The Lamb of God

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Preacher: Prof J.Douglas Macmillan

[0:00] I would like you to turn with me this evening to the New Testament Scriptures and to the Gospel of Christ according to John on chapter 1. John chapter 1, the words for our text we find in that chapter in verse 36.

We read again in verse 35, John 1 and 35. Again, the next day after, John stood on two of his disciples and looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God.
These words in verse 36, the words of John the Baptist as he saw Jesus walking, Behold the Lamb of God. John the Baptist did what not too many preachers dare to do.
He spoke to his disciples one day and then the very next day he gave them the very same sermon. And I guess that not many preachers really have the nerve to do that. And one asks why. You see, when John, we read that the next day after, that refers to something that had gone before and refers to the fact that on the preceding day, John had preached from almost the same text.
[1:35] You find it in verse 29. The next day John sees Jesus coming unto him and saith, Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.

The text that time was a little bit fuller. Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world. And then the very next day, John takes the same text.
Only this time he shortens it. He doesn't feel that he has to make it quite as long as he did the day before. And instead of saying, Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world, he says, Behold the Lamb of God.
Why did he do that? I think for a very simple reason. I think that he knew that essentially he was expressing the same truth.
The very essence of his message is found in the fact that Jesus is the Lamb of God.
[2:42] And the Lamb of God is inconceivable to John and to his hearers apart from the function and work that the Lamb is to fulfil the taking away of the sin of the world.

Now I would guess that this text is very familiar to you and that probably you've heard very many sermons on it. I hope you have because that means that you have a background of understanding to the text.
And I know that for our own congregation, you've heard me preach on it once in the last four years. Some of you may remember. Not from this verse, but from the other verse.
29. Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. I want tonight to ask a question and to attempt from the Bible to provide an answer.
Why did John call Jesus the Lamb of God? Now John knew other titles for Jesus.
[4:00] For example, this chapter tells us that John knew Jesus to be the Son of God. Now that was a very vital and a very important truth that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God in a unique sense.

That seems far more important than the fact that Jesus was the Lamb of God. Why did John not just say, He is the Son of God?
Surely, that would have been a saving truth for his hearers. I think not. I think that John touches the very heart of the Gospel when he says not, Behold the Son of God, but behold the Lamb of God. Because the Son of God had to become incarnate. He had to become man. And the Son of God in human nature, the God-man, had to go to the cross to a place called Calvary.
And he had to give himself there a sacrifice for sin before the sin of the world could be taken away. I think in essence, that begins to show us.
[5:25] Why? John called Jesus the Lamb of God. I think that John was suddenly able to look at Jesus of Nazareth, whom I think he knew very well.

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He was able to look at him through the mirror of Old Testament Scriptures. And that the mirror of Old Testament Scriptures reflected on the head.
And John was able to see, as though it were actually taking place, the events that were to close the life of the mind of Nazareth.
The events of the cross. And I think that John had a very particular and definite understanding of what these events meant.
And again, I think that he took that very definite and particular understanding of Calvary and the cross. That he took them straight from the Old Testament Scriptures.
[6:44] We remember that John the Baptist was a man steeped in the Word of God. He was a preacher of the Old Testament. And he knew the Old Testament Scriptures as few preachers ever have known them.

And John knew something else. He knew that the people to whom he was speaking and preaching also knew their Old Testament. There was a common body of knowledge between John and his congregation.
You know, that gives any preacher a head staff, doesn't it? If he can guarantee, if he can calculate upon a common fund of knowledge and a common fund of biblical knowledge especially, then the preacher doesn't have to depart too far from the Bible.
There was a day in Scotland when any preacher in any denomination or any church in Scotland could count on his people, the people to whom he was preaching.
He could count on them having a wealth of biblical knowledge. In most cases, that's no longer true. Because the people of Scotland hardly no longer know the Bible in the way that Forbays did.
[8:03] But John was preaching to a congregation steeped in Old Testament Scriptures. And that meant something else.

