

“Blood and glory of the Lamb.” John 1:29-42

“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, “After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.” I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel.” And John bore witness: “I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, “He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.” And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.”

The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God!” The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, “What are you seeking?” And they said to him, “Rabbi” (which means Teacher), “where are you staying?” He said to them, “Come and you will see.” So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which means Christ). He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas” (which means Peter).

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

Have you ever been and felt guilty? Have you ever been caught and exposed when you were guilty? Feeling like you are dying of shame... What did you want to do in that situation? What often is our first instinct when we are caught guilty?

We can get our answer if we look at children. How do they usually act when they have done something wrong and are guilty? “It was not me; it was him; it was her!” Sound familiar? We adults are the same. When we are guilty, we want to blame someone else. “It was not my fault, it was yours! It was that another person, circumstances, etc.”

If you recognize yourself as someone who doesn't like to feel guilty and would like to put your blame on someone else, then I have very good news for you. Very good news, indeed! There is someone you can put all your guilt on.

Do you know who he is? That's right, Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. He is God's own solution to our problem of being and feeling guilty for everything that we have ever done wrong, and for everything good that we have failed to do.

But how would that work, we may wonder? And why is Jesus called the Lamb of God? Imagine how strange that may sound to someone who is not familiar with Biblical imagery. The Lamb of God?! Who do you, people, worship?

So, what is this Lamb of God business about? We can take a quick tour around the Word and see what it reveals about the Lamb in the Old Testament, about the Lamb in New Testament time, about the Lamb of God today and about the Lamb of God in the age to come.

First, the Lamb in the Old Testament. This helps to understand why John the Baptist called Jesus the Lamb of God. As you may recall at Mount Sinai God Yahweh not only gave to His chosen people the Law, the 10 Commandments, but also detailed instructions for worship, as we call it – for the Divine Service.

The worship at the time of ancient Israel wasn't that different from ours. That's right! The purpose of the worship was the same - so that the Holy God could be among us, to grant us His forgiveness and to bless us. How exactly was it done?

God Yahweh Himself instructed His people what to do. First, they had to come to the appointed place and bring a sacrificial animal, often a lamb. Then they would lay their hands on the head of this sacrificial animal, confessing their sins and symbolically transferring their sin and guilt to the lamb.

Then, the sacrificial animal was slaughtered, its blood poured out at the altar, parts of the animal were burned and parts of it eaten as a celebratory holy meal in God's presence. Okay, but what was that all about? It is quite simple.

God Himself wanted to grant His people the gift of forgiveness of all their sins, and He also wanted to teach us that forgiveness is always a costly gift. Remember, how Paul the apostle wrote to Romans that "wages of sin is death".

What God Yahweh was teaching His people with these sacrificial rituals was that sin leads to death; that for us to be able to receive forgiveness from God, someone else needs to take our sin away and to receive what our sin deserves. Someone else must sacrifice their life for us. That was the logic of their worship.

And once their sins were forgiven through the ritual sacrifice, God blessed their holy meals in His presence, and so people went away forgiven and blessed by the Lord. This is how the Old Testament sacrificial worship was foreshadowing and teaching about *the* Lamb of God, who will take away the sin of the entire world!

Now, about the Lamb in the New Testament times. It is obvious that the life of a sacrificial animal is in no way an adequate exchange for a human life. If you are guilty of something that may require capital punishment, you cannot get away by just offering: "Please, take this sacrificial animal instead of me!" It will not suffice.

What is possible though, is that someone else steps in and confesses: "This was not their fault, it was not their sin, it was mine. I will take their place. I will receive the due punishment." And then you are free to go.

This is what Jesus did for you. He came to take your place. To take all your sins. To receive the wages that our sin deserves. To receive them in your place. He, the Eternal Son of God, offered Himself as a sacrifice for all your sin. He became your sacrificial Lamb. Supplied by God the Father Himself.

And now, what about the Lamb of God today? Does this phrase sound familiar? When do we say, or sing these words "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world"? That's right, in the Divine Service right before the Holy Communion.

See, there is something amazing going on here. This is where God's own solution to all our sin and guilt is given. The Lamb of God is it. When you come to the Divine Service, what do you bring to our gracious God that He does not have already? What is our unique contribution? That's right... our sin.

But then He invites you to approach Him and lay your hands on the head of Jesus, so that He can take all your sin from you. You bring your sin and guilt here, you put it on Jesus, and He sacrificially takes your place; the Lamb provided by God Himself.

