Look the Lamb of God

John 1:19-51

Key Verse: 1:29 “The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.”

Last week we studied the fact that Jesus is the Word (logos) who existed as God before the creation of the world and came to this world as a man to be with us. He was the first cause of the whole universe and the author of our lives. So in Jesus we have life, eternal life. In Jesus we have true meaning and purpose of life. In Jesus we have reason and hope for the future. After John the author stated that Jesus is the Son of God, he testified how and why Jesus is the Son of God through witnesses and the disciples who were with Jesus. We know the power of testimony by witnesses in proving authenticity and credibility. In today’s passage John introduces a few witnesses of Jesus to prove why Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of God. Let’s see and listen to their testimonies about Jesus.

First, the testimony of John the Baptist: The Lamb of God (19-34) Look at verses 19-22. “***Now this was John’s testimony when the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. He did not fail to confess, but confess freely, “I am not the Messiah.” “They asked him, “Then who are you? “Are you Elijah?” He said, “I am not.” “Are you the Prophet?” He answered, “No.” Finally they said, “Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?”*** The Jewish leaders in Jerusalem were the Sanhedrin and the religious leaders. They sent priests and Levites to investigate John the Baptist because people thought that John the Baptist possibly might be the Messiah. (Lk 3:15) John preached the baptism of repentance. “*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near*.” (Mt 3:2) People confessed their sins and were baptized by John at the Jordan River. John’s message was powerful and his popularity reached sky high. The religious leaders in Jerusalem sent their people to find out who John really was. John answered them that he was not the Messiah even before they asked him who he was. He also answered that he was not Elijah or the prophet. People thought that John was Elijah because the Lord said in Malachi 4:5, “*I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes*.” The angel Gabriel also told Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, about John in Luke 1:17, which says, “*And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah…*” People thought that John was a prophet because he delivered the message of repentance like the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah. John the Baptist answered all their questions with the same answer, “No!”

How did John identify himself then? He gave an answer from the Scripture, Isaiah 40:3. Look at verse 23. “***John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, “I am the voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way for the Lord***.’” John identified himself as a voice of one calling in the desert who prepares the way for the Lord. Indeed, John preached the baptism of repentance so that people might believe Jesus is the Son of God and the Messiah. Here, the important thing we can notice is that John found himself in the Scripture. How many of us as Christians identify ourselves in the Scripture? This year is the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation started by Martin Luther. On Oct 30, 1517 Martin Luther put a copy of 95 theses on the door of the church in Wittenberg protesting the corruption of the papacy and the Catholic regime. Martin Luther was motivated by Romans 1:17, which says, “*The Righteous will live by faith*”, while he was climbing up the staircase of the cathedral on his knees. Luther found himself in the Scripture Romans 1:17. What do you say about yourself? Who do you think you are? This existentialistic question challenges us to find our identity in the sight of God. John the Baptist was a voice of one calling in the desert. Some might answer, “I am a voice of one calling on campus.” Others might say, “I am a prayer servant like Hannah.” What do you say about yourself?

The questions of the religious leaders about John continued. They asked him why John baptized people if he were not the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet. (24,25) John answered them in verses 26, 27. “***I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not know. He is the one who comes after me, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.***” John did not answer them what they asked. He answered to introduce the Messiah, who would come after him. He said that he was not worthy even to untie the straps on the shoes of the Messiah. John’s humility before the Messiah was admirable. People in this world brag about themselves to the maximum degree if they are a little better than others, or have a little more than others. But John humbled himself and made himself nothing in order to exalt Jesus. He taught us what kind of attitude we should have when we serve the Lord. “I am just a voice.” “I am an unworthy servant.” “May the name of the Lord Jesus only be exalted.”

