Text: John 1:29-42a

**Introduction**

"Now this is what you shall offer on the altar: two lambs a year old day by day regularly. One lamb you shall offer in the morning, and the other lamb you shall offer at twilight. And with the first lamb fine flour mingled with oil, and some wine for a drink offering. The other lamb you shall offer at twilight, and shall offer with it a grain offering and its drink offering, as in the morning…It shall be a regular burnt offering throughout your generations at the entrance of the tent of meeting before the LORD, where I will meet with you, to speak to you there. (Exod. 29:38-41)”

How does one approach God or speak with God?

Regardless of the gods in question, man has always assumed that such access to the divine required some sacrifice. Agamemnon sacrifices his daughter Iphigenia, so that Artemis would grant the 1000 Greek ships good winds heading to Troy. The Carthaginians at war with the Romans would sacrifice babes to Molech. There were also lots of other more minor sacrifices. The most common might have been the food and drink offerings to the lares and penates – the household gods. Or the pinch of salt on the sealing of a pledge. The most famous being the loyalty oath to the divine Caesar. When one approached the gods, one did not come empty handed.

Of course the logic of sacrifice is something that I think makes intuitive gut level sense, but if you start thinking about it, it falls apart. As YHWH would say, “do I eat the flesh of bulls or the blood of goats? If I were hungry, I wouldn’t tell you, for the world and its fullness are mine. (Ps 50:13)” If you god needs your food, he or she isn’t much of a god. And if all we are doing is entering into some type of transaction, that seems a tawdry concern for a deity.

And we shouldn’t think that we are far removed from such things. It was just in the news the other day that Hammtrack, Michigan approved actual animal sacrifice. The new Israeli government is opening the temple mount looking towards a 3rd temple. All kinds of such things are the rage in the younger set proudly claiming to be witches. And honestly, what is the difference between the modern hospital and the ancient temples of Asclepius for most people? We are often so desperate to hang on to this life that we will turn over our very selves. We could argue back that the modern hospital has a better track record, I wouldn’t deny that, but only for a bit of time.

Yet there it is in Exodus, God establishing a daily round of sacrifice. A lamb, some grain and some wine. Morning and Evening. “Here is where I will meet with you.”

**Text**

I’m convinced that John must have had Matthew, Mark and Luke in front of him as he wrote his gospel, because John doesn’t really retell the story so much as add color and depth – maybe you could say contemplation. If Matthew, Mark and Luke are the play-by-play announcers, John’s the color commentator. He wants to tell you what is really happening. So instead of just retelling the story of the Baptism of Jesus, John treats that in passing. “I saw the Spirit descend from heaven and it remained on him.” But what does this mean?

According to John and John, it means three things:

First, “This is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit…this is the Son of God.”

Second, “He was before me.”

And Third, “this is the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”

I’ve worked backward in those from the actual texts because the first couple are not the focus today, and we’ll treat them only briefly. This is the Son of God. That could actually have many meanings in that world. At various times David, the Kings, Israel herself could be described as the Son of God. It was simply a messianic title. This is the anointed one of God. But what exactly that means for us isn’t clear.

By saying “he was before me” John is making a much deeper statement. The physical Jesus that he’s pointing to as the messiah is younger than John, by 6 months. His prophetic work is just beginning. John is THE prophet, at least right now. This is John saying I’m the forerunner. “I came baptizing with water that he might be revealed to Israel.” Who might be revealed? The LORD. God himself, the one who was before all things. The one through whom all things were made. This Jesus is that one. “He was before me.” But again, what does the Appearance of the Lord mean for us? Is the axe at the root of my tree? Are we to be leveled, or raised up?

Behold, Look at him, see him – “the lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.”

**Christology**

What had Israel been offering on those altars, Day and Night, all these years. A lamb.

What did Israel eat that provided the blood such that the angel of death would pass over them? A lamb without blemish.

What was provided when Abraham was to sacrifice his son? A lamb.

Israel, look and see, this one is the lamb. This one is the lamb of God provided for you for forgiveness.

Your entire history. All your sacrifices. They have always been this Jesus. They were merely the shadows of this one reality. God has always provided the lamb to forgive your sins.

But let’s look at those shadows again for a second. What was to be offered alongside the lamb? The finest flour mixed with oil and some wine. A grain offering and a drink offering. The stuff of bread and wine.

Where is our lamb? In the bread and wine. When we eat and drink of this one, death passes over. Our sins have been forgiven and are remembered no more.

Israel, behold, The Lamb of God. Given for you.

Where does God meet with us? Right here. We have access by the Lamb. Given by God.

**Moral**

There is a second question that meeting God brings up. “What are you seeking?”

Your sins have been forgiven. And we might think that answers everything. And maybe it should. But it doesn’t. Because when we are seeking God, what are we seeking?

Many times we are simply seeking a divine vending machine. Let me put in my sacrifice, and hopefully out pops what I want.

Maybe we are seeking power. That is what the rulers of Israel wanted from the messiah. Its our turn to be the world empire.

All those pagan sacrifices aren’t that foolish. They were offering what people were seeking. There are lots of things that will offer you exactly what you are seeking – if you are seeking the power of God for any number of various ends: be it health, wealth or power itself.

If this is what you are seeking when you come to meet Jesus, you’ll leave disappointed. Like a rich young ruler once left. Like the Pharisee and the Scribes. Because here is the lamb of God.

The lamb who takes away your sins. The lamb who bids you come and see. And what you see is not the power and the glory, but a man lead outside the city to the cross. What you see is one who offers up his life. What you see is a man who preaches the Kingdom not of this world. What you see is the man who bids you to follow him. To pick up your cross.

What are you seeking?

If you are seeking the world, turn around. That isn’t here.

If you are seeking the lamb and his forgiveness…Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.

**Eschatological**

 “Andrew found his own brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” and he brought him to Jesus.

Everybody at sometime wants to talk with God. They are looking for him everywhere.

And in a land of deep darkness a light as come. You have met that light. You have beheld it. And today that light is full of grace and truth.

And like John, and Andrew and then Simon. Like any chain of witnesses we are called to give our witness. To testify concerning that light. To live lives of grace and truth. What we have been given in abundance, we share.

Will it always be what they are seeking? Probably not.

The world and all those other things we sacrifice to can be awfully enticing.

But even at the 10th hour, Christ makes room for those who come. And is happy over the one who would stay.

The Lion of Judah will come soon enough. Today, behold the Lamb, given for you. Amen.