

From the Pulpit of the Japanese Baptist Church of North Texas  
November 6, 2016

Behold, the Lamb of God

John 1:29-31

1:29 The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said,

"Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

1:30 This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.'

1:31 I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel."

### **1. Essence of Christ – Son of God**

The duty of John the Baptist was to point to Christ and testify for him as a forerunner of Christ. Actually, John testified Christ, about His essence and mission, in today's portion of the Bible. The essence of Jesus is the Son of God, as well as God the Son, and his mission is to become the Lamb of God. First, let's listen to John's words that testify the essence of Jesus.

John talked about Christ, who is to come after him, as follows in John 1:27, saying, "Even he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie." In the old days, when people had guests, they used to untie the strap of sandals of their guests and clean their feet. In a Japanese samurai movie, you may have seen that when a traveler checked in an inn, a concierge took off the guest's sandals, and washed their feet. It is the same thing. And in Jewish countries, it was the lowest servant's job to untie the strap of guests' sandals.

Therefore, John described that Christ is supreme existence by saying, “unworthy to untie His sandal.” He said not because he was trying to be humble but because Christ was truly beyond the human beings.

John also talked about Jesus as follows in verse 30, “After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.” These words sound like a riddle, but what does this actually mean? “After me comes a man” means Jesus started his mission after the ministry of John the Baptist.

Then, what does “because he was before me” mean? According to the Gospel of Luke, Jesus was born 6 months later than John the Baptist. John the Baptist is older than Jesus by 6 months. But what John was talking was not about who was born first, but was about Jesus was before him in infinite as the Son of God. The Gospel of John begins as follows, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” “The Word” refers to the Son of God. It was 6 months after John the Baptist was born that the Son of God was born as a human and named Jesus. It was after John that Jesus began his public life as Christ. But Jesus had already been born from the Father God as the Son way before John. It was even before this world became to exist that Jesus was already in existence. It was surprising indeed that John said “he was before me”. John already knew that Jesus was the Son of God by God’s grace.

In John 8:58, Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.” “I am “ is the same as God said “I am that I am” in the Old Testament. Because Jewish people were very familiar with the Bible, they immediately felt blasphemy when they heard Jesus said this, and they tried to stone him to death. Jesus declared himself

as the eternal existence, that is God. Jewish leaders did not accept that Jesus existed from the beginning or he was before them. But John the Baptist introduced Him as God to the people.

John the Baptist not only respected Jesus as a great person but he also recognized him as God and he knelt down before him. It was the same with the disciples of Jesus. When they saw Jesus performed miracles and revealed himself as God, they fell down at Jesus' feet and said, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Furthermore, after Resurrection, they called Jesus "my Lord and my God" and worshiped him. A person said, "if a king or a president comes into this room, people would stand up and welcome him. But if Jesus Christ comes in, we have to fall down before His feet." We can be polite to good people but for sacred Jesus, we are required to worship him. The faith of believing Jesus Christ is not to become a fan of Jesus and respect him as an excellent person, but is to worship him as God and become a follower of Jesus Christ as the Lord.

Do you all understand the truth that Jesus Christ is not only a man, but the Son of God who came here from the eternity? Do we believe in Him as the Son of God and trust Him, follow Him, and tell the world about Him? If not, then, Christmas ends up as just a birthday of a great man. The birth of the Son of God took place far long time ago. Christmas is, to be strict, the day that the Son of God became a human. Only when we stand on the truth that Jesus is the Son of eternal God, we can celebrate Christmas in a true sense.

## **2. Mission of Christ – Lamb of God**

John the Baptist testified the mission of Jesus Christ next. It is

described in the phrase, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” What does it exactly mean that Jesus becomes “the Lamb of God?”

God is Holy. People cannot stand before the Holy one because of their sins. When prophet Isaiah saw the vision from Holy God, he shouted, “Woe is me! For I am lost!” (Isaiah 6:5,) “I am lost” could also be translated “I am being destroyed.” When people stand before Holy God, they could only awe of how Holy God is and how sinful they are. People may be blessed when they return God and be with Him; but standing before Holy God only means death to people. How could it be solved, the dilemma that people need to be close to God yet sinful men cannot come close to Him?

In the Old Testament time, people sacrificed animals at the altar in order to solve the dilemma. They put their hands on the heads of the animals when sacrificing them. This gesture, putting hand on the head, means the animals become scapegoats for the sins of people. The animals are killed on the altar and burned as the sacrifice. When the smoke reaches out the heaven, God forgave the one and accepted him. Isaiah was cleansed by the burning coal – taken from the altar – touched his lips in the vision, and appointed to be a prophet. “Burning coal in the altar” represented the forgiveness through the sacrifice on the altar.

