

Andrew K. Frey

Maundy Thursday

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!” (NIV 84)

Theme: Jesus—The Lamb of God

1. Passover.
2. Lord’s Supper.

The Christian Church has been singing the Agnus Dei for over 1300 years. Agnus Dei is Latin for “Lamb of God.” This song is based on the words of our text. We’ll sing one version of this song in a few minutes on p. 23. It is part of our communion liturgy. For centuries millions of Christians have connected the words of our text to the Lord’s Supper. That is because in the Lord’s Supper we receive the forgiveness of sins through the body and blood of the Lamb of God that he shed as a sacrifice on the cross.

But we can easily forget about God’s forgiveness. With all the sins that we commit time after time, we may fall into think that Christ can’t possibly forgive us. So today we look at the forgiveness that Jesus—the Lamb of God gives us in the Lord’s Supper.

This evening’s text takes place as John the Baptist was baptizing people in the Jordan River. He saw Jesus walking near him, and John wanted everyone to know who Jesus was. So he yelled out, **Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.** The words: “takes away the sins of the world,” show us that we need our sins taken away. For by nature we are nothing but God’s enemies who could do nothing but sin against him. We deserved nothing but his wrath and punishment. And even know as believers we still sin against him every day. No matter how hard we try, we still fail to obey him. Because of our sinful nature, we can’t possibly remove our own sins—there is nothing we can do to save ourselves. Our sins need to be removed so we can live in heaven forever. So John the Baptist points Jesus out as the Lamb of God who alone takes away sins. He did this through his suffering and death on the cross. Calling Jesus the Lamb of God would have called many different pictures to mind for the Jewish people. They would have thought about the daily sacrifices. The burnt offerings that were offered day after day for the forgiveness of sins. The people also would have thought about the Day of

Holy Cross, Standish, MI.

April 5, 2012

Atonement—or Yam Kippur. On that day two goats—a type of lamb, were taken. One was slaughtered and sacrificed. Then its blood was rubbed all of other goat while the High Priest pronounced the sins if the people upon it. Then the live goat was taken outside of Jerusalem and left. Thus through those two goats the people’s sins were forgiven, removed, and were never to return again. But all of these sacrifices weren’t permanent—they had to be made every day or year.

But the Israelites would not have only thought about these two sacrifices when they heard the Lamb of God. They also would have thought about the Passover. It was a meal they celebrated every year They were celebrate it as a reminder of how God rescued the people from the hand of the Egyptians. God had sent 9 plagues on Pharaoh and the nation of Egypt. God was trying to convince the King of Egypt to let his people leave the land and go to the land of Canaan. But Pharaoh didn’t want what his free labor to leave his country. During each plague he would claim that he was going to let them go, but after the plague was over he changed his mind. Finally God had enough, he was going to send a 10th and final plague on the land of Egypt. The plague of the firstborn. God was going to kill every firstborn son of everything in the land. But he told the Israelites that if they did what he said, they would escape this plague. He told to pick out a lamb and kill it. Then they were to take the blood of that lamb and spread it on the doorposts of the house that they were staying in. And when the angel of the Lord saw the blood on their doorposts he would pass over that house and not kill the firstborn. The Israelites were to eat this lamb with bread made without yeast along with bitter herbs—to represent the bitter time they had as slaves in Egypt. They were to eat this meal with their robes tucked in and a staff in their hands. For when the Egyptians found out what happened, they were going to tell the Israelites to go. So the Lord saved the Israelites from slavery and oppression through the Passover. And God commanded that they celebrate this festival every year so they could remember what he did for them.

This is what Jesus and his disciples were doing on Maundy Thursday. They were celebrating the Passover feast as the Lord commanded. They ate the lamb and the unleavened bread. That night Jesus took

some of the unleavened bread, gave thanks and said, **take and eat, this is my body, which is given for you, do this in remembrance of me.** Then he took a cup of grape wine and said, **take and drink, this is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins, do this whenever you drink it in remembrance of me.** It was on the same night as the Passover that Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper. On the same night that Jesus and his disciples ate the Passover Lamb, the Lamb of God gave us his body and blood in, with, and under, the bread and the wine.

