

“Behold the Lamb of God!”

Last Sunday we observed the Feast of the Baptism of our Lord otherwise known as the 1st Sunday after Epiphany.

Attention was drawn to the importance of John the Baptist having set the stage for Jesus' Baptism. John spoke, "I baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after; I am not worthy to carry his sandals (Matthew 3:11). In order to fulfill all righteousness, John had to honor Jesus' request for John to baptize him, as well as Jesus humble himself and receive baptism.

Today our attention shifts from Matthew's account of what happened to the Gospel of John where the author deepens our understanding of who Jesus is. Like Matthew, Mark and Luke, John reports "the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove" — He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God (John 1:32b-34).

But then John does something none of the other Gospel writers do. He has John the Baptist expound and elaborate further who this Jesus is. Not once, but twice he refers to Jesus as the Lamb of God. Not only that, but in a dramatic way John the Baptist shouts, "Look, here is the Lamb of God" (NRSV). Other translations state, "Behold!" (KJV)

Like today's version of an Instagram, suddenly the picture is out there, not only for a few to see, but it has gone viral, it is all over the Internet! "Behold the Lamb of God! Lamb, Passover; Lamb, Shepherd; Lamb, Sacrifice! Before you is the one who will give up his life for you! When we hear "Behold," John wants us to think "Aha!"

This past week I had the privilege to serve as a judge for the Annual Spelling Bee at Ford Elementary. 19 4th-5th grade students vying to be the best speller! Though it was fun, the experience also provided many "Aha" moments. Each contestant would: 1. Say the word; 2. Spell the word; and then 3. Say the word again. Once they had spelled a word, and they knew that they had spelled it correctly, there was that look of "Aha," "Look," or "Behold!" Like an Instagram, "I got it!" When John the Baptizer says, "Behold the Lamb of God!" he wants us to get it.

When I think of Jesus as "the Lamb of God," I think of someone trying to help me get to the other side. Think about these things: Moses, angel of Death, Pharaoh, Passover, Egypt, Nile River, getting to the other side! Bad news, tough break, huge disappointment, ongoing disappointment, hope! Jesus lived, died, and rose from the dead, resurrection! It seems to me that everywhere we turn, God is helping us get to the other side.

Last Wednesday when talking about change, Bishop Wright made reference to three kinds of people: 1. those who would be for change; 2. those who would be uncertain about it; and 3. those who would be against it because they had not been able to get beyond disappointment.

Over the years I have experienced people who do not want you to be happy. For that matter, they don't want me to be happy. Why? Because they have not been able to "walk through" their disappointment and come out on the other side.

When John the Baptist says, "Behold the Lamb of God!" he wants us to know in Jesus we have someone who wants us to go from bad news and tough breaks to hope, from life and death to resurrection, from huge disappointment and be able to come out on the other side. ***Amen!***