

1Yr07 – The Lamb of God John 1:6-29

Pastor Dave Shepardson Calvary Chapel Nuevo / www.wordbymail.com

Open your Bibles. Title of the message this morning, “The Lamb of God.” We’re going back to John Chapter 1 verses 6-29 with a focus on 29.

Here’s the deal. Next week we are going to begin the period that is normally called the ministry of Jesus Christ. It’s called the “ministry years.” For three and a half years Jesus Christ as the God-man, as God walking on earth as a man, he went around the fulcrum point of the spiritual world known as Israel, healing and teaching and revealing God to man. And he laid the foundation for the New Testament church. And that’s really exciting. But listen, before we leave this up front info, there’s one more thing we have to know. We have to get something really, really clear in our minds. And so that’s my prayer today, is that we get to a point where we firmly grasp, so that we’ll never let go, the ultimate mission of Jesus Christ on earth, the ultimate mission of Jesus Christ becoming a man.

Here is my frustrating remark that I hear from people about Jesus, or response to Jesus that bothers me the most. *“Oh yeah, Jesus? He was a really good teacher. He really shared some good things about how to live.”*

Jesus Christ never gave us that response as an option. Never. Jesus Christ the creator of all that’s been created will not stand for us to mix him in with Buddha, and Gandhi and Oprah as having good ideas about how to live. That’s not why Jesus came, that’s not why God became a man, and if we don’t grasp why in the world God became a man, we’ll go through the three and a half years of his ministry saying, “Oh, that’s a nice idea, oh that’s a good thing, I should teach my children that.”

That’s all true. But if you don’t grasp the ultimate mission of Christ on earth all the rest of that stuff you will mix in with the stuff you get from Dr. Phil. Jesus Christ is one of a kind. God’s only begotten son. The only one of his kind. Don’t make him just another good teacher.

So today we want to get crystal clear in our mind the real purpose, the big picture, the over-riding reason, the ultimate mission of God becoming a man in Christ Jesus. And if we do, and if we’ll hold on to that then everything else that we’ll see in the remaining fifty-two weeks, we’ll see it coming out of this one over-riding ultimate, all encompassing purpose. So we are going to do this one big message before we move into the ministry.

Let's pray. *Lord please, give us the right focus. Give us the right obsession. We want to be obsessive and not complacent Lord. We want to know why you came to earth. The real ultimate reason, we want to have it clear in our mind and we want to filter everything else that we learn about God through that purpose. And so please reveal it to us in this message and continue to reveal it to us from glory to glory, until we see you face to face. We thank you for it in advance, in Jesus' name, amen.*

So here's how we got to where we're at today. Our first message we made it clear that Jesus Christ is God in expression as a man. He is God expressed as a human being. A hundred percent God and a hundred percent man. Then in our second message, we looked at 2,000 years of planning in order for God to become a man. So, 2000 years of set up and then we looked in our third message at the incredible incarnation when God actually did become a man. And then in our fourth message we looked at how the first people responded to God becoming a man. So we've been kind of "God becoming a man" oriented. And then we saw the incredible baptism. And we saw the heavens open and the Father speak his approval of the Son and the Holy Spirit come out of heaven and rest upon Christ. And then last message we immediately saw Jesus driven into that ultimate cage fight of temptation to the death with the devil himself in the wilderness.

That's how we got here. Now Jesus is about to embark on three and a half years (or so) of being God among man. Of teaching and healing revealing who God is as he lived. But again, from the very beginning, we have to get clear in our mind what the ultimate mission was. What the ultimate purpose was. And if we'll have that in our minds we will be able to filter everything we see for the rest of these messages through that.

So, John Chapter 1. We're going to actually review a little bit, because we've got to lead up to today's focus. I haven't given John the Baptist quite the "due" that he's due. He wouldn't want that. He would say, "What are you even saying my name for? My name isn't even worthy to be said in the same sentence as the Lord's."

