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Preacher: Rev. George Macaskill

[0 : 00] Well, now let's turn to the passage of Scripture. We read the Gospel of John, chapter 1.

And as God would help me, I'd like to concentrate on verse 29. John, chapter 1, verse 29.

The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him. And said, Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Human beings have always sought a supreme being.

Or the supreme being. Human beings have the history of humankind as they've always sought a human being. A supreme being that's superior to the human race.

[1 : 12] But history also shows that humans are more prone to the sin of polytheism. Rather than the sin of atheism.

It seems our inclination by nature is to believe there's more gods than that there's no god at all.

Apparently, atheism, well, atheism is only about 300 or 400 years old.

Any formal, secular, organized ideology of atheism, it's quite a new thing according to the history of human race.

Now, according to history, the eastern world has sought that one supreme being through mysticism.

The western world has sought that one supreme being through rationalism. The gospel of John teaches us there's only one way to God.

[2 : 28] There is only one way to find the supreme being. And that one way is through Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God.

Why is there religion in the world? Why is there religion in the world? Do you know why? Because in the world, there's death.

And they need an explanation. In the world, there's disease. Suffering. Trouble. War. There's all these things.

And we need an explanation. And the world has come up with religion. John tells us, it's not religion you need.

It's Christ you need. It's Jesus you need. Why does death exist? Why is there suffering in the world?

[3 : 33] Because there's sin in the world. We don't need religion. We need forgiveness of sin.

We need deliverance from sin. That's causing all the havoc. That's causing all the problems. And only Christ can deliver from sin.

Religion can deliver from sin. However strict you may invent a religion. It can't deliver or forgive sin. Only Christ Jesus can deliver and save and forgive sin.

Next question. What is sin? What is sin? Here's my definition this morning.

Sin is the exclusion of God in your life. Living without God. Keeping God out of your life.

[4 : 44] That's sin. I heard recently one minister defining sin as saying no to God.

I would even go further and say sin is disagreeing with God. Disagreeing with God.

Well, our text says Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

I want to look at that by asking three questions. Why are we to behold the Lamb of God?

First question. Second question. Why is Jesus called the Lamb of God? And thirdly, what does it mean to behold the Lamb of God?

[5 : 51] Why are we to behold Him? Well, our text tells us because He can take away the sin of the world. Note.

Christ can take away the sin of the world. Not the sin of devils.

There's no hope for devils. There's no hope for devils. No one's ever paid for the sins of devils.

But do you know this? The sin of the world is greater than the sin of devils. You say, how is that? Because you and I have sinned against grace. Devils have never sinned against grace because they've never had the chance.

[6 : 53] They've never had the opportunity of pardon and forgiveness. but you and I have. And you and I by nature dismiss it and say, not interested.

Not my thing. I'm not into these things. That's a serious, serious, serious sin. God coming and saying, all can be forgiven.

sin. And you say, not interested. Wow, that's serious. No devil has ever done that. I'm not saying he wouldn't do it, but they never got the chance.

You have the chance, the opportunity to be forgiven and be delivered from the power of sin. You see, the world is plagued with sin.

As I've already said, it's a cause of death, it's a cause of disease, it's a cause of deterioration. It's why we age, you know.

[8 : 10] Have you got rust in your car? Rust wasn't in it in the beginning. aging wasn't in it in the beginning.

It's all the result and effect of sin. The world is plagued with sin. But secondly, not only is the world plagued with sin, the world is perverted through sin.

sin. We do not see things in their true light. The Bible can come to us with glorious truths and we say, what's the fuss?

What's wonderful about that? We're blind when it comes to spiritual issues. we need spiritual light. We need spiritual discernment.

We don't see things as they really are. We're plagued with sin. We're perverted through sin and thoroughly we're paralyzed by sin.

[9 : 31] That is, by nature, we're paralyzed, we're dead to spiritual life. We can tell you you're on the road to hell.

We can tell you you cannot save yourself and you're not in the slightest concerned about it.

You don't believe it. You're not into these things. That's spiritual death. Paralyzed by it.

The world is plagued with sin. The world is perverted through sin. It doesn't see things in the true light. We're thoroughly paralyzed by sin.

Dead to spiritual life. No desire to please God. You might do what's right if it pays you. Am I correct?

[10 : 34] You'll do something right if it keep on being worthwhile. But being right is doing what's right to please God. That is not in us by nature.

By nature, we dislike God and want to keep him at a distance. Plagued with sin.

Paralyzed, perverted through sin. Paralyzed by sin. Forthly, punished for sin.

That should alarm you. But maybe you're there and you're saying, what do you expect the minister to say? What else do you expect him to say? It's his job.

See, dead. Spiritually dead. My friend, sin must be punished. And either you pay for it yourself, either I pay for it myself in a lost eternity forever, or Christ died on the cross for me.

