

**THE  
BON AIR  
PULPIT**

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**Scripture: *John 1:19-29***

**Message: *Behold the Lamb***

God always called great attention to events in Jesus life. When He was getting ready to be born, He sent angels to come from heaven and they began to sing to shepherds. When He is getting ready to begin His ministry, He raised up a man that we know as John the Baptizer who came and spoke for about six months. The Bible says that people came from everywhere to hear his message. You can almost sense the electricity in the air as people began to sense that God was getting ready to do something great.

As you know, the Bible says that before He comes again, God is going to send the angel, Gabriel, to blow the trumpet of God so that everyone will get ready for His coming again. This morning as we enter Holy Week, I wanted to call your attention to this person named, John the Baptizer, who came to call attention that Jesus Christ was coming. It is very significant what he said about Him and we wanted to understand it better today.

This is from the book of John, Chapter 1, Verse 29. *The next day John saw Jesus coming towards him and he said "look, this is 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 is greater than me because He lived before me. I myself did not know Him but the reason I came to baptizing with water was so that He could be revealed to all of Israel."*

For over five months you and I have been caught up in the tragic drama of little Elian Gonzales. You remember the story that his mother tried to flee from Cuba and come to the United States where they could enjoy freedom. Something tragically happened in that ninety miles between Cuba and the United States and the boat sank. We don't understand how Elian was put on an inner tube. He was the only survivor of that tragic accident. There were two fellows who had a large, fishing boat and they left Florida and went out into the Atlantic to do some fishing and as they passed by they happened to see this inner tube that was bobbing up and down. The man's name was Dontago Darlympe and he said, "I saw it and I thought it was a doll on an inner tube. We went on and did fishing and then he said when we finished our day of fishing we thought maybe we should go back and check that inner tube. When they got close they realized it was a little boy. Dontago jumped into the water and picked him up, put Elian into the boat and took him to the US Coast Guard. The day that I saw them interview Dontago, the news commentator said, "You realize that you saved that little boy?" Well that is a word we don't use to much, that is more of a Bible word. Nobody knows how a little boy who was unconscious was able to stay on an inner tube. A big wave could have come and hit it and knocked him off. As you know, if you are in salt water, you can get dehydrated and then with the sun beating down on you, you don't live very long in the ocean. But Dontago jumped in, picked him up, put him on the boat and he saved him. Saved doesn't have any meaning if you could do something for yourself. Little Elian couldn't paddle a big inner tube to get to safety, soon he was going to die. If he was ever going to be alive somebody would have to come and save him.

That is a word that I said is a Bible word. We find it all the way through the scripture. What it says is that Jesus Christ came to save us. Now that doesn't have any meaning to you again if you think you can paddle your own inner tube to the coast. But once you understand that Jesus saves us means that He did something for us that we simply could not do for ourselves. We were helpless and hopeless and that Christ came to save us.

The only way that you can become a Christian is to admit your own helplessness and to admit the fact that there is no strength within yourself. The person who comes down the aisle of a church and says I want to give my life to Christ, the first thing he admits is that he is helpless. He comes to confess his brokenness. I came down the aisle of a church when I was a young person and what I said to God was, "Dear God, within myself I do not have the ability to be what you want me to be. I can't forgive myself, I can't live like You want, I admit my brokenness and my sin and I come to depend upon you to save me."

The whole essence of the Christian faith is you first admit your helplessness and hopelessness and you come to trust in Jesus Christ as Savior.

P.T. Forsyth was an English preacher and he said most churches are filled with nice, wonderful, people who have never admitted their own helplessness and have never experienced therefore breathless gratitude to God. The reason we come and sing the praises of God is that we come to understand that in Jesus Christ, He did something for us that we could not do for ourselves. He came to save us and that is the week we are celebrating this week.

When John the Baptist turned to introduce this one who had come, I want you to hear the words that he said because we need to be reminded of what this word means to be saved by Jesus. He said of him first, this is the Lamb of God. Most of us don't know how to relate to that, taking a person and comparing it to an animal.

When you begin to read through the Bible, what you will find is the word, lamb, is all the way through the Bible. It is an interesting study to start at the front of the Bible and go all the way to the end. You begin to understand more and more what this word means when we call Jesus, the Lamb of God.

You only have to turn to the fourth chapter of the Bible, man has already sinned and they begin to take it real seriously. They understood that when they disobeyed God, that it separated them from God. They began to feel something we don't feel too much of and that is guilt. They began to ask the question, how can we get right with God. In the fourth chapter of the Bible it says that when the first worship service was held, that Abel brought the first of his flock, a lamb. He offered it to God. Now listen to what he is doing. What he is saying is, "Dear God, I can't die for my own sins but what I am going to do is I am going to take an animal and I am going to slay the animal. The animal is in that sense, taking my place, and I offer this animal. What I am saying Dear God is, I want this animal to be a substitute for me and I want therefore on the basis of the death of this animal that you would forgive me." All the way through the Bible, people then began to bring a lamb and they began to offer it and to say this is my offering to take my place.