I am going to give John the Baptist a little more focus. So in John 1:6-7, John the Baptist is introduced in the Gospel of John. I want to do this because I want you to be like John the Baptist. I want to be like John the Baptist. John the Baptist was sent for one reason, to prepare the way for the Lord. And so we read in John 1:6-7:

John 1:6-7 (NLT)

6 God sent a man, John the Baptist,

7 to tell about the light (that's Jesus) so that everyone might believe because of his testimony (John's testimony).

That's why he came, so that *everyone* might believe because of his testimony. (Yes, you theological scholars, it is the elect who believe, but whether they believe or were elected first, you have to fight about because I refuse to join in the argument, at least about that.) So he came that everyone might believe who Jesus Christ is. *John the Baptist's focus was on the ultimate mission of Jesus Christ.*

John 1:10–11 (NLT)

10 He (that's Jesus) came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him.

11 He came to his own people, and even they rejected him.

That's why we have to be clear on the ultimate mission of Jesus Christ. Because John the Baptist came to prepare the way. John the Baptist came to make the way straight and sadly, the people for the most part rejected Jesus Christ as they do today. Too many people today know about Jesus in church, maybe even grown up in church, but they don't recognize fully who Jesus is or what his ultimate mission was. However, to those who do believe, to those who receive who he is and why he came, John 1:12 says

John 1:12 (NLT)

12 But to all who believed him and accepted (received) him, he gave the right to become children of God.

Can I tell you right now what the greatest gift for all eternity is? Would you just clear your mind of all that junk that the world has shoved in there, and the enemy has shoved in there, and your flesh has shoved in there, and hear from me the greatest gift in all of eternity? It's right there in John 1:12. He gave the right to become children of God. That's it. It doesn't get any better than having the right to become children of God.

We talk a lot about being adopted, don't we? We talk about how we've been adopted by God. And in a sense it's true, but actually it's more than that. The greatest gift for all eternity is actually a new birth. It's actually a new life that begins with a new birth, which causes you to be born again as a child of God. It's much more than God saying, "Okay you're a sinner and I'm going to bring you into the family as a sinner."

It's actually, you're a sinner and you're dead. You don't realize it, but Ephesians says you're already dead. (Beginning of Ephesians 2.) So God says, "You're dead, so I'm going to bring you to life, again. And you're going to be born again as a child of God. That life is going to die and I'm going to give you a new life. Not a physical life, a spiritual life."

And so John 1:13 says:

John 1:13 (NLT)

13 They (those who believe & receive Jesus) are reborn—not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God.

The second birth. It's the greatest gift for all eternity. And listen, why am I going through this section of John? Because I want you to understand that the primary, over-riding mission, the ultimate mission of Jesus Christ was not all the teachings and all of the stuff that he did for three and a half years. All that stuff is important. But if you miss the ultimate mission, then he becomes just another teacher that you can compare to any other teacher. That's not why Jesus Christ came. He came with an ultimate mission that involves you being dead in your sins and him making you alive and you becoming a child of God. It's the greatest gift in all eternity.

I need you to know, that's why Jesus came. That was his ultimate mission. And we're going to spend, before we get to Passion Week, we'll do thirty messages or so through the life of Christ. And then we'll really focus on Passion Week, because that's what the gospels do. But all thirty, or however many there are, of those messages will all be leading up to the culmination of the ultimate mission, which allows you, enables you to be born again as a child of God and receive the greatest eternal gift there could ever be. That's why I am asking you before we move to this next step to really focus on this truth.

All that God offers us: the forgiveness of our sins; the peace that passes understanding that he is with us, (he is our peace;) our eternal life in heaven, our inheritance, our joint heir reigning with Christ for eternity – all of that comes, is made available to us through the ultimate mission of Jesus Christ. And so if you miss the ultimate mission, it becomes a philosophical conversation. And it becomes religious conversation. A comparison of religions. What you need is to be alive because you are dead, dead in your sin. You need to be alive. And all that God offers us comes through that new birth. And that new birth was the ultimate mission of Jesus Christ coming to this earth. And if you'll grasp this I promise you you'll have an answer for all those nit pickers. The ultimate mission of Jesus Christ becoming a man.

