

<sup>29</sup>The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Here is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! <sup>30</sup>This is the one I told you about: ‘After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me, because he existed before me.’ <sup>31</sup>I didn’t know him, but I came baptizing with water so he might be revealed to Israel.” <sup>32</sup>And John testified, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and he rested on him. <sup>33</sup>I didn’t know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘The one you see the Spirit descending and resting on—he is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ <sup>34</sup>I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.”<sup>[a]</sup>

<sup>35</sup>The next day, John was standing with two of his disciples. <sup>36</sup>When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, “Look, the Lamb of God!”

<sup>37</sup>The two disciples heard him say this and followed Jesus. <sup>38</sup>When Jesus turned and noticed them following him, he asked them, “What are you looking for?”

They said to him, “Rabbi” (which means “Teacher”), “where are you staying?”

<sup>39</sup>“Come and you’ll see,” he replied. So they went and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day. It was about four in the afternoon.<sup>[b]</sup>

<sup>40</sup>Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of the two who heard John and followed him. <sup>41</sup>He first found his own brother Simon and told him, “We have found the Messiah”<sup>[c]</sup> (which is translated “the Christ”),

## Remain

Remain: there just seem to be so many negative connotations when it comes to staying where you are. Left-overs aren’t always the favorites. The last child picked for pick-up game is the least desirable. There was even a loosely Christian book series out there that made staying behind a bad thing. Granted, nobody wants to be left behind. We like to go places, do things, grow, get more, it doesn’t matter what it is. If it can be bigger, better, stronger, that’s what we want. So much so that to stay with the old model or refuse to upgrade is seen as a bad thing.

So why would we talk about staying. Simply put, it’s because the word occurs five times in our lesson although it doesn’t show up in our English translations. The Holy Spirit remains on Jesus. John’s message remains the same. Causing his disciples to follow Jesus because they want to know where Jesus remains, “*where are you staying?*” The reason they want to know where he remains is because that’s where they want to be.

Is that what we want? As we follow Jesus he turns to us and asks us the same question, “*What are you seeking?*” What is it you want? We are confronted with the same question that calls us to examine the desires of our heart. We want a lot of things. Maybe you want to travel. You don’t want to stay here. You want to go, the world is so big and you want to explore. Maybe you want to settle down and have no intention of going anywhere. It doesn’t matter what you do but there is one thing that is epitome of the Christian life and that is to remain with Jesus. The God who is always ready to meet with us, the God who his eager to see, The God who wants to be with his people so much so that he takes away what hinders us from him. For the God who has done so much for us: I can’t wait to be with him.

Where did John start? He wasn’t sure at first. He was the wild man living out in the desert, eating locust, and honey, wearing a camel skin tunic. Was he some sort of eccentric genius more in tune with the divine? He wasn’t out there to make a name for himself. It never was about him. His message had always been about Jesus. We don’t know what kind of relationship he had with his younger cousin. We’re not sure they met much as children. But we do know that John leapt in his mother’s womb when Mary visited. We know that John knew of Jesus and that John

knew he was special but John also admits, "*I did not know him.*" Before Jesus' baptism John did not know Jesus in all of his divinity. Just as the Magi didn't fully understand this gift that was given to them, so also John needed God to reveal to him. God reveals something about Jesus to John. At his baptism – the Holy Spirit descended like a dove (that does not mean he is a dove). He descends like a dove and remains on Jesus.

In the OT – we're used to seeing the prophets filled with the Holy Spirit and do mighty things. Samson is one, the 70 elders of Israel prophesying is another, and Gideon before he went to war is another. When their work was done the spirit left. But here he remains on Jesus.

John admits. *I didn't know him.* And I wouldn't have known him had it not been revealed to me by the one who sent me. He said, "*The one you see the Spirit remain upon.*" This is the one revealed by God to John. This is the Lamb of God, a very specific person, with a very specific role. Jesus is the Lamb, singular with the definite article: the Lamb. And as soon as you mention Lamb – a Jew would already be thinking sacrificial. They had many lambs, the lamb of the Passover, celebrated annually which recalled the deliverance from Egypt when the Angel of the Lord passed over the houses marked with the blood of the lamb. A lamb became symbolic of God's faithfulness and deliverance. It wasn't just the Passover lamb there were many sacrifices, the morning and evening sacrifice of a lamb. All of these sacrifices pointed ahead to Jesus who is the Lamb. Moreover, it's not just anyone's lamb. This is the Lamb of God: God's lamb.

And while a Lamb was symbolic of God's deliverance we also realize that it came at a tremendous cost to himself. So John stands before his disciples and pointing with a verbal finger, "*This one. That's the Lamb, who takes away the sin of the world.*" All sin. Anywhere, everywhere, past present and future sin is all summarized and set on the lamb who is present tense, "*Taking away the sin of the world.*" That is the sole focus and message of John's preaching.

