

Evotional

Date: 30th December 2007 (am).

Speaker: Neil Durling.

Message title: "As good as it gets?"



Bible passage: John 1:29:

These passages are too long for this page.

The message in brief:

The writer John introduces Jesus as the "Word made flesh" at the beginning of his gospel. "Word" means "intelligent communication". And this Word comes as a lamb. Verse 29 says the following...

John saw Jesus coming toward him: We need to see Jesus as he comes towards us in our everyday lives.

And said: "Look": Can you imagine his roaring voice? John the Baptist limits his work to introducing Jesus to others, he doesn't try and make a kingdom for himself. I asked a friend this week why he doesn't share his faith. His answer: "I'm too busy getting on with my life."

"The Lamb of God ...": Why does John the Baptist call Jesus a lamb? It seems that the Baptist and the writer had different ideas as to what this phrase meant.

For John the writer it was linked to sacrifice:

- The Old Testament speaks of "the lamb provided by God".
- The daily ritual burnt offering was a lamb offered "to make atonement" (Leviticus 14). However, it is never called "the lamb of God".
- The Passover Lamb was incorporated into Paul's theology (Paul: 1 Corinthians 5:7) and John makes it clear that Jesus was executed at the time of Passover (John 18:28) and cried out the same words ("It is finished") as the priest did when he cut the lambs throat.

For John the Baptist it was linked to judgement:

- If "lamb of God" has sacrificial overtones this would not sit well with the Baptist; he was *not* prepared for a suffering Messiah. After all, he had some doubts about who Jesus was precisely because he lacked this "sacrificial" understanding (Matthew 11:2-9). He was expecting a Messiah who would bring judgement and clean up the sin of Israel.
- The name Jesus came from the Hebrew Joshua and Joshua was a warrior who brought the Israelites into the Promised Land, not through sacrifice but, rather, through war.
- He probably had in mind the apocalyptic lamb, the warrior lamb, found in some Jewish texts (1 Enoch 90:9-12; Testament of Joseph 19:8; Testament of Benjamin 3:8, which he would probably have read.

As Christians we are "followers of Christ": Which Jesus (the Baptist's or the Writer's) are we following?

"The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world": He *takes* (to lift/raise/take up/to lift up the hands/carry a burden/remove/to bear) the *sin* (missing the true goal and scope of life/an offence resulting in guilt/it is flouting or wounding the love of God) of the *world* (singular = collective brokenness of the world). How does Jesus take away the sin of the world? For John the Baptist it probably had more to do with judgement and destruction than sacrifice. However, John the Writer sees all of the Old Testament as pointing towards Jesus and so linked it to sacrifice. Jesus, by the power of his death, destroyed or abolished our sin.

We can take comfort that even John the Baptist got it wrong although he got it right! He pointed his disciples to Jesus even though he didn't fully understand who Jesus was. We can do the same having every confidence that God will use our faltering sentences and inadequate answers to plant seeds of hope in other people's lives.

Question:

Am I looking for Jesus as he comes towards me and pointing him out to others?

A prayer:

Father God, thank you that you use my faltering attempts at sharing Jesus to advance your kingdom. Amen.