After the baptism and temptation that we've seen in the last two messages, John the Baptist is still just preparing the way. He's preparing the way. He's this radical guy that is pointing the way to Christ to make sure the people "get it." He's preaching repentance as an open door to receiving the ultimate mission of Jesus Christ. Everything that John the Baptist did, everything he preached, clearly pointed to the all consuming focus on a

person, Jesus. Everything that John the Baptist did was pointing to the Lord and you and I preparing our hearts for him to come. Everything he preached centered on and revolved around this one man, Jesus Christ.

As you might guess, the religious leaders weren't so keen on that. They didn't really like that. Because they had been teaching for more than hundreds of years that everything that God has for us is centered on and revolves around religion. Now that's not a shock to some of you, but to some people in our culture who are trusting in religion that should be a shock. John the Baptist never focused and never centered on religion. And so the religious leaders had a conflict with John the Baptist. Guess what, if you think you have a conflict with John the Baptist, wait until Jesus comes on the scene. It changes to murderous conflict. The leaders of the church of the day had a serious conflict with anyone who would center a message on the Savior rather than on their religion.

Is it the same today? Okay if you are a sold out Christ follower trusting completely and exclusively in the person and work of Jesus Christ with no strings attached, there's a whole bunch of religious people who think you're a loony nut. "What do you mean, Jesus and nothing else? Where are you getting that nonsense? My church says you've got to do this, and that and this and that..."

Well, break free from that bondage. Get saved and born again and walk with Jesus and experience the life. There are a lot of religious leaders today that fit the religious leaders that questioned John the Baptist in John Chapter 1. Few are Christ centered, Christ focused, Bible only followers of Christ. There's a whole bunch of people that say, you just don't understand, because we've been doing it this way for hundreds of years.

So the religious leaders come down, they send a contingent actually, of kind of the lower level guys, the priests and the Levites (the scribes.) And they send them down to the Jordan River, because it's quite a walk (twenty miles or so from Jerusalem.) The guys with all the robes and the big hats couldn't walk that far, their clothing was too heavy. So they sent their contingency down to challenge the "crazy guy" at the river. John 1 verse 19 this contingency from Jerusalem challenges John the Baptist. And they start by saying, "Hey, hey! Who are you?"

John the Baptist says, "I'm NOT the Messiah."

Do you see that even when John the Baptist tells them who he is he points to the Messiah? He says, "Look, who I am doesn't matter. The only thing you need to know is I am not the Messiah."

And so they say “Are you Elijah or are you the prophet that we’ve been expecting?”

And John the Baptist says, “No. I told you already, I’m not the Messiah. Why are you even questioning me? What does it matter?”

So John 1 verse 22 the religious leaders say,

John 1:22 (NLT)

22 “Then who are you? We need an answer for those who sent us. What do you have to say about yourself?”

These religious leaders are saying “Who are you? What right do you have? We need an answer.”

John 1:23 (NLT)

23 John replied in the words of the prophet Isaiah: “I am a voice shouting in the wilderness, ‘Clear the way for the Lord’s coming!’

Make straight the way of the Lord.

Prepare the way of the Lord.

Understand clearly what the Lord is coming for.

Understand the mission of the Messiah.

Understand why he is coming so that you can receive who he is and why he’s here.

We can learn a lot from John the Baptist, can’t we? Can you just imagine that laser focus on the Messiah, on who Jesus Christ is and why he came? That all consuming, this is all I have to talk about? What would happen if religion in general, we’ll call it Christian religion, what would happen if the Christian religion only talked about who Jesus Christ is and what his ultimate mission was? Can you imagine? What if all preachers only talked about who Jesus Christ is and what his mission was when he came?

Notice something about John the Baptist. He never talked about himself. Never. And he deflected every question back around to focus on Christ. “Who are you?” “One pointing the way. One preparing the way. Look at the Messiah”

What if we did that? What if preachers did that? What if in every church this morning across this country preachers were actually talking about who Jesus Christ is and what his mission really was? That’s a radical concept!

So in John 1:24 the religious leaders challenged John the Baptist saying, “What right do you have, if you can’t even tell us who you are, what right do you have?”

