel coming around because of his Spirit inspired message. And then onto the scene comes Jesus.

 Now, John and Jesus were some sort of relatives. I am sure they were told by their parents of the circumstances surrounding their births. I am sure they saw each other growing up, perhaps were even friends. But John, despite what he is told was never sure of Jesus until the baptism of Jesus. John had been told that the one he saw the Spirit come down on in the form of a dove was the One. That’s what happened at the baptism of Jesus. Heaven opened, the Father spoke and the dove descended on Jesus. From that point on John knew exactly what God had revealed: **“This is the Son of God.”**

 Nor is John the only one who got this message. Notice what else our text revealed. Some of John’s disciples who heard John say of Jesus, **“Look, the Lamb of God”** were moved to follow Jesus. We are told they spend the day with Jesus. Did you catch what their conclusion was after spending that time with Jesus? Mind you, there are no miracles done. There is only the presence and conversation of Jesus going on and these men conclude: **“We have found the Messiah” (that is, the Christ).** Even these two disciples of John became convinced that Jesus was the Christ of God, the Savior who had been promised. Their words clearly show they believed the Son of God was now in the world.

 Dear people, what an extraordinary thing this is! Men of this world, through nothing more than the work and testimony of the Holy Spirit, can already see and grasp who and what Jesus is. At this point they don’t really know what He will do. What they do know is that already in Jesus and the events surrounding Him the promises of God’s Word are coming true. Again, there have been no big miracles, no continuous stream of miracles as will come in just a month or so. Perhaps these men saw the dove descend on Jesus and heard John’s statement concerning that, but that’s it! The faith of these men is based on God’s Word and promises. Friends, that is all we need.

 You do recognize that such is the whole heart and core of faith? Faith is believing in the Word. It is believing what God has said and revealed. It is trusting that since there is a God that this God would reveal himself to the world. Such is what God has done. That’s the point of the Bible, the Word of God, which is also the designation given to Jesus. Know Jesus, know God! Trust in God, trust in His Word Jesus, that is the heart of faith.

 Now, there are those who would say, “But there are other “holy books” in the world. That is true, there are other religious books of the world, but compare what they say. Are they words that tell you what God does, is doing and will do for you? Are they words revealing the truth of sin and the need of a Savior? Are they words showing the total grace and mercy of God for our souls, words showing how salvation is won from beginning to end? That’s what the Bible is all about. The promises of the Bible is what brought these men to faith and it is what still works today. Because the Bible is God’s Word showing us just what God promised, and fulfilled in Jesus for salvation!

 You want to grasp that truth all the more, then pay attention to how John’s message changed. Please note that John is basically a teacher of the law. He wants people to see and know their sin, to show them the wickedness of their life. In Luke’s gospel you can read of the questions people asked John about their lives. Those answers given were not to tell the people how to get holy but rather were given to show what sinners they were! John is a preacher of the law and the most gospel he had was found in the fact that he was the voice in the wilderness preparing hearts for the coming Savior. Until it is clearly pointed out to him that Jesus is the Christ! Then John’s message becomes, “**Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.”**

 From there on in people began to look at and contemplate Jesus. Why? Because the Jewish people to whom John preached understood exactly what John was pointing too. They knew the history of the Exodus. The details of the Exodus showed you how you were to prepare for what was coming. What was coming was the angel of death and if you wanted to escape that and be a part of God’s people then you needed the Lamb. The lamb was taken into your home on the tenth day of the month and then on the fourteenth, that lamb was slain. Some of the blood of that lamb was smeared on your doorframe and then that lamb was roasted over a fire and eaten by all the members of the household. This feast was done at night, with you ready to go when the Lord called. That night, the angel of death passed over the whole land and every firstborn, both man and animal was struck down in the land, every firstborn except where the blood of the Lamb was found. When the angel saw the blood, that house was passed over and death did not strike. It was the next morning when the Jewish people were told, “Get out, get out of our land” and they were no longer slaves of Egypt.

 Every Jew grasped John’s message. Jesus was that lamb! Jesus is the one who by his death and blood would cause death to pass us over. Jesus is the one who would free the people and allow them to go and become a part of the Promised Land. Passover was a living parable of what the Christ, the Savior of God would do.

 And isn’t Jesus the Lamb of God? Did He not go to the cross there to suffer and die for our sins? And what does Romans declare to us: **“God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood.”** So many passages that tell us how the blood of Jesus cleanses and saves us. So many passages that try to get across the simple message that by faith in Jesus our sins are forgiven and heaven has become our home. So many ways that God has shown that what John proclaimed is true, **”Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world….I have seen and testify that this is the Son of God.”** Our Savior has come. Our sins are forgiven. Heaven is our home in and through Jesus.

 But don’t forget to have faith in Jesus! Sounds silly doesn’t it? At the Passover, the lamb was taken into your home. The lamb was slain and that blood was to be smeared on the door posts. No lamb and no blood and your home was hit by death! That blood of Passover represents faith. The door posts could clearly represent our hearts. Without Jesus, faith in Jesus in our hearts, then we will be hit by death, the eternal death of hell. The blood saves. Faith in Jesus saves. You can give Jesus lip service, but it is heart that counts. We can proclaim him our Savior, but the fruits of faith found in our lives speak of whether Jesus is there or not! You can take the lamb into your house, but fail to have the blood on the door posts and that is a problem! Our Savior has come. Our sins are forgiven in Jesus. Heaven is our home in and through Jesus. But then trust and believe in Jesus, live like Jesus is in your home and on your heart!

 Isn’t Jesus so awesome and his message so simple? Do you know why the world is so hostile to this simple truth of God? It is because it hates the truth. It is certainly because sin, that horrid problem of mankind, makes us enemies of God and those who walk in darkness. The problem of sin was true in ancient times and is still true today. From the world I expect nothing more than what Jesus said would be: **“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first.”** The best message I know to battle this horror and truth of the world is to be just like John and so many others before me who declare: **”Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world….I have seen and testify that this is the Son of God.”** Amen