[11 : 50] One or the other. But sin must be punished. The soul that sins shall die.

The wages of sin is death. Unalterable, irreversible, unchangeable. Why are we to behold Christ? Because Christ can take sin away. Christ can take sin itself away.

Not just the punishment. Not just the effects. Not merely the consequences. Christ can take sin itself away.

And he can take it away to a place where it cannot be found. Not even by God.

[13 : 00] You got that? God has a place. Christ knows that place. And he can take it away. Your sin, my sin.

He can take it away where it cannot be found even by God. Because he's sworn he won't.

Isaiah chapter, sorry, Jeremiah chapter 50 verse 20 says, in those days, in those days, in those days, in those days, in those days, in those days, iniquity shall be sought in Israel, and there shall be none.

Because Christ has taken it away to a place where he'll never be found. I may have said this before, it's worth repeating.

Leviticus chapter 16 tells us about the day of atonement, a wonderful, dramatic illustration of the gospel. On the day of atonement, the high priest would have two goats taken before him.

[14 : 24] they cast lots for the goats, and one fell on the scape goat. One was to be slain, and the other was the scape goat.

And on that day of atonement, the high priest would take his two hands, and he'd place them on the head of the live goat, and he'd confess to the Lord over the head of the goat, all the sins of the nation of Israel, and as it were symbolically illustrating the transfer of sin onto the live goat.

What happened next on the day of atonement? They put a tether, as it were, around the head of the live goat, and they appointed a strong man in the congregation, and he led that goat away into the wilderness.

And in the authorised version, the way it's put is quite significant. He led it away to a place not inhabited.

And they tell me, they tell me, that goat was never, ever seen again. taken to a place where there's no one to see it.

[15 : 54] A picture, an illustration of Christ taking away the sin of the world. And there's another thing, we're very fond of singing, Psalm 103, don't we?

Psalm 103, verse 12, a wonderful picture. You'll excuse me if I've given this illustration before, but it's beautiful, it's wonderful. As far as east is distant from the west, so far has he from us removed all our iniquity.

Removed in his love all our iniquity. Note, it does not say as far as north is from the south.

Imagine, I'm standing on the north pole and Christ takes my sins and removes them to the south pole, the furthest away point in the world.

But it could still be found. It can still be found. As far as north is to the south, it can still be found. But when you say as far as east is from the west, where's the east?

[17 : 20] Oh, it's round there. Well, you move around there. Where's the east? Oh, it's round there. There's no east pole. There's no west pole.

And that's why I believe every word in the scripture is true. As far as east is from the west. west. You go west, you carry on, you never arrive at a west pole.

Christ removes the sins as far as east is from the west. Why, behold, the Lamb of God, he can take your sin away to a place where it can never be found, even by God.

because God has sworn he won't look for it. He's been paid for it by Christ on the cross. So our second question, why is Christ called the Lamb of God?

Well, in ancient times, a Lamb stood with a symbol of three things. it was a symbol of purity, undiluted purity.

[18 : 42] Now, we often think good and evil are equals. Wrong, not true, not scientific.

good and evil are not equals. They're direct opposites, but they are not equals.

Our Bible tells us, good excelleth evil, as far as light excelleth darkness. Light and darkness are not equals.

They're opposites, but they're not equals. Light penetrates darkness. Darkness has no power over light.

What is the technical definition of darkness? The absence of light. Light has the power to obliterate anything.

[19 : 50] light is greater than darkness. Christ is pure light. Pure.

Christ's salvation is real, genuine salvation, and he can purge away impurity. A lamb is also a symbol of innocence.

holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners. You see, it's not just power that's needed when we're talking about doing away with sin.

Not just power needed. Justice is to be upheld. God is holy and God cannot simply say, well, we'll forget about their sin.

sin. Because as I said, God has sworn sin must be punished. He cannot say, oh, I love that person.

[21 : 04] What a pity he sinned. I will forget about his sin and take him to heaven. sin. If God did that, he'd no longer be holy. He'd no longer be just.

He'd no longer be righteous. But he is. The substitute for sin must be sinless.

Otherwise, he cannot at all. It was never Christ, you see, we must die because we've sinned. But it was never Christ's duty to die because he never sinned.

Pure, innocent. But it was his duty to die in as much as he promised he would. And you see, Luke chapter 9 verse 31.

Do you remember, do you remember the transfiguration? verse 31. Yeah.

[22 : 13] Moses and Elijah appearing with Christ. And they were locked in conversation. What were they locked in conversation about? What were they talking about? They appeared in glory and spoke of his departure or his decease which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.

You see, he was about to accomplish. It wasn't easy to plan the death of God. Jesus is God. God can't die.