Then, in exchange for your sins, He grants you His forgiveness. That's how it is done. As someone takes your place, receives the punishment you deserve, you are not guilty anymore, your sin is forgiven. But there is more Good News.

You may remember that in the Old Testament it is repeatedly emphasized that the life of the flesh is in the blood. This is why the blood of sacrifices, that is - their life, was poured out, to show that the "wages of sin is death."

Now listen carefully! The life of Jesus was in His blood, which He shed for you, for the forgiveness of all your sins. But Jesus was not simply a man. He was also a true God. His blood was the blood of true God. What does that mean? That in His blood there was not only some life force for this age, but eternal life.

Now, do you see where this is going? What do we receive in the Holy Communion? We receive the true body and blood of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. That is, in this Holy Meal, the Lord's Supper, you are given to eat and drink... eternal life!

You receive eternal life from God Himself! The Lamb of God Himself hosts this sacred meal and with the bread and wine He serves you His forgiveness and eternal life. He feeds you forgiveness and eternal life! With what reverence, gratitude and joy we need to receive this precious gift!

Do you see how freeing this is for you? It's true, we keep sinning till the end of our lives. But you don't have to blame anyone else for your sins. No need for that. You don't have to deny that you have sinned. No need to worry about your goodness.

You are forgiven. You are invited to lay your hands on the head of Jesus, the Lamb of God, and to confess: "I am a sinner and I have sinned." And your Father immediately transfers all your sin and guilt to Jesus. And Jesus gladly receives your sin and in exchange gives you His forgiveness, His innocence and holiness.

Have you failed as a spouse? Do you feel guilty? Have you failed as a parent? Do you feel guilty? Have you been dishonest in your work and business dealing? Do you feel guilty? Have you not loved others as you were supposed to?

Have you hurt someone with your words or actions? Have you been indifferent to Jesus, to His mission? Do you feel guilty? Then here is Good News for you. Lay your hands on the Lamb of God, confess freely your sins and put all your guilt on Him, and He will gladly take it from you. "I forgive you! You are forgiven. Go in peace!"

This is the Good News. Jesus, the Lamb of God has taken your place, forgiven your sins, cleansed your conscience and given you a new life. Now come and be blessed by the holy meal of the Lamb, come, eat and drink forgiveness and eternal life!

Thanks be to God! And finally, **the Lamb of God in the age to come**. This is the most beautiful one. Open the book of Revelation! The Lamb of God is the main actor there. But now the Lamb is very different. Just listen to a few verses:

“I saw a Lamb standing... with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.” (Rev 5:6) Seven horns, absolute power. Seven eyes, the fullness of God's Spirit.

Hear the voice of countless multitudes singing: **“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!”** (Rev 5:12) The Lamb is the One to whom all authority is given in heaven and on earth. He is the Mighty Judge of the world.

And how good is that! Just imagine, if He invites you to lay your sin on Him, if He Himself takes it away, how will He judge you on the Last Day? Something like this: “My brother, my sister, you are forgiven, come and receive the Kingdom that I have prepared for you!”

This is how John the apostle recorded the vision given to Him: **“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, and I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb.”** (Rev 21:1a, 22-23) The Lamb... who took your sin away.

This is where we all are heading. Imagine what incredible life awaits you, if this New Heaven and Earth and New Jerusalem are ruled by the same Lamb, by Jesus Christ, who sacrificed His life to get you with Him. How good is that going to be!

The very last remark. What did Andrew do once he realized who Jesus was? What did Phillip do when he realized it? Yes, they ran and told their friends and relatives: “We have found Him! The Lamb of God, Jesus! He takes away our sin and guilt. He conquers death. He gives us peace, joy and a new life. Come and see for yourself!”

You know that the Lamb of God has found you. He has taken your place. All His promises are yours. You are His. No one can snatch you from His loving arms. And you will soon see Him as He is. All of that is yours. Even as we are still waiting for that Day. But that is not true for everyone. There are so many our fellow humans suffering from sin, guilt, shame, fear of death. Without hope, without solution.

Let us ask our Father in heaven to send us His Spirit and to use us to invite as many as possible to meet the Lamb of God. So that their sin too can be taken away, so that they too can receive a new life and so that there is even greater joy in the age to come, under the glorious reign of the Lamb of God.

And the peace of God that surpasses all our understanding keeps your hearts and souls in Jesus Christ. Amen.