John 1:26–27 (NLT)

26 John told them, “I baptize with water, but right here in the crowd is someone you do not recognize.

27 Though his ministry follows mine, I’m not even worthy to be his slave and untie the straps of his sandal.”

Right here among you religious people, right here in your midst, right where we are at, there is someone here that you don’t recognize. Right here in the midst of you religious people – I’m not talking about you, I’m talking about John the Baptist to the religious people. If you’re religious in here it’s okay, as long as you’re just religiously living for Jesus. As long as you just religiously love Jesus. Because to do something religiously means to just do it daily or constantly or repeatedly. As long as you religiously have a real personal relationship with the living Lord, then praise God, I support your style, your type of religion.

But John tells these religious leaders, “Look, there’s someone in your midst you don’t recognize.” (This is really important.) “There’s someone in your midst you don’t recognize. You know the Messiah’s coming. You know that one in the spirit of Elijah will come before him, well there’s one here that you don’t recognize. Why not? Because you’ve got too much ‘stuff.’”

If you’ve ever talked to someone who’s really been engulfed, indoctrinated in religion, and you just say, “Hey, let’s just talk about Jesus,” they have a hard time. I’m not being critical today. I’m just sharing with you. They’ll say, “Well, the church says...” “Well the church history says...” And you say, “Okay, what about Jesus? What about Jesus?” And it can be really hard on people, and they can get worked up about it.

But this is exactly what John the Baptist is saying. “Hey, in the middle of your religion there’s someone that you don’t recognize because you have so much stuff it’s blocking your view of the Messiah. It’s blocking your view of who Jesus Christ is and his ultimate mission.”

I don’t want that to be us. I want us to have clear in our mind and consumed in our heart who Jesus Christ is and his ultimate mission. Guys, we need to have the one track mind of John the Baptist. I know there’s more. I know that the Bible is a really big book and all of it is great, and here’s the deal, all of it is about Jesus Christ. That’s the truth. And we need to have this one track mind to say, “Yes. All of those things are important within the realm of who Jesus Christ is and what his ultimate mission on earth was.” That single

focus, one track mind on the ultimate mission of Jesus Christ becoming a man. It was John the Baptist's primary focus and it should be our primary focus.

And here it is, the ultimate mission of God becoming a man. John 1:29.

John 1:29 (NLT)

29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look! (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!" How often do we miss that? The Bible is about ***The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!*** The mission of Jesus Christ is to be the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. That all consuming focus that we should have in our relationship with God, is that you, Jesus, are the Lamb of God who took away my sin and your death is sufficient to take away the sin of the world. And that's what should be driving us, that's what should drive us individually, that's what should drive our service for the Lord, that's what should drive our bringing glory to God. The all encompassing, over-riding reason that God became a man is to be the Lamb of God who was slain to take away the sin of the world.

And so John the Baptist says, ***"BEHOLD! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"*** Look! Behold! Set your attention! Set your focus! Stop arguing about what version of the Bible you should use and talk about Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! Let's talk about knowing him, who he is and why he came.

What a change that would make. What a change that would make in your heart. What a change, if you were to say instead of "God fix this. God fix this. God it's another day, I've got something else for you to fix. And God I need you to probably get a palm pilot," (because God is a little behind the times) "I'm going to need you to get a palm pilot because I've got a lot of things you need to fix. I've got a lot of stuff you need to do for me. That's your job, right?"

No! That's not his job! His job is to save you from the death that is the just wages of your sin. And that's not even his job, that's his mercy. But the only reason you know him is because he revealed himself to you as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! Bless the Lord oh my soul! And forget not his benefits! Listen, you want a new car? God gave you a new life. You want a new job? God gave you an inheritance in heaven.

There are some really big theological terms that have to do with the *The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!* Really big ones. And I struggled with how many of them to use, because I thought, “Well maybe if I use a lot of big words, they’ll think I actually know what I’m talking about.” And then I thought, “No. That’s not worth it.”

So I’m not going to use the big theological terms, but I need you to hear some very basic, basic truths. There’s one critical statement that has two theological terms hidden in it and I am going to say it a couple of times so that you’ll grasp it. There are a couple of words in here that are really key.

Through a substitutionary sacrifice (which means a death in place of ours) we are made at one with God.

