

John 1:29-41 *The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! ³⁰This is the one I meant when I said, 'A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.' ³¹I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel." ³²Then John gave this testimony: "I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. ³³And I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' ³⁴I have seen and I testify that this is God's Chosen One." ³⁵The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. ³⁶When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!" ³⁷When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. ³⁸Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?" They said, "Rabbi" (which means "Teacher"), "where are you staying?" ³⁹ "Come," he replied, "and you will see." So they went and saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with him. It was about four in the afternoon.⁴⁰Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. ⁴¹The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ)*

Dear friends in Christ our Savior,

What do you want? At first glance, this sounds like a pretty harsh question. We can add our own intonation to the question in English and make it sound pretty menacing and annoyed and even condescending: What do you want!? But this isn't the way Jesus asked the question. While it can be translated, "What do you want?", it might be better to translate it: "What are you seeking?" Rather than a question which sounds a bit condescending and comes from a place of annoyance, Jesus had another motive in mind. This was a deep penetrating question which intended to lead these men to truly contemplate what they were seeking by following after Jesus. He wanted them to think about what they expected to get from him. He wanted them to search their hearts to lead them to understand what they were getting into. He wanted them to follow him for the right reasons and have the correct expectations for what discipleship would mean.

What do you want? That's what Jesus asks of us today. It's good for us to step back from time to time to evaluate our expectations of Jesus. What do you want from Jesus? What are you expecting from him? Why do you follow him? Having the right expectations of Jesus keeps us balanced in our faith and keeps us from being disappointed when the reality of following Jesus doesn't meet our expectations. It's important for us to evaluate this because there are many different expectations people in our world have of Jesus that are unrealistic and just not true. Some people come to Jesus expecting that he will make their lives completely satisfying. They expect Jesus to give them good advice for how to live their lives. They expect Jesus will share their views—whether moral, political or philosophical. They expect Jesus will always give them what they want. They expect that by following Jesus they will never have any problems or difficulties. They expect that Jesus will never say no to anyone but be fully accepting of any and all lifestyles and actions. Some come with these expectations: Shouldn't the Savior of the world be able to save my marriage and if he doesn't, what kind of Savior is he? Shouldn't the Savior of the world have been able to save my daughter from dying; my son from his addiction; my dad from Alzheimer's; my mom from cancer? Why didn't he do that?! Shouldn't the Savior of the world keep children from going hungry and keep crazy people from walking into schools and murdering innocent children and teachers? Shouldn't the Savior of the world make it possible for me to earn a decent living and have a good job? Shouldn't the Savior of the world be able to make me happy all that time? And if so, then why doesn't he?

All of these are different expectations that people have of Jesus in our world. Maybe you've had the same thoughts go through your mind as you tried to navigate the difficulties this life can throw at you. Yet, these expectations aren't realistic because they don't see Jesus as he truly is or recognize the reason for which he came to this earth. To help us have the proper expectations of Jesus, John the Baptist this morning identifies not only who Jesus is but more importantly why he came to this earth. Having the correct expectation of Jesus will keep us balanced in our faith and focused on what is right and proper. It will keep us from being disappointed and will help us to navigate the difficulties of life not questioning and doubting God, but trusting him and relying on him to see us through. So we ask that penetrating question this morning: **What do you want?**

This was an important question for these disciples to ponder. People in their day were looking for many different things from Jesus as the Messiah too. After Jesus fed the 5,000 with five loaves of bread and two fish, the people wanted to make Jesus their "bread king" who would provide for all their earthly needs so they would never be in want. Many in Israel were looking for the Messiah to bring them deliverance from the oppression of the Romans to make them the greatest and most powerful country in the world. Some looked to Jesus as a miracle healer and source of entertainment to see what he would do next. It was important these disciples were following Jesus for the correct reason and with the right expectations. They would all too easily find out that following Jesus would not make their earthly lives any easier. In fact, they would become targets just like Jesus was. They would wander around the country with him with no place to call home. Their lives were not going to get easier by following Jesus but rather more difficult. They needed to start with the right expectations to keep themselves balanced as they faced these difficulties. Jesus' question was designed to focus their attention on seeing him for who he truly was and what he came to do.

