

## INI

St. Paul's Lutheran Church  
2100 16<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Austin, MN 55912-1749  
Pastor Ted Barthels  
Sermon preached on  
January 11, 2015  
1<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Epiphany

Scripture Lessons: Deuteronomy 6:1-9; Roans 10:12-21

Hymns: 351; 360; 352; 644

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: John 1:36-51

36 And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God!" 37 The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. 38 Then Jesus turned, and seeing them following, said to them, "What do you seek?"

They said to Him, "Rabbi" (which is to say, when translated, Teacher), "where are You staying?" 39 He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where He was staying, and remained with Him that day (now it was about the tenth hour).

40 One of the two who heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. 41 He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated, the Christ). 42 And he brought him to Jesus.

Now when Jesus looked at him, He said, "You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas" (which is translated, A Stone).

43 The following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and He found Philip and said to him, "Follow Me." 44 Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. 45 Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

46 And Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see."

47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!”  
48 Nathanael said to Him, “How do You know me?”  
Jesus answered and said to him, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.”  
49 Nathanael answered and said to Him, “Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!”  
50 Jesus answered and said to him, “Because I said to you, ‘I saw you under the fig tree,’ do you believe? You will see greater things than these.” 51 And He said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.” (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth.  
Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God my Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Eye witness testimony –

Properly identifying someone is key to good testimony. An improper identification makes the rest of an individual’s testimony ineffective, and suspect. We are here in this world for one purpose above all others: that we might testify to the truth of Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. People need to know who Jesus is and what He has done for them. There are many in the world today that like to talk about Jesus, but are not speaking the truth about Jesus. Indeed there are many that cloud His true identity with a great deal of speculation and sophistry. They consider themselves to be more knowledgeable about history and science and philosophy than what is presented in the Bible, and as a result the testimony they present about what they refer to as the “real historical Jesus” is anything but that. It is their reconstruction of what they believe Jesus was. The result is that the testimony heard about Jesus by many in the world, including many of our fellow Americans, many of our friends and neighbors, is a far cry from the truth, even a covering up of the truth about Jesus.

We should not assume that everybody we know already knows who Jesus really is. It just isn't that way. While everybody has heard the name Jesus spoken, many people have heard it far more often as a swear word than a testimony to Jesus' glory. The point is that there remains yet today a real need for us to be conscientious about --

**THEME:** Proclaiming Jesus' True Identity.

We see how this was done during the opening days of Jesus' public ministry, first by John the Baptist in his role as the forerunner to the Christ. He made it clear that Jesus' true identity included His being --

### **I. The Lamb of God.**

**John 1:36-39** “And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, ‘Behold the Lamb of God!’ 37 The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. 38 Then Jesus turned, and seeing them following, said to them, ‘What do you seek?’ They said to Him, ‘Rabbi’ (which is to say, when translated, Teacher), ‘where are You staying?’ 39 He said to them, ‘Come and see.’ They came and saw where He was staying, and remained with Him that day...”

John's testimony was clear and concise. He wanted these two men who had been spending time with him to know Jesus. John's purpose in life was to communicate that vital information about Jesus to others. It was not about increasing his own following, and gaining recognition for himself as being a great spiritual leader among the Jews. John would later teach others of his own disciples, **“He must increase, but I must decrease”** (John 3:30).

So then we must understand just how important this was to John that he present a clear testimony concerning Jesus. John knew it was far more important for people to know Jesus than it was to know John. So why use that expression “Lamb of God” which might seem a bit obscure to us? Because it wasn't obscure to the people in John's audience, and it wasn't without the context of John's other teaching. Many of the Jews understood the real significance of their religious feasts and sacrifices. They were not an end in themselves, but rather a type or shadow of what was to come. The image of the Lamb of God could be traced back to the

first Passover when the Lord delivered His people out of the slavery and oppression of Egypt. When the final plague would befall Egypt, when the angel of death was about to kill the firstborn throughout the land, the Lord established the Passover. Each household was to select a pure and perfect yearling lamb whose blood was to be painted on the doorposts and lintels of their homes, while each family roasted the lamb for a special dinner observing the Lord's deliverance of their people. Jesus was the fulfillment of this picture. Just as the angel of death passed over the homes of all those who in faith obeyed the Lord's command, so everyone who believes in Jesus as the Lamb of God is delivered from the death and damnation.

This identification of Jesus by John was a reiteration of the truth he had declared of Jesus the previous day: **"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world"** (John 1:29)! That gospel message is the key to how and why Jesus delivers us from death as the Lamb of God. Jesus' sacrifice on the cross is the only way, the ONLY way by which we could be saved. Sin demands judgment and justice. In His love and grace God in heaven above desired our salvation, our deliverance from the eternal consequences of our sin. Only by a sacrifice that was pure and holy, and perfect in every way, a sacrifice that was precious beyond our comprehension, could we be delivered from the curse of the law. John's testimony stands to this day as a clear and accurate testimony to the true identity of Jesus. He was and is the Lamb of God who was sacrificed for our sins, who was dead but is now alive and lives forevermore (Revelation 1:18)!

Such a clear testimony moves men's hearts. Those two disciples of John acted upon his testimony. They went after Jesus so that they might learn more about Him. They stayed with Jesus that day and what all went on between them is not told us, except that Jesus certainly encouraged their inquiry into who He was and what He was about.

