

“We interrupt this broadcast for a special announcement!”

What happens when you hear words like that? I remember the first time I heard something like that, I was probably six or seven and I was pretty upset that they were interrupting my Saturday morning cartoons for footage of some tanks in the desert. But as adults, when we hear those words, what happens? We may have been watching or listening to our program intently, we may have only had it on while we did something else. But when we hear that, we know something important is about to be said, so we sit up and take note, we give it our full attention. This is important, we need to watch and listen.

Now, the Jews didn't have TV or radio programs to interrupt, they didn't have an early warning broadcast system. But they did have a special word that was used only when something of extreme note or significance was about to be said. In the Hebrew it was *hinné*. “Behold!” our old English bibles used to translate it. But even that doesn't really capture the full essence of how this was meant to capture attention. Something different, unexpected, extremely significant was about to be said; sit up and take notice now!

This *hinné* concept was brought over to the Greek language when that became the common tongue of the land. They used the Greek word *idé* instead. The idea was the same. This is something you need to pay attention to, it is important. And it's that very word that we hear John the Baptist use twice in our reading today: <read text: John 1:29-41>.

Did you hear it? Our NIV bibles render the word as just “Look!”, which comes somewhat close to the original intent. It's probably as close as you can get in English in a single word. We don't use “behold” anymore in our regular language, and even that is still a little weaker than what it's meant to say. This is a special announcement meant to capture the attention of anyone listening, and when you look at what John says, he's absolutely right to use this special word!

“Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”

Is there anything more important than this announcement? It's said other ways throughout the Bible, but here it is in a nutshell. Jesus is the sacrificial lamb, sent by God, meant to be sacrificed in our place so that our sins can be taken away. And not just ours but everyone's, everywhere. And we have sin. We may not fully understand the depth of our sin, we may not be fully convinced that all our sins are equally offensive to God, but you don't have to think too long or hard to drift back into your memory and find those things you've done that cause your heart to grip with fear when you remember them. The things you've done and said. You are a sinner. You have broken God's law and you deserve God's punishment for your crimes. The fair punishment for defying a holy God is to be eternally separated from his holiness. That is our fate by nature. That is what we deserve. The sins we have committed cannot be scrubbed off us by hard work or extra good deeds. We can't just be nicer people in response and expect it to make a difference. The deeds are done, the blood is on our hands and we are guilty. We are stained with sin and that means we deserve to die.

“Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”

There is nothing better than this news, than seeing this sight. John's disciples heard this truth stated. They heard his testimony of how Jesus was identified at his baptism. They believed the word that was spoken about Jesus and so they went to follow him. They ask Jesus where he's staying so they can go there to. And Jesus responds, **“Come, and you will see.”** How entirely appropriate. It's not just a matter of the question of where he was sleeping for the night. That statement could be used as a response to everything we might want to know about Jesus. When we first encounter our Lord, that statement, “Look, the Lamb of God!” might seem a little cryptic. We may not fully understand our sin, we may not realize exactly how Jesus being a lamb helps us be free of our sin and right with God. We may not fully understand what the stakes involved are. We come forward wanting to know more, filled with questions about this great news, and to all of them Jesus responds with “Come and you will see.”

We have each heard this good news declared to us. By nature we understand our sinfulness and by revelation we are taught the exact punishment we deserve for our crimes. But we have each had someone in our lives make this testimony to us, to point to Jesus and say “Look, the Lamb of God!” And we have each responded by wanting to know what this means, wanting to follow our Lord Jesus and learn everything about him as those first disciples did. This is too important to just shrug and say, “Meh.” This is the key of life! So many people scramble about for meaning in life; some bounce around for all their years trying to find it, others pretend they found it in something and just cover their ears and hum really loud when doubts creep in. But this is it! This is the one thing that matters, that will last past this life and carry on into the next. This is the reason we are here: to learn about the Lamb and how he has saved us.