He was talking to a people who knew the technical language of Old Testament theology. He was talking to a people who knew the language of Old Testament ritual and ceremony.
He was talking to a people who knew very vividly the language of Old Testament sacrifice. Wanted to catch that.
He was talking to a people who knew very vividly knew the language of Old Testament sacrifice.
And John talked of Allah. These people, their minds went to two things. Went to the Old Testament Scripture and went to the daily sacrifice for sin which they knew so well.
[9:18] And it was over against that that they would interpret and understand the message of the Baptist. Something else lies underneath that.

And the thing that lies underneath their understanding of the Baptist message is the Baptist's understanding of his own message. Where did he get his message from? He got it from taking the fact that Jesus had been revealed to him as Messiah and that had been revealed to him when Jesus was baptized.
And that was at least 40 days before this. Because after his baptism Jesus had been led into the wilderness of the Spirit and had been tempted and tempted for 40 days and 40 nights.
Maybe more time had elapsed. and then he came back to where John was baptizing and then it was that John said behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.
And then could we find it even further and say behold the Lamb of God. You see? And during that time the Baptist had taken the fact that God had acquainted him with.
[10:38] that Jesus of Nazareth a blood relation of his. Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah. And John you would do the same. It must have been a shocking startling revelation to John that somebody he had known since he was a little boy was the Messiah of God.

What a shocking that must have made him think very deeply about Jesus. I think he had wondered about Jesus for a long time. because when Jesus came to be baptised of him this picture of righteousness did what he had never done before.
He shrunk from baptising Jesus of Nazareth and said to him Jesus I need to be baptised of you.
And Jesus said John allow it to be so just now in order that we fulfil all righteousness.
and the fact that had been so startlingly revealed John John too and he looked at it as I say in the mirror of Old Testament truth he looked at it through his his special spectacles if I can put it at last his spectacles that had been framed and shaped by God's word in the Old Testament scriptures he looked at that fact in that way and he suddenly saw truth not only about the person of Messiah but about the work that Messiah was to do.

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I want us to do the same tonight to look on Jesus the Lamb of God through the eyes and the teaching of the Old Testament scriptures.
[12:22] And in doing that we will be getting the light focused on one thing the light of the New and the Old Testament focusing together two foci of light pointing out one simple thing God's way of salvation for sinners.

How can a sinner be saved from the consequences of his or her sins and God in the gospel provides a very wonderful answer.
and that chapter we read in the Old Testament will also be well known to most of you. It's the story of the trial of the faith of Abraham.
And I want us to take that story tonight and to look at it or through it to look at Jesus the Lamb of God on the way of salvation for sinners.
Because one can find I think the same sort of things as the Baptist found in that old story.
[13:45] John the Baptist had often read the story of the trial of Abraham's faith and he had read it now in a new way because he knew who the Messiah was.

what did that story have to tell John the Baptist? Well one or two very simple things and yet in the simplicity profoundly revealing revealing what was to happen to Jesus of Nazareth.
the first thing that would come to John the Baptist mind I think would be this that here was a father who was asked to put the life of his son at stake.
He was asked to sacrifice the son whom he loved. The story in Genesis says his only son take now thy son thine only son Isaac whom thou lovest.
Isaac being the son of promise and the son through whom the promises to Abraham were to be fulfilled the very promises that were to be tested by Isaac's sacrificial death.
[15:29] Isaac is looked upon as the only son. The other son had been discountenanced. He wasn't the son through whom the promises were to come. Take thy son thine only son and already you see the language sounds very familiar doesn't it to any reader of the New Testament take thy son thine only son here is a message that is going to touch our father's heart.

More than that here is a message that is going to give our father an understanding of another father. father. And it should give us an understanding of another father too.
You know the father I'm talking about don't you from John 3 and 16 almost the same word. The father of God God so loved that the life of his son was put at stake.
God so loved that the sacrifice of his son was involved in his love. Now way back there all these centuries before that he is teaching Abraham he's teaching Abraham many things about Abraham's own house.
but God this God father the father God is teaching Abraham many things about the divine heart. Take thy son thine only son do that Abraham and you begin to understand something of the love of God for sinners.
[17:20] The love that's going to provide the only son as a sacrifice for sin. two fathers and of course there are two sons.