Those are the big theological terms that we’ll use today, substitutionary sacrifice and the term “at one” from which we get our word “atonement.” The word “atonement” means “to be at one.” A substitutionary sacrifice brings atonement, or us being at one with God. Here’s some cross references for you to write down. Read all of Isaiah 53. (The whole Chapter). 1 Peter 1:18-20. And Revelation 5:6-9.

The significance of Jesus Christ being the substitutionary sacrifice that brings us at one with God, that makes us right with God, (in other words the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world) the significance of that goes all the way back to the garden of Eden. When Adam and Eve first sinned, the first thing God did was sacrifice an innocent life. God sacrificed an animal for them, didn’t he, to cover them with animal skins. And from Genesis forward we see this constant of God in his mercy ordaining a substitute sacrifice for you. The wages of sin is death. Period. But God has allowed a substitutionary sacrifice to die in your place, to pay the penalty of death that you rightly and justly deserve to pay for your sin.

One of the greatest demonstrations by God of this is in Genesis 22. This is a great chapter to really grasp. The father of the faith, father Abraham, God uses him in a very dramatic way to paint a picture of a substitutionary sacrifice. As the Old Testament grows, as we journey through the Old Testament, more and more the substitutionary sacrifice for sin that God ordains and places into his people’s lives is an innocent, spotless lamb. In the Old Testament the lamb becomes the picture of the substitutionary sacrifice.

So in Genesis 22, father Abraham is put through an excruciating test in order to demonstrate what God is going to do that is being introduced to us in John Chapter 1. And so in order to paint this picture, God tells Abraham to sacrifice his only son. To take his son, his only son Isaac – the son of the promise – to take him up Mt. Moriah and

sacrifice him there. Now Mt. Moriah just happens to be the same mountain that 2,000 years later a cross would sit on. And God would sacrifice his own son. But here, 2,000 years earlier God has Abraham take his only son up the mountain, Mt. Moriah, to sacrifice him to God. And so as they are walking up the mountain to make the sacrifice, Isaac says in Genesis 22:7:

Genesis 22:7 (ESV)

7 . . . “Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?”

And then in a phenomenally prophetic statement, Abraham answers his son:

Genesis 22:8 (ESV)

8 . . . “God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.” . . .

God will provide for himself a lamb for the offering. And so as Abraham raises the knife to sacrifice his only son as a picture of what God would one day do on the same place, on the same mountain, the Angel of the Lord stops him. And God does provide a substitutionary sacrifice in place of Abraham’s son that would pay the full penalty for sin that was due to a holy God. A substitutionary sacrifice. It was a picture, a foreshadowing, (listen carefully) of the ultimate mission of Jesus Christ to be the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. And so it is from Genesis 3 to Genesis 22 and into Exodus Chapter 12 (if you love connecting the Old Testament to the New Testament I’m helping you do it right now.) Study Exodus Chapter 12 along with Genesis 22.

At Exodus Chapter 12 the people of Israel were in bondage to Egypt. They were in bondage to Egypt. Egypt, in the Bible, always represents sin. Egypt is the place of sin. It is representative of sin. So, follow me, because this is how God paints pictures and foreshadows things.

The people of God are in bondage to the place that represents sin. And God has begun the process to free them from that bondage through Moses and the ten plagues on Egypt. Every one of them a just judgment upon the sin of Egypt. And so in Exodus Chapter 12 God had just announced to the Pharaoh the tenth and final plague which was death of every firstborn in Egypt. Every firstborn of every kind would die as the tenth and final judgment for the sin of Pharaoh and Egypt, because the wages of sin is death. And God is first and foremost a holy and just God and he must judge sin. And so God’s judgment upon every family in Egypt was that the firstborn would die on this night.