However, the sacrifices of animals in the Old Testament time were only the models of the true sacrifice coming after, and the animals’ blood cannot completely wipe out the sins of people. The true sacrifice is, needless to say, Holy Son of God Jesus Christ. He was sacrificed for everyone in the world, shouldered the burdens from

everyone, and died on the altar, the cross, as the sacrifice for everyone. On the Good Friday 2000 years ago, the Holy One became “sin”; He was reprobated by Father God; and the Lord of life died. It was written in the prophecy, but people would never have expected the affair like that; it was just unprecedented. This affair, “The death of the Son of God,” though completely achieved the redemption. Through the redemption people were forgiven, could come close to God and even could be with God. Jesus Christ was surely the Lamb of sacrifice that God prepared for us. The promise of salvation from God, that was described for thousands of years while the Old Testament time, was finally achieved to perfection by “the Lamb of God.”

The Savior died in suffering; moreover, it was for wiping out the sins of people. This fact was written in the prophecy of the Bible, but hardly was it understood by the readers. Even so, John the Baptist knew it through the special grace; thus, he could proclaim, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” Since John the Baptist were caught and executed right after Jesus began preaching, John didn’t saw the cross of Jesus Christ, but he had already testified the cross. In Matthew 11:11, Jesus spoke the complement about John the Baptist, “Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist.” I suppose this was because John the Baptist understood the true mission of Jesus Christ.

This drawing is known as “Isenheim Altarpiece Painting” by Matthias Grünewald. This painting is now conserved in the museum, but originally in the chapel of the hospital located in Isenheim, Germany. This drawing has John the Baptist, who couldn’t actually be there, beside the cross of Jesus Christ, and points Him. This expression implies that Jesus’ cross was not a coincidence but the prophecy, and Jesus crucified on the cross is precisely the “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.” Here is described Jesus Christ, drunk all of the sins in the world, and died as the Lamb of God to wipe out all. We can almost hear John the Baptist shouting from this painting – “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”



### 3. Remembrance of Christ – Lord’s Supper

“The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”. This word became the hymn for the Lord’s Supper. In Latin, this is known as “Agnus Dei”. In the picture presented before, we can see a lamb that holds the cross at the feet of John the Baptist. We can see the bloodshed at the throat and it is poured to a chalice. The chalice is a cup used in the Lord’s Supper. This picture tells us that the chalice

that we receive in the Lord's Supper is the forgiveness and eternal life that Jesus, the Lamb of God won.

We remember the cross of Jesus Christ by repeating the Lord's Supper. In the U.S, we repeat the ceremony for example "Independence Day" or "9/11". The same as this, we repeat to remember the death of Jesus on the cross for two thousands years as Jesus told us to do so. We are going to continue to do this from now on. Every time we do this, the believers remember that Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God. By keeping the Lord's Supper, we understand the meaning of the cross and develop the love and faith in Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God.

When each of us is developed by the Lord's Supper, the church is built as the body of Christ. A pastor said, "Church is a community of the holy communion." This means that the church consists of people who keep the Lord's Supper together, and I totally agree with him. A communion song, titled "The Lamb of God" by Paul Inwood, songs that church is built up in the unity of one faith when her each member receives the life, joy, love and light, and is healed, supported, and given the power through the communion.

Jesus, Lamb of God, Bread of Life for us;  
Jesus, Lamb of God, Wine of Joy for us;  
Jesus, Lamb of God, bearing all our sin:  
Have mercy on us, give us your peace.

Jesus, Lamb of God, Source of unity;  
Jesus, Lamb of God, Precious corner-stone;  
Jesus, Lamb of God, bearing all our sin:  
Have mercy on us, give us your peace.

Jesus, Lamb of God, Bread that makes us one;  
Jesus, Lamb of God, Wine that heals our pain;  
Jesus, Lamb of God, bearing all our sin:  
Have mercy on us, give us your peace.

Jesus, Lamb of God, Food for hearts and minds;  
Jesus, Lamb of God, Giving strength to all;  
Jesus, Lamb of God, bearing all our sin:  
Have mercy on us, give us your peace.

Jesus, Lamb of God, Building up your Church;  
Jesus, Lamb of God, Source of light and love;  
Jesus, Lamb of God, bearing all our sin:  
Have mercy on us, give us your peace.

“Jesus, you are the Lamb of God, takes away the sin of the world. You died on the cross for our sins. We can live because of you.” With this confession of faith, we remember the Lamb of God, Lord Jesus Christ as we celebrate the Lord’s Supper.

**(Prayer)**

Dear Father God, you know that any sacrifices offered by us are not enough for redeeming us from our sins; therefore, you prepared the sacrifice by yourself. That is your Son. Jesus is offered by you so that he is the only one who can save us. When we call Jesus “Lamb of God”, we shall remember who Jesus is and what Jesus did for us in our heart. In the name of Lord Jesus, Amen.