Sermon Notes

Speaker: Patrick Mead

1/5/25

Behold the Lamb.
John 1:29-34

1. Welcome to 2025 at Our Safe Harbor Church. We will be focusing our worship and messages on the person and power of Jesus, the Christ, the Son of the Living God. This should not be a surprise to anyone who has followed us over the last four years. Our focus will not waver from Jesus.

2. Our Midweek Bible Studies begin tomorrow with the Gospel of John. This is a continuation of Just Jesus Stories. A recent poll of listeners found the overwhelming majority of them wanting to finish the remaining two Gospels before moving to the OT. It seems right, then, to start this new year by looking at this encounter between Jesus and John the Baptist.

3. Jesus and John the Baptist would have met many times before as families were tight and they were cousins. Their mothers were very close and I'm sure they played together as youths and discussed the things of God as they grew through their teens. They would have both been different from other kids and teens – Jesus was about his father's business at the age of 12 and John the Baptist was most likely a Nazarite (following instructions to his father before his birth and the comparison made with Elijah – "hairy").

4. On this busy road, pilgrims would travel to Jerusalem for the Passover and other holy days. The phrase "watch the lamb" or "behold the lamb" would be known by every man and boy in the crowd as they would have heard it again and again. The lamb you brought for sacrifice had to pristine, free from injury or fault. As the road was long, the responsibility to watch the lamb was a very important one.

5. When John the Baptist says "watch the lamb," heads would have swiveled. John then elevates Jesus by referring to him in terms that could only apply to the Messiah, the Anointed One. "Who takes away the sins of the world" and "he has surpassed me because he was before me" --- that later is important. John was born first, but he says that Jesus was before him. He knew who Jesus was and his introduction of Jesus to the people is full of Messianic power.

6. He saw the Spirit come down on Jesus. He was determined to reveal him to Israel. He bluntly and plainly calls him the Son of God. (this is one of the many reasons why it is silly to say that Jesus never called himself the Messiah, the Son of God. He did so in many ways and so did those around him...and he never corrected them).

7. In a fiercely monotheistic culture, this was quite a bold statement and a risky one as well. John repeats it in the next scene, John 1:35-39. John was absolutely plain in his announcement and it was NOT misunderstood by those who heard him. They immediately dropped what they were doing and asked Jesus to be their rabbi. The rest of chapter one consists of people encountering Jesus and following him.

8. They knew he was the Son of God. He reveals to them that he is also the Son of Man (John 1:51). Does this verse trigger a memory of another story in your head? It should! Genesis 28:10-17.

9. Jesus is the stairway to heaven. He is the gate of heaven. He is the connection between the earth and heaven, between deity and mankind, between our temporary lives and our eternal lives.

10. One might expect God to invade the planet with armies and announcements made with the trumpets of war, but God sent a baby – the Son of Man...though not the son of any man. The Son of God, but in form as a human baby. And that is where we see another aspect of the name "Lamb of God."

11. The is the Lamb of God because he is the sacrifice for sins and the defeater of death, but he is also the Lamb because of his gentleness and love. Nothing about a lamb is dangerous or threatening. In fact, we are drawn to them. They are not strong, they are not intelligent, and they are not threatening. They are pristine, pure, and attractive; we want to touch them and be around them.

12. Jesus came in a form that would not frighten us away. Remember that Daniel, a man of courage and faith, did not faint away at lions or kings but hit the dirt when he met an angel of power. God could not approach us as He is. So, God came as a lamb, a baby. Think about that for a moment and give thanks!

13. Think about how gentle Jesus was with sex workers, publicans, tax collectors, the poor, the widows, children, and honest seekers. The only harsh things he had to say to people were reserved for those who were religiously arrogant, those who smugly believed that God loved them and NEEDED them. If you need an example of what he had to say to them, read Matthew 23.

14. Now, let's fast forward about 60 years from that meeting of John the Baptist and Jesus by the River Jordan and the road to Jerusalem. The apostles are dead except, perhaps, the Apostle John. Jerusalem has been taken by Rome, its walls destroyed, its people killed, enslaved or scattered to lands far away.

15. The early believers, still largely Jewish but with more and more Gentiles coming into the fold, are scattered and have the stories of Jesus and not much more to keep them together. They had the books of the Hebrew scriptures, in many/most places, but the NT was still just a collection of letters circulated in some circles, not in others.

16. The boots of Rome have crushed the homes and hopes of many believers. They look for the return of Jesus but there is a real, valid fear that the next generation will not know faith. God sends a revelation to a man named John. It comes with messages to the churches. Revelation 1:4-8. Wow.

17. The appearance of Christ in chapter one verses 12-16 cause the Revelator to fall down as if dead. Jesus then lifts him up and says (Revelation 1:17-18). This is the real Jesus, Jesus not as a harmless lamb but as God, the Son of God.

18. The messages to the churches are a mixed bag. Ephesus is warned about false men and women who've taken over their church. Smyrna is warned about a coming persecution and encouraged to hold fast to their faith. Pergamum hears that they have done well but they have evil people in their midst who have misled them into sexual sins. Thyatira is warned that a teacher in their midst has misled them into sexual sins and the worship of idols (the danger of new faiths and new church movements). Sardis is warned to wake up and get to work.

19. Philadelphia is given good news: they have done well. The church in Laodicea is warned that they have become lukewarm and in danger of having God come to discipline them.

20. Remember the realities all these Christians were facing. These were dark times. The Revelator then moves the scene to the throne room of heaven. "Come up here and I will show you what must take place after this." We enter a room that shines with colors that defy description. We see flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder, lights, crystal, a sea of glass, living creatures unknown on earth, and circling beings crying out "holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty who was, and is and is to come." (the name given to Moses – I AM).

21. Now…the future of the faith and of God's chosen people hangs in the balance. A book is introduced in Revelation chapter 5. The book tells the future of the faith. Everything hangs on what is in the book. A mighty angel calls out to the entirety of heaven, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?" But no one in heaven or on earth could open the scroll or even look inside.

22. The Revelator weeps and weeps for this book holds the future of his family, his people and no one can open it. No one can protect them or let them know what is coming so that they can prepare. Then, one of the elders says this: Revelation 5:5.

23. Expecting, perhaps, a mighty warrior, or Jesus as shown in chapter one in all his power and glory, the Revelator lifts his eyes and sees…a slaughtered lamb. While all of us would have been shocked at this – how can our future be saved by a slaughtered lamb?!?!?

24. And…yet…"He had seven horns and seven eyes which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth." He knows everything and has all the power that there ever was or will be. A slaughtered lamb! The whole of heaven falls down and worships this lamb in one of the most powerful worship scenes in all scripture.

25. It is here that we will step away and wait for the next lesson. For now, look at the bookends: at the very beginning of the ministry of Jesus, he is the Lamb of God. That meant something very specific to them. Then, long after the ascension of Jesus to heaven and when the world was falling apart, we come to the throne room of God where God's presence knocks the faithful to the ground...and see Jesus portrayed as a slaughtered lamb.

26. Once again, harmless to us, though he holds all power and all authority that ever was or will be. Peaceful to us, given to forgive our sins and the sins of the whole world... a power based entirely on love for all, a love that will move with more power than the greatest army imaginable.

27. Our Lord, our Savior, the Lamb at the beginning, the Lamb at the end, always faithful. Praise be to the Son of God, the Son of man, the Lamb of God.