However, and listen very carefully. God prepared a substitutionary sacrifice for the families who had faith in him. So God’s judgment was coming upon sin in Egypt, but

God made a way for those who put their faith in him to have a substitutionary sacrifice take the place of the death of the firstborn in the family. Are you following me? So each family is required to get a lamb and bring a lamb inside for four days. They were to care for the lamb and love the lamb and then on the fourth day they were to slaughter the lamb. The lamb was to be slain by the family, by the head of the family with the family watching. And then, listen closely, with a hyssop branch the blood of the substitutionary sacrifice, the lamb that was slain for that family, with a hyssop branch (and God is very specific about this orders, about his details) he says first put blood on the branch. Then put the blood on the doorposts of the house, so you are moving the branch vertically up and down. Then put blood on the branch and put it on the lintel, the crossbeam, of the house. And so all of Israel in Exodus Chapter 12 is taking the blood of an innocent lamb that was slain substitutionally for the family and then with that blood they are making the sign of the cross on their front door.

Listen, Jesus Christ isn't a New Testament invention. He's been around since Genesis 1:1. And so with the blood of the innocent substitutionary lamb on the door, that night the Angel of Death would come over Egypt to deliver the just judgment for sin. And when that Angel of Death saw the sign of the cross and the blood of the substitutionary sacrifice, he would pass over that house. And so we have the first Passover. And so near our Easter time in the spring when all good Jews celebrate the Passover, this is what they are celebrating, it's the Angel of Death passing over their house. Because, listen, their family was covered by the blood of a substitutionary sacrifice which was an innocent and spotless lamb. That's the first Passover. So then God has all of Israel do this every year, remember it every year, it becomes the number one festival for Israel, even to this day. And every year, not today anymore, but today they buy the lamb, though some may still sacrifice, but every year the family would sacrifice the innocent lamb and put the blood on their doorposts. Every year to celebrate the Passover. And then there's the whole thing about the Passover meal, which is very cool.

So, I'm just telling you, when I say that Jesus Christ's mission was to be the Lamb that was slain for the sin of the world, it was nothing new. In Leviticus 16 (read Leviticus because when you read Leviticus Chapter 1, it lays out a whole bunch of New Testament truths.) In Leviticus 16 the Day of "At-One-Ment" is established, The Day of Atonement now called Yom Kippur. That's why the Lamb of God was slain for the sin of the world – to make us at one with God.

So they're in the wilderness, they're wandering in the wilderness and in Leviticus 16 God sets up the Day of Atonement. Here's the focus of the Day of Atonement. Innocent animals, actually three – in this instance there was a bull and two goats – (but some

people think that word for goat may be from the sheep family but it's not important) but two goats especially. One was sacrificed for the people, an innocent sacrifice for the people. The other one, the Priest laid his hands on, transferred the sin of the people to, and then sent the goat out into the wilderness. That goat was called for "AZAZEL," we call that goat, the scapegoat. He was the scapegoat. A scarlet cord was tied around his neck and he was sent out to explain to the people, to demonstrate for the people a substitutionary innocent sacrifice is killed for your sin and then your sin is taken as far as the east is from the west. This is the story of Jesus Christ, in Leviticus. Substitutionary sacrifices, mostly of a lamb, and that became the focal point, the illustrative point.

So first, the atonement of the sacrificial animal is for one person, Isaac. Then the atonement, the making right, of a sacrificial sacrifice was for a family in the Passover. Then, on the Day of Atonement the atonement was for the Nation of Israel. Once a year for the entire nation of Israel. Do you see the increasing effect of the sacrificial substitutionary sacrifice of an innocent lamb, or goat for the Day of Atonement? It got to where it atoned for the sin of all of the people.

And then, in John 1:29 John the Baptist says, "Look. The Lamb of God (drawing all of that Old Testament truth into the people's minds) who takes away the sin of the world." It's not just Isaac, it's not just a family in Passover, it's not just the nation of Israel, this is *THE* Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Everything else that Jesus Christ does in the three and a half years of his ministry you have got to filter through the fact that his ultimate mission was to be the Lamb of God that takes away your sin. And the sin of those that you love. That's the all encompassing, over-riding purpose. And I know there's more. I know. But you have to start here. We have to start here.

When Abraham says to his son Isaac, God will provide the lamb for a sacrifice, that's what John the Baptist was saying. This is the Lamb that God is providing for a sacrifice so that you don't have to pay your own wages for your sin which is death. This is God's substitutionary sacrifice to pay the penalty for your sin in your place. That's what Jesus came for.

