

"BEHOLD THE LAMB"

Date: April 2, 2021

Speaker: Chris Potter



(Vs) *John 1:29 ESV* – "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

- Lamb of God : The sacrifice of blameless lambs played a very important role in the Jewish religious life and sacrificial system.

Behold – To gaze upon; to see all the way through.

- On this Good Friday, we choose to gaze upon the cross of Christ.
- There is nothing particularly unique about a religion that worships a resurrected god — the ancient world is filled with such religions. But Christianity is the only religion to have as its central focus *the suffering and degradation of its God!*
It's with Good Friday and Easter together that we find the uniqueness of Christianity.
- The resurrection is made as cheap as the fake grass in an Easter basket if we don't linger long and hard over the scandal of the Cross. The cross is the epicenter of Christianity.

The first time I really looked... Story – Passion of the Christ

- Too much to behold at once... I watched as they...
 - Arrested this innocent man and subject Him to an illegal trial under the cover of darkness and ultimately sentence Him to death as a blasphemer...
 - Subjected Him to a public lashing, 39 of them, with a whip made of leather throngs of various lengths, interwoven with sharp pieces of bone and lead, meticulously designed to inflict the most damage as possible...
 - Stabbed a crown of thorns into His head, to inflict even more pain and public humiliation to this so called "King of the Jews" ...
 - Forced Him to carry His cross, the very instrument His hands and feet would be nailed to up on Calvary, and the place He would struggle to breath His last breath...
- One of the things that didn't sit right with me... you have this Jesus doing all of these wonderful things : He is healing the sick, receiving people into His presence and forgiving sins... and all of a sudden people hate Him at such an extreme carnal level...

But understanding how we got to that terrible scene is important for us, because what Holy Week is, is us reliving, retelling, re-entering that final week in Jerusalem...,

- We can say, without exaggeration, that everything Jesus said or did was an announcement or declaration of the Kingdom of God...

- The problem with that is we hear that 2K years later and we have no real concept of this archaic word, "kingdom" ... so to understand this better just for tonight let's update our language, say the "government of God" or the "politics of God..." – scandalous right?
- Jesus is saying that you have to rethink everything because I am announcing the arrival of the government/politics of God... an alternative arrangement of the world that comes from God, a new way of arranging human society...

Why is Jesus offering this alternative way? Because our foundational way is broken...

- You see the serpent crawls into Eden, begins to insinuate very subtly (that's what it says about the serpent, He is more subtle than the other beasts of the field). And the insinuation from the serpent is that God does not have their best interests in mind. He subtly incriminates God, blames God. Entices Adam and Eve to partake of the tree, to transgress against God, and no sooner than have they eaten of the fruit that they knew exactly who is good and who is bad, and they begin the age-old practice of blaming (scapegoating)...
- As soon as Adam realizes there is something wrong, he blames Eve, and then Eve blames the serpent. A generation later you see Cain blaming and this escalates into killing his brother Abel..., And then we are off, the foundation of the world we have created is laid...
- Scapegoating is one of the foundational sins of the world... by that I mean its at the foundation of how we formed society.

Jesus was proclaiming to the principalities and powers (the very rich, the very powerful, the very religious) that their time was up, because the alternative from Heaven was now within reach...

- This is why Jesus emphasized in the beatitudes how fortunate are the poor, the suffering, the meek, and those aching for justice, because they are the people most likely to embrace this alternative kingdom of God as good news...
- The more He does so, the more the Jewish people recognized Him as the long-awaited Christ...
- This is a title meaning anointed one, which is simply referring to the ancient Hebrew practice of anointing the king with oil. So, King Jesus is what Christ Jesus means.
- And in His ministry, every time they recognized Jesus as this, "Shh.. don't tell anyone" ... and this is a problem because there already was a King and his name was Caesar.
- But Jesus' entry into Jerusalem is the first time He embraces Himself as King...

The long-awaited King...

(Vs.) Zechariah 9:9-10 (ESV) – "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow shall be cut off, and he shall speak peace to the nations; his rule shall be from sea to sea,"

Zoom out to see...

- **Pontius Pilate, the Governor, the stand in authority for King Caesar is coming into Jerusalem.** He is there because the city is a powder keg. The Jews travel once a year for Passover, a celebration of Jewish liberation, and if there is going to be a revolt it will be this week. In fact, there are already mini rebellions and sedition going on.... So Pilate enters town from the West on His war horse and the full might of the Roman army...
- In from the East, you would see a group of Galileans following their king as He rides the colt of a donkey into town. It's almost an embarrassing site, His feet dragging on the ground...

The principalities and powers had a vested interest in keeping the world as it had always been arranged — an arrangement that benefits the elite. To change would have required an examination of themselves, but that is not something they were willing to do...

- So, those in power - Caiaphas (the very religious), Herod (the very rich), and Pilate (the very powerful) colluded together to execute this would be King who threatened their preferred way of life.

A mere five days after arriving in Jerusalem, Jesus is betrayed, arrested, tried, condemned, spit upon, beaten, scourged, and crucified.

- That's how long it took for the blaming/scapegoating way in which we have ordered the world to catch up and commit the greatest of crimes... the murder of God. And that's what we see when we look upon the cross; — the killing of the Innocent One.

Evil begins with subtlety... in whispers... in the dark.

- This still lives in you and me...
- Matt. 26 : Then the chief priests and the elders of the people gathered in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, and plotted together in order to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him.

(Vs) Matt. 26:14-16 – Then one of the twelve, whose name was Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests in secret and offered to betray Jesus for 30 pieces of silver...

- What does the name of the devil mean? The blamer, accuser.

Jesus gives us a choice...

(Vs.) Matthew 27:17 (ESV) – So when they had gathered, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release for you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?"

The cross must be gazed upon... you must behold it over and over again...

(Vs.) 1 Cor. 11:23-25+27-28 (MSG) – Jesus, on the night of his betrayal, took bread. Having given thanks, he broke it and said, This is my body, broken for you. Do this to remember me. After supper, he did the same thing with the cup: This cup is my blood, my new covenant with you. Each time you drink this cup, remember me. Anyone who eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Master irreverently is like part of the crowd that jeered and spit on him at his death. Is that the kind of "remembrance" you want to be part of? Examine your motives, test your heart, come to this meal in holy awe.

- On the cross, He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Showing an alternative way to live than the one the world knows. A co-suffering form of love that would rather die than use violence against His enemies.
- But this Jesus, who went to the garden and prayed through such agony that He sweat drops of blood, did so that He would have the strength to make it to this throne... that is the we king we gaze upon...
- The cross is God sharing in all that I am, all that we have to undergo and suffer, and in this way, He offers us the way through and beyond suffering to new life.

So today, above all days, we look unflinchingly at Christ crucified, we Behold the Lamb that is King. To enter deep into the mystery of the cross is to encounter the greatest revelation of who God is.

POEM : "Behold the Lamb"

*Behold, The Lamb of God is passing by.
 "Follow Him," was John the Baptist's cry.
 For He'll take away all of this world's sin
 and open heaven's door to let us in.
 As a lamb to the slaughter He was led
 pouring out His precious blood so red.
 For only He could pay that awful price
 and offer His life as a sacrifice.
 Stricken and smitten was He
 for my transgressions and iniquity.
 There lash by lash my penalty He paid
 when upon the alter the Lamb was laid.
 But behold...*

*Before heaven's throne the Lamb of God stands
 the wounds of the cross in His feet and hands.
 There He intercedes and He pleads for me
 This Lamb of God Who died to set us free*