Now, let us see what John’s testimonies was about Jesus? Look at verses 29-31. “***The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! This is the one I meant when I said, ‘A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.’ I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel***.” John the Baptist testified about Jesus as the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. In the era of the Old Testament a high priest selected a year old lamb and sacrificed it for the sins of his people. He took its blood and sprinkled it so that God’s forgiveness might be upon his people. They called this a ‘sacrificial lamb.’ When the Israelites came out of Egypt, God commanded them to kill a lamb and put its blood on the doorposts of their houses so that the angel of the Lord might pass over when he saw the blood. God commanded them to celebrate the Passover by sacrificing a lamb. We call this the ‘Passover Lamb’. Christ Jesus became the sacrificial lamb and the Passover Lamb. John the Baptist saw Jesus as the Lamb of God, who takes away not only the sins of Israel, but the sins of the whole world. John testified that Jesus was the Lamb of God; not an animal lamb provided by people, but the lamb provided by God. The blood of animals provided by people was temporary, imperfect, and limited for our redemption. How can the blood of animal cleanse the sins of men? But the blood of the Lamb provided by God was eternal, perfect, and unlimited in power and efficacy for our eternal salvation. Jesus became the sacrificial lamb of God for the atonement of our sins. He was crucified on the cross and shed his precious blood for the sins of the world. When John the Baptist saw Jesus coming toward him, he realized that Jesus is the Lamb of God, who was taking away the sins of the world.

In John’s gospel there are several descriptions of Jesus. Jesus himself said in John 6:35, *‘I am the bread of life*.” Jesus also said, “*I am the light of the world*.” (8:12), “*I am the good shepherd*.” (10:11), “*I am the resurrection and the life*.” (11:24), “*I am the way and the truth and the life.*” (14:6), “I am the vine.” (15:5), and so on. Among all these, John’s testimony about Jesus as the Lamb of God is the most fitting for the role of the Messiah.

John’s testimony about Jesus continued. Look at verses 32-34. “***Then John gave this testimony: “I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. And I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, “The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’ I have seen and I testify that this is God’s chosen one***.” John testified that the Holy Spirit came down on Jesus like a dove, and he heard God the Father testify that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit. John’s water baptism was the baptism of repentance. We can baptize others with water for repentance, not with the Holy Spirit. Only God can baptize with the Holy Spirit. John the Baptist finally testified about Jesus, saying, “*I testify that this is God’s Chosen One, the Son of God*.” Only the Son of God can baptize us with the Holy Spirit. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is for forgiveness of sin and for regeneration. Jesus forgives our sins and changes us into new creations through the power of the Holy Spirit. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, “*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come; The old has gone, the new is here*!” When we are baptized with the Holy Spirit, we become born again. (Jn 3:5) Those who are born again with the work of the Holy Spirit live new lives in Christ and with Christ. (Ac 10:41)

In Acts 2, the Apostle Peter addressed the crowd on the day of Pentecost when the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit. Peter testified about the baptism of the Holy Spirit, “*Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.” When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*.” (Ac 2:36-38) When we repent of our sins and accept Jesus Christ as our Lord, who died for our sins and rose again for our eternal life, we will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. There have been so many Christians, including me, who were baptized with the Holy Spirit when they repented and believed in Jesus Christ. Let us repent of our sins and ask for forgiveness for our sins so that we may receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Jesus will baptize us with the Holy Spirit and change us into new creations. Amen!

Second, Andrew’s testimony: We have found the Messiah. (35-42) The second witness of Jesus as the Messiah was Andrew, the brother of Peter. Andrew was one of the two disciples of John the Baptist and followed Jesus when they heard John testifying about Jesus as the Lamb of God. John the Baptist testified again that Jesus was the Lamb of God. When Andrew followed Jesus, Jesus turned around and asked, “***What do you want***?” (38) This is another existentialistic question. Jesus asked Andrew about his motivation for following Jesus. “What do you want, Andrew?” “Why do you follow me?” We are Christians, and we follow Jesus. If Jesus asks us today, “What do you want?”, what might you answer? If Jesus ask you today, “What is your motivation for following me?”, what is your answer? It is very important to know what we really want. God always provides what we really need, not what we desire. What we desire is not always what God desires for our best. We ask for this and that to God in prayer. But sometimes we do not know what we really want and need for our best. Jesus tested the motivation of Andrew’s intention. What was Andrew’s answer?