All this is the same today. The truth about Jesus remains the same. Now we know that His mission on earth was successfully completed and that He has returned to the glory of heaven, exalted also according to His human nature. However we still point others to Jesus, telling them that Jesus is that "Lamb of God who takes

away the sin of the world!” Jesus remains God’s answer to sin for all of fallen mankind that we might have life in His name. We have been drawn by the Spirit to follow after Jesus that we might learn more of Him. We find that truth in the Holy Scriptures, and the Spirit leads us to the same conviction held in the hearts of these disciples, Jesus is --

## **II. The One of Whom the Prophets Wrote.**

**John 1:40-46** One of the two who heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. 41 He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which is translated, the Christ). 42 And he brought him to Jesus. Now when Jesus looked at him, He said, “You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas” (which is translated, A Stone).

43 The following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and He found Philip and said to him, “Follow Me.” 44 Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. 45 Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”

46 And Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see.”

One of these two disciples is identified as Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. Our text presents a couple of points worthy of our consideration. First, Andrew didn’t keep the information he had about Jesus to himself. He presented a clear testimony to his brother, Simon. He may not of consciously realized it, but he was already fulfilling the life purpose that Jesus intended for him, to share the good news of the Savior with others. That was John the Baptist’s purpose in life; that became Andrew’s purpose in life, who by trade was fisherman, not a rabbi or priest. It would then become Simon’s purpose in life. The next day Jesus approached Philip, and very quickly it became Philip’s purpose in life as he sought out Nathanael. Nathanael wasn’t so quickly convinced by simply Philip’s word, so Philip invited Nathanael to come and see Jesus for himself.

Let's look at the testimony of these men for moment. Andrew's testimony to Peter was clear and concise, "**We have found the Messiah.**" He didn't hesitate, or hedge. He stated clearly his conviction that Jesus is the Christ who was to come into the world. Then Andrew brought Simon Peter to Jesus. He was very direct and unapologetic. He didn't worry about what others were teaching or what the rest of the society thought. It wasn't a matter of what *he* thought. He didn't start his testimony with "*I think we might have found the Christ.*" He gave a clear testimony to the Jesus' true identity! We also should learn to express the conviction of our heart in a clear and certain testimony: Jesus is our Savior from sin, He is THE Christ who was to come into the world.

Now look at Philip's testimony. Neither did he start out with an expression of personal opinion. His testimony was founded on Scripture. He testified that Jesus was the one of whom Moses and the prophets spoke. In our present day the authority of Scripture has been undermined, and personal opinion about things spiritual is considered as valid as anything written in the word. That is not the case. Personal opinion, what I might think, or what some might now refer to as "personal truth" isn't as valid as Scripture. It doesn't carry the same authority, nor does it possess the same power of the Holy Spirit that does Scripture. We need to know the Scriptures. We all need to learn more of Holy Scripture, and it doesn't require that one lose the rest of one's activities or life. Just spend some time regularly in the Word and your own conviction concerning Jesus' true identity will grow and increase, as will your ability to present that clear testimony in the same way as did John the Baptist and the apostles, for Jesus makes His own identity very clear: that He is --

### **III. The Son of God, and the King of Israel.**

**John 1:47-51** "Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, 'Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!'

48 Nathanael said to Him, 'How do You know me?'

Jesus answered and said to him, 'Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.'

49 Nathanael answered and said to Him, 'Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!'

50 Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Because I said to you, “I saw you under the fig tree,” do you believe? You will see greater things than these.’ 51 And He said to him, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.’”

Jesus wasn’t just guessing based on a visible first impression that Nathanael was an okay kind of guy. Nathanael may have wondered about that as he challenged Jesus’ knowledge of his personal qualities, but Jesus made it clear that He was more than making an assumption from Nathanael’s outward appearance. Jesus made it clear that He not only knew what type of person Nathanael was, but that He actually knew what was going on in Nathanael’s life. Jesus’ own testimony about Himself was enough to convince Nathanael. In a very quiet way Jesus had demonstrated the divine qualities which He possessed then, and still possesses today. Jesus is the Son of God! Be clear on that. Be clear about what that means for you.

Our flesh might find that thought more than a bit scary. Jesus knows all about what is going on in your heart, in your mind, and where you are at any given moment, and so He knows your every sin! But as a child of God, Jesus’ omniscience is a great and comforting truth. Jesus is not just a character in a book, or an expression of superstitious ideas, or simply someone who lived a long time ago who still impacts the world with His philosophy of love. Jesus is our living and powerful Lord and Savior, our God! He knows what is in our heart. He knows the faith and hope and love that He has instilled in our hearts. He knows where we are and when we are in time of trouble or tribulation, and He is able to do something about it.

You see, Jesus’ testimony about Himself did not stop with that demonstration of His knowledge of Nathanael, and so also of us. He used that as a starting point to testify of His real glory and dominion. Jesus testified “**most assuredly**” that Nathanael would see the heaven’s open and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man. Let there be no doubt in your heart and mind that this is most certainly true for you and me as well. Jesus is the connection between heaven and earth. Jesus is the connection that brings us the divine intervention in our lives that

guides and protects us through all the perils of this life, both physical and spiritual, until that day when we are privileged to see the glory of the Lord with our own eyes, and “*our* eyes shall behold, and not another” (Job 19:27).

It all comes down to knowing who Jesus really is, His true identity. Realize how precious and wonderful this knowledge is that you possess in your heart, and realize that the Lord would have you share that truth clearly and confidently with all others who are in your life, to the praise and glory of Jesus.

**AMEN.**

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.