Their answer tells us that they understood what Jesus was all about. They did not want to fit Jesus into their preconceived notions about him. They wanted to learn from him and let him tell them what he was all about. Jesus' invitation allowed them to do just that: "Come and see and learn what I am all about and you will not be disappointed." We are not given the exact details of their discussion the rest of the day. But we can assume from the context and from John and Andrew's reaction that Jesus spent the rest of the day confirming what John the Baptist had said about him. John and Andrew had been

John the Baptist's disciples. John the Baptist had set for them the correct expectations. They had heard him the day before when he had proclaimed: "*Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!*" Then the next day as Jesus passed by, John again exclaimed, "*Look, the Lamb of God!*" They had been there the day before as John provided his witness of Jesus fulfilling the sign that God had given to him. If John said this twice in such a short period of time, we can assume that this is what he had been preaching on a regular basis. He very clearly pointed to the Messiah as the one whose purpose was to take away the sins of the world. He didn't come to fight an earthly battle but a spiritual battle. He was the very lamb to whom every other lamb in the OT had pointed. Especially for the people of John's day, this picture of Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world would have been a vivid illustration. The entire Old Testament ceremonial law and worship life had centered on sacrificing lambs—year old males without defect. Recall the Passover lambs who were sacrificed the night before Israel left Egypt and whose blood was painted over the door frames so that the angel of death would Passover their homes. There was the Day of Atonement each year where two lambs were chosen. One was sacrificed for the sins of the people and burned on the altar. The other lamb had the sins of the people placed symbolically on its back and was released to wander away from the people out into the desert. The picture was beautiful. What a symbol of their sins being carried away and forgotten forever! Regularly the people were to bring lambs to the temple to burn as a sacrifice in atonement for their sin.

All of this pointed ahead to Jesus, who came to be sacrificed for the sin of all people. John the Baptist's job was to reveal to these people exactly who Jesus was and what he came to do: He was the Lamb of God who came to take away the sins of all people. This is who the Messiah came to be. He didn't come to conquer the Romans and restore Israel to its former glory. He didn't come to be a bread king who would miraculously provide for all the physical needs of his people. He didn't come to be an entertainer who performed wonders for people to marvel at or to be a healer who took care of whatever ails you. He came to be the Lamb who would offer himself for the sins of the people. This is how these disciples were to view Jesus. They were to view him as the Lamb who would satisfy their deep, desperate need as sinners for a Savior who would rescue them from their sins.

It brings us back to the original question: What do you want from Jesus? Whatever your expectations are as you gather here today, this is what Jesus invites you to see: he is the Messiah who came as the Lamb to sacrifice himself for your sins. He didn't come to bring an earthly peace from the troubles of this life, but peace between humans and God through the forgiveness of sins. He didn't come to make your earthly life easier and full of earthly success and glory. If anything, following him will make life more difficult as it will draw the ire and vitriol that so many have for him. But it will guarantee your eternity because you know the sacrifice Jesus made on your behalf and the perfection he gives to you through faith. He didn't come to carry your earthly burdens but to carry your sins on his back all the way to Calvary's cross so that he can carry them away from God's sight forever so that they are never remembered or charged against us.

What a comforting picture this is when we consider the desperate situation of our sins. The tendency in our world is to gloss over sin and think that it's not that big of a deal. So many people comfort themselves by thinking, "I might not be perfect, but at least I'm not as bad as... (fill in the blank: that crazy guy who shot up all those people; that rapist who hurt all those ladies; that thief who stole money and bankrupted all those people's retirement funds; etc.) Yet God said, "Sin is sin." That little white lie that you told is still a lie...and is sin. The few words of slander that you spoke about someone else were only to one person and they were true...but they were still slander and therefore sin. The thoughts you had about your neighbor were only in your head, but they were still lust and still sin. God tells us that he is serious about all sin and punishes all sin with death. Maybe you're on the other side of this equation. Maybe you are here today loaded with a heap of guilt over a sin you committed which is plaguing your conscience. Maybe it's a sin so big you don't think God could possibly forgive it. Maybe you hurt someone so close to you in a way that you don't think could ever be forgiven. Maybe you are caught in the spin of the same sin that you keep committing that you just can't get out of. You are not thinking lightly of your sin but are all too well aware of the death and hell you deserve for what you have done. You are on the verge of desperation and about to lose hope that any help is available. Regardless of you who are...we are all in the same position because of our sin.

And if we came to Jesus looking for earthly peace or release from our troubles or worldly success and glory, we would leave completely defeated and hopeless. But John the Baptist cries out to us this morning: Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" More pointedly: Look, the Lamb of God who came to take away your sin and give you the gift of life! This is Jesus' invitation to you this morning: Come and see your Savior from sin! Come with the weighty burden of sin on your shoulders and watch Jesus lift that burden from you and carry it to Calvary's cross. Come and see God's promises of love fulfilled in Jesus. Come and see your salvation and your deliverance. Come and see the one who brings you the life God truly intended for you: spiritual and eternal life with him now and forever. Come with the expectation that your sins are forgiven and you have been made right with the eternal, almighty God and will live in peace with him for all eternity.

While the question we are asking today is, "What do you want," maybe the better question is, "Why wouldn't you want this?" Your Savior went forward as the Lamb of sacrifice and offered his life and blood to death so that you can live forever. You have the peace of knowing your sins are forgiven and heaven awaits. While life may be difficult here, you have the hope of the perfect life to come completely free from sin and its effects. This is who Jesus is and this is what he offers to you. When you come with these expectations, you will never be disappointed! In the grand scheme of things, this is exactly what we want from our Savior! Amen.