Look at verse 38b. “***They said, “Rabbi” (which means “Teacher”), where are you staying?***” Andrew replied with philosophical question, “Where are you staying?” Andrew meant “Teacher, I want to know where you stay, who you are, what is your teaching.” In ancient Greece teachers taught their followers in their gardens. Academy, in modern terms ‘School’, means ‘garden’ in Greek. Their teachings were performed in the garden. Andrew wanted to hear Jesus’ teaching and experience who Jesus was. So Andrew and the other disciple went and saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with him. (40) What was the first thing Andrew did after he spent time with Jesus? Look at verse 41. “***The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, “We have found the Messiah” (that is, the Christ)***.” Andrew testified about Jesus to his brother Simon and brought him to Jesus. Andrew’s testimony about Jesus as the Messiah is significant. At that time, the Israelites expected a powerful messiah like Moses, who would deliver his people from the Roman Empire. But the concept and view of the Messiah whom Andrew testified about was different from the ones of the Israelites. The Messiah (Christ in Greek) should be the Son of God. The Messiah should be the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world. The Messiah should be the King of Israel who rules the world with love and righteousness. His kingdom should last forever. We are not sure if Andrew really grasped this spiritual and redemptive concept and view of the Messiah from Jesus, but this view should be the work of the Holy Spirit, who enlightens our hearts for Jesus. When Peter came to Jesus, Jesus saw the hope of God in Peter and changed his name from Simon to Cephas, which means ‘Rock.’ (42)

Third, Philip and Nathanael’s testimony: You are the Son of God, the King of Israel (43-51) Jesus had diverse methods of calling each of his disciples. Andrew followed Jesus and was chosen. He then brought his brother Peter to Jesus and Peter became Jesus’ disciple. Now Jesus initiated a call to more of his disciples. Jesus found Philip and said to him, “Follow me.” (43) Philip found Nathanael and told him, “***We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote---Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”*** (45) Andrew’s way of testifying about Jesus was his own experience. He explained to Peter what he learned from Jesus. Then he brought Peter to Jesus. Philip introduced Jesus to Nathanael, probably one of his friends, using words from the Scripture. Philip testified that Jesus was the one Moses wrote about and the prophets talked about. In a word, Philip said that Jesus is the Messiah who fulfilled the law of Moses and the prophecies of the prophets. Philip’s scriptural and intellectual testimony about Jesus was challenged by Nathanael, who had local prejudices. “***Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?” Nathanael asked***. (46) People did not believe that the Messiah would come from the small town of Galilee, Nazareth. Nathanael and the people did not know that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, the home town of King David.

Philip didn’t give him up. He invited Nathanael to Jesus saying, “***Come and see***.” (46) We need persistence like Philip when we invite others to Jesus with confidence. “Come and see. You will find the Messiah.” Come and see. You will find the meaning and purpose of your life.” “Come and see. You will meet God.” What did Jesus say to Nathanael when he approached? Look at verse 47b. Jesus said to him, “***Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit.”*** (47) This was not an empty praise to gain Nathanael’s heart. This was Jesus’ spiritual insight revealing who Nathanael was. Nathanael was surprised by Jesus’ supernatural insight. So, he asked, “***How do you know me?***” (48) Jesus answered, “***I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you.***” (48) People used to pray and meditate under a fig tree. Jesus saw that Nathanael was praying for the coming of the Messiah. Jesus saw Nathanael’s pure heart and sincere desire for the Messiah. Nathanael was deeply moved by Jesus’ wisdom and supernatural insight. Then he declared. “***Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel.***”(49) Jesus added more his vision for Nathanael in verses 50,51. “***Jesus said, “You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You will see greater things than that.” He then added, “Very truly I tell you, you will see ‘heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on’ the Son of Man.***” Jesus foretold that Nathanael would see the same kind of vision which Jacob had seen in the wilderness. (Ge 28:12)

In today’s passage, we heard the testimonies of John the Baptist and his disciples about Jesus. John testified about Jesus as the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. Andrew testified about Jesus as the Messiah. Philip testified about Jesus as the one who fulfilled God’s promises. Nathanael confessed that Jesus is the Son of God, the King of Israel. What is your confession about Jesus? What is your testimony about the one whom you follow? What do you want? What do you say about yourself? I thank God that I am a shepherd for college students. I find myself as a voice of one calling on campus. Jesus is my Messiah because I confessed and believed that Jesus died for my sins and rose again from the dead for my eternal life. He is my everything, the meaning and purpose of my life. He is Christ and Lord. What is your testimony? What is your confession? May God help all of us to have a clear testimony about Jesus and a clear identity about ourselves, as John the Baptist did. Let us invite many truth-seekers and directionless wanderers to our Bible symposium so that they may also testify, saying, “We have found the Messiah!” Amen.