So we can see that the Passover is closely connected to the Lord's Supper. Jesus is also closely connected to the Passover Lamb. In fact in his first letter to the Corinthians Paul calls Jesus, **our Passover Lamb.**

There are many similarities between the two. For starters the Passover Lamb had to be a firstborn male—Jesus is the only Son of God. It was to be without defect. Jesus was without defect because he had no sin. The Passover Lamb and Jesus were both killed on the same day. When the Israelites killed the Passover Lamb, they were not allowed to break any of its bones. When Jesus died they were going to break his legs, until they realized he had already died and ended up stabbing him in the side instead. In fact when John records this event, he connected it back to the Passover Lamb. **These things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled: “Not one of his bones will be broken.”** Not breaking the bones of the Passover Lamb was a prophecy fulfilled by Christ.

The Passover Lamb was one that saved the people of Israel. Through its blood the people of Israel were saved. They didn't deserve to be saved, and yet they were through the death of that Lamb. The same stands for us and Christ. We don't deserve to be saved. And yet, through his blood which he shed on the cross we are. Both the Lamb and Jesus didn't deserve to die. They were both innocent and did nothing to deserve this punishment. And yet, they were killed so others could be saved.

The Passover meal both looked backward and forward. It looked back at God's saving hand as he rescued the people from the oppression of the Egyptians. He saved them from slavery. But it also pointed

forward to the time of Christ. When he would save the people from the slavery of sin. The Lord's Supper is a meal in which we look back at victory that Christ won for us by giving up his life on the cross. And it points forward to the time when Christ will return and take all his believers to heaven where we will be free from sin and oppression. Those who celebrated the Passover were saved—and thus in a way forgiven. And we receive the forgiveness of sins in the Lord's Supper. Matthew tells us that the Lord's Supper is **for the forgiveness of sins.** We see elsewhere that when we partake of the body and blood of Christ, in with and under the bread and the wine, we partake of the new covenant. The new covenant is the agreement that Christ has paid for all our sins—that we don't have to worry about obeying God's law to get to heaven, for Christ kept it perfectly through us.

That is the beauty of the sacrament. Through it we receive the forgiveness of sins. And so, also a new life and salvation and the strengthening of our faith. But why do we need the sacrament? Aren't we forgiven through Jesus' death and resurrection? Because we are sinners, who sin everyday. We constantly go against God's word. We always fail to live up to his level of perfection. And so we may despair in our sins. We may wonder if God really does forgive us. How can he be so gracious and forgiving to forget and remove all the horrible things I have done? So the Lord comes to us in this sacrament to forgive us. So we can touch and taste that which he gave up to take away our sins. So we can know that our sins will not count against us.

That is why John the Baptist could call Jesus, the **Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.** For through his bloody sacrifice on the cross he paid the price for all of our sins. He has removed our guilt from us. Our sins will never return to haunt us. Christ certainly died for the whole world. But not everyone will be saved. There will be some whose sins still count against them. Those who fail to believe will not be saved. Through who do not believe in Jesus Christ as the world's one and only Savior will be punished forever. And those who do not believe are not forgiven in the Lord's Supper. Those who deny that the Lord's body and blood are truly present receive the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner. The same goes for those who receive Communion other than for the forgiveness of sins. And they eat and drink judgment on themselves. But those who do believe in the real presence are forgiven. Those who go before God in

deep humility, confessing their sins, will have God's forgiveness. For in the sacrament God comes to us in his body and blood. We partake of the very thing which the Lamb of God gave up to save us from our sins. The price Christ paid for your sins—his body and blood, is what he gives to you in his holy Supper.

There is a good reason why we sing the words of our text in our communion liturgy. Jesus certainly did take away the sins of the world. He wants everyone to know and believe that. And so we don't forget he has given us his body and blood in the sacrament of Holy Communion. Through it our sins are forgiven and we reminded of the precious body blood our Savior shed for us. Amen.