John didn't try to make a name for himself. He went out into the desert, clad in clothes that would do the job, eating what was available and keeping people focused on the primary task of Jesus. Here at Christ, I'm trying to not make a name for myself but to point one and all to Jesus. That's why I wear a robe, vestments. To cover me up, hide the man, make little of me, the person, and point people to Jesus.

When we minimize ourselves we look at what remains. Jesus asked John and Andrew – those two disciples who followed him, "*What are you seeking?*" Jesus wanted them to think about what they wanted. When we look at our hearts and focus on our desires: what do we find there?

What's most important in my life? What am I living for? What do I treasure? Where do I devote my time and money? An honest answer doesn't sound as spiritual or as godly as we'd like. We bring to God what remains, the left-overs. We aren't so concerned with what God wants for us but rather what we want from God. Even in our time here in worship – we may forget the Lamb of God and think more about our sacrifice and in so doing turn worship into something more like a mere transaction between you and the bank. Do you really want to be with God? I give my offering and God gives me forgiveness and I go on my way.

We may, worse yet, make worship all about me, start at it like other churches where people give their testimony... Before I came to church I was a real, mess... Until Jesus came into my life and I turned it around. But do you see the problem? One makes much about me and John makes much about Jesus.

Jesus is the Lamb of God. God's lamb, God's gift because he knew we couldn't do it. It's not our lamb, not our sacrifice, and not our offering that accomplishes anything to save ourselves. It's God. And John even tells us what he has come to do, "*Take away the sin of the world.*" Sounds pretty clear doesn't it? The world. John wants us to understand all people, of all times, everywhere.

But some have limited the universality of such a statement to mean only the world of believers. Other Christians are excited that Israel is a nation and hope that someday they will rebuild their temple and begin offering sacrifices again. But that would be a slap in the face of your Lamb who takes away the sin of the world. It would be saying,

“What you did, doesn’t mean much, therefore we have to do this instead.” But Jesus is God’s Lamb not our lamb. It’s not up to our sacrifice. It’s not as if by my sacrifice given in the offering plate – I’m earning a little bit of my salvation. If that’s how you feel about the offering, both of us are better off if you keep it. Jesus is the Lamb of God. He is God’s lamb, God’s gift to us.

This is our God who wants to be known. Our God who wants to remain with his people. But in order to remain with them he has to take away what makes them offensive. He has to deal with their sin or his holiness would destroy them. The very reason Jesus came into this world was to provide the way back to him. He wants to be with his people and he is with his people.

So much so that when John and Andrew follow him, he drops everything invites them to learn more. Jesus could have said, “Come back tomorrow, but instead he invites them, “*Come and see.*” *So they went and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day. It was about four in the afternoon.* - Jesus set aside the rest of his day to spend time with those who don’t yet understand who he is or how he would serve as God’s Lamb.

Later they would learn that this lamb came to sacrifice himself for them. To take up their sin, the consequences of their actions, suffer and die for them. Jesus is that Lamb that was slain. But he didn’t remain dead. He came back. He calls us into his church, his family through baptism. There he too pours out the Holy Spirit on us, and he remains with us. Some people want to see miracles. They want to see the odd and the amazing, the unexplainable – if that’s the case you need look no further than the font, the cross, the altar. Here the Spirit works in us and through us bringing life where there was nothing but death and denial. Here the dead are brought to life, those enslaved to sin are set free. Jesus says you are made a member of his family, “John 10:35 - *A slave does not remain in the household forever, but a son does remain forever.*”

Apart from Jesus and remaining in him we can do nothing, but God has done everything even creating the will and the desire to do good. He has forgiven our every misguided desire, seeking after a God who will provide us with goods and service for a price/sacrifice, and he leads us to love him. What are you seeking? What do you want? I hope you don’t want more of me. I hope you don’t want me to try to be like culture because I don’t care about what’s popular, or what’s fashionable, besides you wouldn’t want to see me in skinny jeans.

What I want for you is the same as Andrew and John. Remain with Jesus no matter what. That is the Christian life to be with Jesus to know him more, and to make him known. Everything else is extra. It’s not the accumulation of knowledge, or good advice, it’s the time with God. Hearing his Word, knowing his work, because he wants to be with us. The reason we come together as a church isn’t necessarily to make us more moral, better, or so we have life all together, it’s because where he is, there we want to be. He tells us he is here with his people in Word and Sacrament. Here he promises to be with us.

So what if Remaining, staying put, has negative associations with it. If that is where Jesus is, that is where I want to be. Amen.