Now ultimately, the hardest core theologians would say, he actually came for the glory of God. And that's true. But if you don't get this and receive it, you don't have any part in it. So get this, and then you'll be part of that "he came for God's glory."

Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Jesus came to provide himself, as we read in Genesis 22, as the substitutionary sacrifice for the sin of the world.

What's the ultimate mission of Jesus Christ in the world? To be a substitutionary sacrifice, to make mankind at one with God. To pay the full penalty for our sin so that we can be made right before God. That's why God became a man, because no other sacrifice would accomplish that massive of an eternal need in the lives of sinful man. My prayer is that you would get consumed with it. And that everything else would be filtered through it. Get happy about it. Ephesians 1 says the Holy Spirit is our down payment, our guarantee of our inheritance. So let him give you that joy.

Is there more to this story? Yes. Will we get into it? Yes we will. But first there have been millions of Passover lambs innocently sacrificed for the people of God. And on this day, John the Baptist pointed and said, "This is *THE* Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." Everything else has to be filtered through that most absolute, incredible eternal truth.

So, what sets us free from the wages of sin which is death? God has made a way on his part. Our part, listen carefully to me, is identification with that Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Our identification with the substitutionary sacrifice that pays the full penalty for our sin in our place, our identification with him Romans 6 says, comes through faith in him. Through our faith in him we are so identified with him, that when he hung on the cross to pay for our sins, we hung there in him. And we he died for our sins, we died in him. And when he conquered sin and death and the grave, we conquered sin and death and the grave in him. He is the substitutionary sacrifice. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. We either believe and receive that, or we reject it. But those are the only options the Bible gives us. We believe Jesus is who he says he is or we reject him.

Let's pray. Lord, life with you Jesus is so much easier than we make it. Lord there is plenty we don't understand. There's plenty Lord we can't grasp. There's plenty that you have retained as a mystery. But one thing you've made clear, that you, Jesus, are the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Help us be obsessed with that. Help us be consumed with that. Bring us to that point. Give us the faith which is a gift from you to throw ourselves completely, all of our faith, all of our trust in that absolute truth. Jesus you are God come as man to live a perfect life to die in my place as a substitutionary sacrifice to pay the full penalty for my sin so that I can be seen as righteous before you, God. What else can I ask you for? What else do I need to understand? What else drives me? But understanding what you did as God for me, taking my place on that cross.

(Listen, if that's revelation to you, seize the moment and say:) *Lord, I believe. I believe that I believe you are who you say you are. I believe you are God become man, for me.*

Because of your love for me. I believe you died in my place and paid the penalty for my sin. And I repent of my sin today, I turn from it and I turn to you Jesus. Because of who you are and what you've done for me, I make you my Lord. Thank you for saving me. Fill me with your Holy Spirit for the power to follow you and to be driven by who you are and what you've done for me.

(Let's remain in an attitude of prayer and deal with God. Right where you are. What is the struggle? Are you consumed with stuff that's temporal and fleeting? Are you confused by religion or misguided or hurt? Do you blame God for something man has done to you? Do you not see him in the right light? Do you think he is your genie and you don't believe because he hasn't done enough for you? Listen he took your sin and paid the price so that you don't have to pay it for eternity. And there's a day coming in your life and you're going to understand that is the greatest gift of all. When eternity opens and you see the glory of God, and you sees the place that he has reserved there for you. Handle it with God, right now.)

Lord I believe. Help me to follow you.

(Before you stop praying, let me say one other thing. We preachers in our culture, like to call people forward, ask people to stand up and come forward because it's a sign that you are making a commitment to Christ. And I'm not knocking it; I'm not cynical of it. But I am asking you to come forward *tomorrow*. Not in a safe place in church, but in that dangerous place in the world. Come forward in your own family. And say "I made a commitment to follow Jesus. Now what? Jesus Christ came into my life. Now what?" My charge to you, my challenge to you is that you respond out there, in the real world.)

Lord Jesus, give us the strength to respond in the real world. To stand up for you. To be obsessed with the God of creation who loves us so much that you would take our place to die. Inspire us tomorrow to live for you, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.