

2nd SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

January 15, 2023

COLLECT: ALMIGHTY GOD, whose Son, our Savior Jesus Christ is the light of the world: Grant that your people, illumined by your Word and Sacraments, may shine with the radiance of Christ's glory, that he may be known, worshiped, and obeyed to the ends of the earth, through Jesus

Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one 'God, now and forever. Amen.

THE LESSONS: First Lesson: Isaiah 49:1-7

Psalm: 40:1-12

Second Lesson: 1 Corinthians 1:1-9

Gospel: John 1:29-42

THE SERMON: In the Gospel lesson for today, when John sees Jesus approaching him at the Jordan River, he calls out to the crowd waiting to be baptized, "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world."

The belief that sins could be transferred from humans to animals was prevalent in ancient times and the thought was that evil spirits that caused evil behavior could be chased away.

The lamb is important in the celebration of Passover. It was an offering laid on the altar as a sacrifice for the sins of the Hebrew people. John is telling the people that Jesus would be that lamb that would redeem them of their sins. He would also give them salvation which meant he would put them in the right relationship with God.

The offering of the lamb on the altar implies a personal offering from the individual. The sacrifice implies that God directly intervenes and he accepts the offering and he personally forgives the individual.

It is much like my calling your name as I give you communion. I am implying that God meant this especially for you.

In the Jewish religion another animal has a greater significance in forgiveness for sins. It is the scapegoat and it appeared during the fall festival of Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. On this day it is a final time for the individual to reflect on the wrongs he/she may have done to relatives, friends, neighbors, or others intentionally or unintentionally.

Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement is the holiest of all Jewish celebrations. Even if a Jewish person doesn't regularly attend temple or synagogue services, this is the one services he or she tries to make. It is much like how the C and E' look at Christmas and Easter.

This is the service of cleansing or atonement. No one is exempt. This service is for the community and the sins they may have committed knowingly or unknowingly.

On this Day of Atonement, during ancient times. two goats are brought before the priest who would offer prayers. One goat, "the Lord's goat" would be sacrificed on the altar for removal of the people's sins. The other goat, "the people's goat" would have the priest place his hand on the head of this goat as he prayed and transferred the sins of the people onto this goat. This goat, the scapegoat would then be led to and let loose in the wilderness taking the people's sins with it.

Like all things, today there has been a change in how Yom Kippur is celebrated, Coins are used instead of the goat and the coins, after the Yom Kippur service are given to charity.

The Hebrew people would have all been familiar with the significance of the lamb and the scapegoat. So, when John identified Jesus as the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world. They paid full attention to what John went on to say.

John tells the people he really didn't know Jesus and the power he had. He, John, baptized with water, but as he baptized Jesus and brought him up from under the water, John said a voice spoke to him: He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain on is the One who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. John said, "I saw this happen, the Spirit like a dove descended and land on Jesus, there it remained. So, I know he is the Son of God."

The next day John saw Jesus walking and again he pointed him out, loudly shouting: Look here is the Lamb of God." Two of John's disciples followed Jesus, they not only wanted to know where he was staying, but also to hear him speak and to see what he was doing. One of the disciples was Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter. He was so impressed he found his brother, Peter, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah."

In Andrew's mind the Anointed One the prophets had prophesied about and which was written in Jewish scripture had come true. God had made his presence known by the appearance of his Son, Jesus.

This too is an epiphany of Jesus. Now he will be revealed to the world as he begins his ministry of preaching and healing. We will meet him in the

reading of the scriptures. We will experience him as he acts as a result of our prayers. We will embrace him as we practice our faith.

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