Take thy son thine only son whom thou lovest. Take him. Take him and don't take him alone but take him with all the paraphernalia sacrifice and Abraham does that.
he cleaves the wood and he takes a censer of fire and he takes the knife and then we read this lovely thing they went out together father and son they went together to the place of which God has spoken and already you see you see the parallels don't you that we're drawing between God the father and God the son and Abraham the father and Isaac his son we're seeing the gospel through the eyes and the heart and the actions of Abraham of all we're seeing the gospel through the through the heart of a human like ourselves he is seeing the gospel too through the process of God dealing with him in a strange way and they go out to the mountain of God's appointing and you know way down the corridors of history there's another son and for this son too there is all the paraphernalia and all the ritual of sacrifice there is wood and just as Isaac has to carry the wood for his sacrifice up onto the mountain and the place of the ark the shore
Jesus of Nazareth is to carry the wood you are the Lord of him he went forth bearing his cross to the place of Ascar to the place of death they went out together said Abraham and Isaac and God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself father and son moved together for you salvation and for mine as well what was Isaac as he journeyed for three days what was he in the eye of Abraham father who was dead for three days in his intention of obedience to

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God Isaac and his son was already dead and we know another father whose son was for three days under the power of death too do you see how the story illumined the understanding of the mountains do you begin to see what we mean when we say that we look at Jesus through the teaching of the Old Testament and he understood what Jesus was to meet and what Jesus was to do they go up onto the Mount of Sacrifice to Abraham and Isaac and Abraham builds this altar as often thought of how he must have felt as he lifted and fitted every stone into that altar every movement leading towards the death of his son at his own hand and then there was the question that the whole thing roused in
[22:26] Isaac's mind and of course the whole thing raises many questions doesn't it that God can proceed in this way at all and yet we have to remember all the time that God is teaching the faith of his servant Abraham God is bringing Abraham into a new place of obedience but he's doing more than that he's bringing Abraham to a place where he will see the day of Christ very clearly and where he'll see the way of salvation through faith in Christ he's bringing Abraham to the place where he has to trust in the God who can raise the dead in order to fulfill the promise if he wants to do it that way Hebrews tells her that Abraham acted in the belief that God could raise his son from the dead in which he had him in a figure the question came to

Isaac with children it was natural that it would come father here is the altar and here is the wood and here is the fire father there's one thing missing here is the man for a daughter don't call me where is the lamb for a bant offering why a bant offering why a lamb well Isaac knew Isaac knew as everyone in Israel was to know as Abraham himself knew sacrifice was because of sin barren offering was to appease that God who was offended sacrifice was to fulfill the sentence of God upon sin the soul that sin as it shall die and
Isaac Isaac knew in his own experience what it was to be under the knife of God judgment I believe that Abraham must have explained to Isaac as he climbed the mountain in Moriah must have explained to Isaac what God had said to him and told him to do because Isaac Isaac made no sign of resistance at all and Isaac is reckoned was at least in his middle twenties at this age and Abraham was an old man and Isaac his obedience is just as great as Abraham his father she allows his father to tie him on the altar and he allows himself to be under the knife of God justice he is seeing he is seeing in a terribly personal way what God means when he says the soul of sinners they shall die he sees that his life is to be forfeited because of sin we have asked to you not just for Isaac but for all men for all of us our life is forfeited before God because of sin and Joseph Abraham lifted the knife so the knife of God judgment upon us and our sins is poised also and Isaac has no question he's got no question with the acting of Abraham his father because he believes that Abraham has obeyed God and he's got no query for the rightness of what God is doing either but to the question that he asked of which Abraham answered to Isaac subtle function where is the lamb and Isaac Abraham said to
Isaac my son God will provide himself with Allah for faith Abraham had he believed did he I think he did I think he saw already that as he trusted God with the life of Isaac his son so God he danced with our trust and God did the voice from heaven came and the hand of Abraham was stayed and God had provided Abraham Abraham caught in a thicket with his two horns and Isaac is listened his bonds are listened and what takes its place on the altar of bond offering the lamb of God's providing
[28:09] God's substitute lamb and I want you to notice this very carefully because here is the very heart of the way of salvation the knife is poised to take life because of sin that's what sacrifice is all about and the knife is stayed but only for a moment is stayed only while the victim is changed what happens the victim is substituted by another the knife comes down and life is taken and God demanded man in the symbol of life being taken away and I think life is spared because the life of