It was something that had to be accomplished. But it was accomplished. And Christ chose to die. Pure, holy. But thirdly, the Lamb of God was a symbol of sacrifice. Now, to be accepted, a sacrifice must be voluntary.

Otherwise, not a sacrifice. It's got to be volunteered. Christ gave his life. Christ's life was not taken away from him.

[23 : 29] It was not taken away from him. he bowed his head and gave up voluntarily. Long before the thieves on each side died, he gave his life up.

A voluntary sacrifice because he loved his people so much. To be accepted, a sacrifice has to be voluntary.

and you see lambs. He was led like a lamb to the slaughter. He opened not his mouth. And I was always confused about that.

Why did Christ, at that mock trial, why did Christ not stand up and say, I'm not guilty of these things you're charging me with? Answer, he was representing those who were guilty.

So he opened not his mouth, but was led like a lamb to the slaughter. The lamb of God, voluntary sacrifice.

[24 : 43] But it's time to behold, to ask the most important question of all. What does it mean to behold the lamb of God?

Does it simply mean to look at him? In, if you, just, in Matthew 27, verse 36, sitting down, this is at the cross, sitting down at the cross and sitting down, they watched him there.

Matthew 27, verse 36, what does it say in the ESV? They sat down and kept watch over him there. They were looking at him, dying on the cross. Is that what this word behold means? It means much, much more.

It's the enemies that were watching over him, seeing if what he had prophesied would come true, seeing if God would save him. It wasn't in faith, you see.

[26 : 00] To behold the Lamb of God means simply another term for having faith in God. To behold the Lamb of God, there must be trust, there must be love, and there must be commitment, there must be trust in him, believing when he died there, sinless, he died in the place of all who put their faith in him.

You must have love for him. Those who were sitting down watching him, there had no love for him, but to behold him means to behold him in love.

it means to follow him, to have some commitment to him. I've said it here before, I'm sure I have, that all the difference in the world between believing about Christ and believing in Christ, and I can't think of a better example than to use it with regard to politics.

we all believe about Boris Johnson, Liz Thrust, we all believe about them.

Who believes in them? That's the question when it comes to Christ. We have to believe in him. We have to trust him.

[27 : 35] We have to believe every word he said was true. We have to believe he has the power to accomplish what he said he would accomplish because he's God and they found a way where God could die if the second person of the Godhead took human nature.

The human nature could die, but it was the person of the divine God, the human nature of the divine person of God. it's just another word really for exercising faith in Christ.

And we're called to behold him in your present condition where you are. In fact, all you need to do is just turn around and look at him.

Behold him in faith. You don't need to accomplish anything. There's salvation for facing the right direction.

There's salvation for facing Jesus if you trust him, if you love him, if you're grateful to him for coming and taking your place and dying for your sin.

[29 : 00] If you're going to determine to follow him, it doesn't matter how far away you are, just turn around.

I'm from where you are, from where you are. Trust him, depend on him, however far away you are. There's life for a look at the crucified one. I end, and I've probably said it before, but again surely worth repeating.

Spurgeon says, preaching on Isaiah 45 22, look unto me and be ye saved. All the ends of the earth. He wasn't addressing all the ends of Israel, addressing all the ends of the earth, addressing pagan nations, any heathen, any pagan, however far away.

[30 : 02] They just look to me in faith, depending, trusting. And he said, a blind man can look.

He may not be able to say, I see, but he can look. He can turn toward. He can peer. He can stare. And there is life for a look at the crucified one. Behold, the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world.

May God, the Holy Spirit, make his word effectual to every one of us. Let's bow our heads. Our Father God be pleased to take the things of Christ and make them ours here, now, in this place. Show us Christ. Give us love in our hearts. Give us faith in our souls. Give us life in our body that we follow Christ and depend on him.

[31 : 24] Hear now in mercy, answer in peace, as we pray only and all in Christ's name and for Christ's sake alone.

Amen. Amen. We'll conclude our service by singing from Psalm 34 in the Scottish Psalter, verse 5. Page 247. Page 247, Psalm 34 at verse 5. They looked to him, and light and were, not shamed were their faces.

This poor man cried, God heard, and saved them from all his distresses. Verse 10, the lions young may hungry be, and they may lack their food, but they that truly seek the Lord shall not lack any good.

Psalm 34, verse 5 to 10. To God's praise. They looked to him, and light and were, not shame and were their faces.

[32 : 55] This poor man cried, God heard, and saved him from all his distresses.

the Israel of the Lord and counts and round and compasses, all those of the blood who in fear on them delivereth.

evereth. Who takes and see that God is good, who trusts in him is blessed.

Fear God his saints, none that him fear shall be with want oppressed.

The lions young may hungry be, and they may lack their food, but they not truly seek the Lord shall not lack any good.

[34 : 40] The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and forever more.

Amen.