

The Second Sunday after Epiphany
15-01-2023
St Cuthbert's Anglican Church – Tweed Heads

Isaiah 49: 1-7 The Lord's Chosen One will come
His salvation will reach to the ends of the earth

Psalms 40: 1-14 Waiting Patiently for the Lord

1 Corinthians 1: 1-9 Paul gives thanks for their fellowship in Jesus

John 1: 29-42 John the Baptist testifies about Jesus
The first disciples follow Jesus

Introduction

Last week we recalled Jesus' Baptism by John the Baptist. This week we hear from John's gospel, also at the beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry:-

We are given a picture of "Who Jesus is", especially with the words John the Baptist uses for Jesus, that is "The Lamb of God".

And we are also given a picture of "What Jesus does", as we see how Jesus calls people to follow him.

Let us look at these two aspects of "Who Jesus is", and "What Jesus does", and how it relates to us in our lives today.

Who Jesus is - Lamb of God

Today we have heard the words of John the Baptist when he sees Jesus:-

'Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!' John 1:29

Throughout the New Testament there are many names, and many titles which are used for Jesus. Today we hear the title "Lamb of God", and we also hear Rabbi, Messiah, Christ, and Son of God. If Jesus is God, then we will always be struggling to find enough ways to describe how wonderful and amazing Jesus is.

What does this title, "Lamb of God", convey.

In the Foundational Salvation Story of Israel, we have the Passover (Exodus 12). At the first Passover, a lamb was sacrificed, and the blood was put on

the doorposts and the lintel of the houses of the Israelites, so that God would pass over them, but the firstborn of all the Egyptians would perish.

From this time onward a Lamb was sacrificed at Passover.
For Christians, Jesus is the final lamb to be sacrificed.

The Atonement, in which Jesus died on the Cross, so that we could receive forgiveness for our sins, is central to Christianity. Of course, Jesus didn't stay dead. He rose from the dead, and all those who trust Jesus can live with this Resurrection Hope.

In 2013 the Doctrine Commission of the Anglican Church of Australia published a book called "Christ died for our Sins - Essays on the Atonement" Within Christianity there are a lot of different views on how the Atonement works, but the authors of these essays were in agreement on the following points:-

1. Atonement is grounded in God's Love, not God's wrath.

We hear this in John 3:16:-

¹⁶ 'For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

2. Father and Son (and Spirit) are united in the Atonement, not pitted against one another.

3. The Atonement is necessary because of humanity's "SIN" problem.
We are all sinners.

4. The atonement is a demonstration of God's justice, not a travesty of it.

5. The atonement is not merely about the death of Christ. Similarly, to baptism last week, it is incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension.

6. No image of the atonement is sufficient on its own. Sacrifice, Victory, Satisfaction, Moral influence, and others are all part of the overall picture in what God has provided and achieved for us in Jesus.

To say that Jesus provides the way for all people to come to God, is of course a Huge Claim! In John 14:6 Jesus says:-

'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

As Christians we believe that Jesus is the way to God. Jesus is the way to experience the fullness of all that life has in store for us.

What Jesus does – Jesus called followers

If this claim about Jesus is true, what would you expect Jesus to do about it?

We hear in John's gospel today how Jesus called followers:-

³⁵ The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, ³⁶ and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, 'Look, here is the Lamb of God!' ³⁷ The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus.

And then those who met him called others:-

. ⁴⁰ One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. ⁴¹ He first found his brother Simon and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah' (which is translated Anointed). ⁴² He brought Simon to Jesus

We see in the New Testament how the message spread.
We see today that Christianity is the largest religion in the world.

An atheist once said "I don't trust Christians who don't share their faith. If what they believe is true, then they should want to help others to be saved and not be lost to God."

Sharing the Good News of Jesus with others is something we are all called to do. It is not necessarily easy, but then nothing of great value or worth generally does come easily.

We are not all called to be evangelists like Billy Graham, but we are all called to share in our own way. The easiest way to share the gospel is to tell someone your own story of why you believe in Jesus. That is why I introduced the sheets at the back of the Church entitled, "My Christian Story".

Conclusion

As Christians we affirm with the John Baptist:-

'Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'

And in this affirmation, we are called to share this "Good News" with the world. I'd like to conclude with our collect prayer which sums this up nicely:-

Almighty God, whose Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, is the light of the world: may your people, illumined by your word and sacraments, shine with the radiance of his glory, that he may be known, worshipped, and obeyed to the ends of the earth; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**