And so like those disciples of John we get up to follow Jesus with questions in our head. We want to know more and Jesus answer is again the same to us, "Come and you will see." Now, we've not had Jesus physically walk past us on the street. We've never had someone point him out to us in a crowd that we could go up to him and talk to him. But that doesn't mean we don't know where to find him, that doesn't mean we can't sit at his feet and learn from him. We have the word of God recorded for us and that is where we find our Savior.

We have the sure testimony of those who witnessed his deeds, just like John testified in our reading. We have his own words recorded for us to read, his own actions and teachings recorded in the gospels. And we have everything that God wanted recorded about him in our Bibles. That is the purpose of the Bible, to show us and teach us about Jesus, our Savior. Lots of other reasons for the Bible existing have been given, and there's lots of good stuff we can learn from our Bibles, but this is the single primary purpose: to show us our Savior Christ. We sometimes speak of the Scriptures as being Christocentric, which is a fancy word that just means they all center around Christ. Jesus himself said, "**You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me.**" (Jn 5:39). If we want to follow our Savior and learn about him, that is where we do it.

This is why it is so important that we listen regularly to everything our Savior teaches us. We never can reach a point where we have learned and understand it all. We never can be done growing in our understanding of our own sin and understanding the real grace of our Savior. If we don't grow, if we don't understand then we place ourselves on very precarious ground. We demonstrate that what Jesus did isn't really important enough to us to warrant regular attention. And we place ourselves with a very tenuous grasp on our salvation so that the first thing to come along that upsets us or wounds our pride and we let it go because God or others failed to live up to our (wrong) expectations.

Instead, let us constantly sit at his feet and learn from the Lamb. Learn and refresh ourselves regularly about our own unworthiness. Let understand how little we measure up and also understand that about the people around us, that they are just as sinful as we are. And let us hear and understand how God has forgiven us all by the blood of the Lamb. In the Lamb, in the Messiah long promised, we are redeemed and made holy in God's eyes. Let this understanding demolish our personal pride and soften our attitudes as we deal with those who may wrong us. We are all of us sinners, capable of the worst humanity has to offer. But we are all redeemed by the Lamb just the same. Share that attitude of love and forgiveness with each other in the same spirit of grace and mercy that the Lamb has had on us.

And finally, built up in the Word, from sitting at the feet of and learning from our Lord, let us take that knowledge, that understanding and the zeal that come from it and let's take that out into the world just as John's disciples did here. The first thing Andrew did after learning the truth about the Lamb was to go and tell that news to someone else. Someone close to and important to him, someone who absolutely needed to hear this; his brother.

Now, I realize that for most of us, the initial thrill probably wore off long ago. It's one thing to hear good news and share it immediately, like Andrew did here. It's another to have known it our whole lives. I'm not suggesting anyone here run down the street grabbing people by the lapels and shouting what a great thing this is for them. But that doesn't mean there's nothing here for us to emulate. It is still good news, in fact as we pointed out, the best news. It is not only the greatest thing a person can learn about during this life, learning it is the only reason any of us are given time here at all. The people we meet who don't know about the Lamb are only here because God wants them to have the time to learn.

But as we well know, that time won't last forever. And those of us who do know about the Lamb are only still here to serve that singular purpose; to grow the kingdom. It is up to each of us to tell others what we know, to share the good news. That's not "the church's" responsibility, it's yours. The days of mass mailings and knocking on a hundred doors cold is past, those methods don't work on our culture anymore. People are wary of strangers, they're wary of someone trying to sell them something. But they will listen to a friend, to someone they trust. And that is why it is up to each of us to reach out to the people who trust us and help them while they still have time. That time of grace from God won't last forever, we never know when it's up. So share the news of the Lamb with an appropriate zeal, teach it to those who will be lost without it and treat it like the good news that it is.

It's an important announcement. Important enough that it's worth interrupting whatever else might be going on at the moment. It's unexpected, it's different and it is life-changing. *Hinné! Idé!* Behold! Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Who takes away your sin. Look to the Lamb, learn from him, follow him. And then take that wonderful news and bring it to those who need it. Amen.