Allah is taken away instead of his and I think that at that point especially Abraham must have been given a great insight into the way of salvation I think it's of this that Jesus is talking when he said Abraham saw my day and he rejoiced the question was answered in a very practical way Isaac's question he could see the knife where was the lamb and suddenly he realizes that he is under the knife and at the same time the only thing he has to trust is this his father's assurance that God will provide a lamb and that happens he sees the lamb provided he is free and another life the life of the lamb is given in place of his life he's given back his life he lives now as one from the dead maybe that text in
Hebrews about Abraham's faith and resurrection even touches on that I don't know he is a resurrection he is a life but in the mind and heart of his father had been forfeited for three days he is

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a life that saw itself to be forfeited and then saw itself allowed to live because of another death the whole New Testament doctrine of substitution of Christ dying in our place and it's as though when John the Baptist saw Jesus he sees too Isaac's question where is the lamb and in Jesus he sees the answer here is the lamb of God providing that lamb away back in Mount Moriah had just been a symbol
Abraham had meant that one yes he had believed that God could provide a lamb there and then and God did but Abraham had meant something more Abraham had meant a lamb that God would provide to take away not only the death of Isaac but the death of God's people of God's people the death of their sins he looked ahead and he saw the day of Christ John the Baptist looking through the teaching of the scriptures and of course other scriptures as well John the Baptist saw the same thing and I think how wonderful a wonderful realization came home to him about God's providing he said here he is behold the lamb of God he didn't have to say on the second occasion who takes away the sin of the one the lamb of God will be doing nothing else but taking away the sin of the one this was why he had come this was why he would die this was why there would be a place called
Calvary to which he would bear his cross because he would be the lamb of God God sacrificed now my friend is the way of salvation the knife of God justice on his love poised over your soul and mine but it falls not upon us it falls upon Jesus the lamb of God what was John talking about he was talking about the substitutionary atonement the death of Jesus that's what theology would say in other words he was saying that Jesus died in your place on your mind because death was visited on him not for his guilt for your love but for your guilt and for mine death in our children has been satisfied and there's no claim on your soul or mine if we trust in
[34:07] Jesus why does John say behold the lamb of God because it is by looking to this lamb and trusting in this lamb that sinners are saved John really at the very essence of the gospel when he spoke like that when he spoke like that John was explaining as clearly as it can be explained how sinners may be saved they are saved because God has provided a special substitute from and that sacrificial substitute was his old son what does the preacher of the gospel invite you to do whether you are old or young no matter who you are he invites you to do the very same thing to behold

Jesus as the lamb of God and to trust in him as you say he eyes that will feed so with every eye but for whom Jesus died because he paid the price your bonds can be loosed and if we can use the imagery of Mariah you can come down off the altar and be a free man or a free woman because God has provided the love Abraham saw the provision stretching her head John saw the provision arise you and I look back and have finished it the way of salvation is just by trusting the what God has done in Christ we have to our gracious
God we thank you tonight for the utter simplicity of the way of salvation that Jesus the Lamb of God has died on the cross to take away our sins but he died in our place and we stung thee oh Lord that that provision is fully adequate to meet all the requirements of divine law and all the necessities of our own sins we pray that we might be given eyes to look to him faith to believe on him minds to understand hearts to rejoice in such great salvation bless each one of us and give us to know Jesus for ourselves personally of the Lamb of God taking away our sins hear us and answer us for our salvation and his glory
Amen

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