When the Jewish people began to build their temple and their tabernacle before God, when you turn to Leviticus, Chapter 1, Verse 4, you were to take a lamb, you were to lay your hands on it in the sense that I am transferring my sins to the animal and you are to slay the animal and that is to become the sacrifice for your sin. Everyday the Jewish priest would come for all of the people. He would take a lamb and he would slay it. In Isaiah, Chapter 53, there is a great promise given and this is the promise. "All we like sheep have gone astray and God has laid upon Him the sins of us all." God came and put His hands on the lamb to transfer our sins there. It says later, He is going to be like a lamb that will take away our sins. With all of that, you can begin to understand that when John the Baptist turned and said, "This is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." Everybody's ears picked up. This is God's one who has been prophesied, the one who has been symbolized, the one who everybody understood, He is the lamb who takes away the sin of the world.

Somebody said that if you take the first of the Bible and under score every time it says lamb or death or blood, and then you begin to flick through the pages like this, they call it the trail of blood. Because all the way through the Bible you begin to understand that somebody is going to come.

When Jesus came, John turned to him and said He is the one who is God's final Lamb for the sins of the whole world. There is a major event that I did not mention in my little going through the Old Testament, but if you understand it, it will make this statement really come alive to you. You recall that the Jewish people were slaves in Egypt. God said I am going to free you and this is the way I am going to do it. You take a lamb, I want you to kill it, and for every family I want you to take blood and I want you to sprinkle it over the door. Tonight the death angel is going to come and he is going to fly over everybody's house but the people who have the blood over the door, the Bible says the death angel will pass over you.

We have a wonderful member of our congregation who was here this morning and if you ask him, he is a Jew. He is a Jew who has come to faith in Christ. If you were to ask him, or ask any Jewish person, what is the greatest celebration you have and without hesitation they would say the Passover. Because this celebrates freedom from slavery, the blood over the door, the death angel Passover.

When you come to this week that we call Holy Week, you will also understand the Jews are celebrating Passover. Listen carefully. The high day of Passover is Friday, our good Friday, is their Passover. People came from all around the world to Jerusalem at Passover day because this is what would happen. High priest would take a lamb and he would slay it. He would go into the temple at exactly three

o'clock in the afternoon. He would offer this sacrifice to God and then he would say a priestly formula that in the Greek language is Tethestia.

Now listen carefully. When was Jesus sacrificed? Friday. What hour of the day was Jesus crucified? The Bible tells you that. In so many translations, it was the ninth hour. The Jewish day begins at six o'clock in the morning and it ends at six o'clock in the evening. The ninth hour means it is three o'clock in the afternoon. At three o'clock in the afternoon the Bible says there came an eclipse of the sun, there was darkness over all the earth. At three o'clock the Bible says that Jesus gave up the ghost. I want you to understand. On this mountain is the temple. On this mountain is the cross. At exactly three o'clock the priest is slaying the lamb here. On this hill at exactly three o'clock, God is slaying the lamb right here.

I want you to hear again those of you who have read the story. You recall Jesus' last words was, "*It is finished.*" You know what the Greek word is for *this is finished*? Tethestia. It is exactly the same word that the priest is saying at exactly the same time. What we are saying as Christians is that Christ is God's Lamb who has been prophesied and now has come at exactly the moment of fulfillment and He has come to forgive us of all our sin. If you were to ask me, "Are you a Christian?" I would tell you, "yes."

Let me tell you what I did when I was a young boy. One day in my home when my father was explaining to me about Jesus Christ, I admitted to God that I was a sinner. I admitted I couldn't live like he wanted me to live. I came and laid my hands on Jesus and I said, "Lord Jesus, I transfer my sins to you and you have died for my sins." I understand that one day I am going to stand before the eternal Father. Somebody asked me one day, "What are you going to tell Him when you get there?" I don't think I am going to tell Him much. What I am not going to tell Him, "You know, I was the pastor of a church." I am not going to tell Him I was better than somebody else. I was not going to give Him excuses of why I did what I did. My hope is that when I stand before Him, I am going to turn to the one at His right hand and say, "Lord, I have no right, I am not worthy to stand in your presence but He who is the lamb has forgiven me." I trust in what He has done for me. My hope is not in me, my hope is in Him and my faith is what He has done for me.

Let me show you how the Bible ends. This is the fifth chapter of Revelation. God has opened up heaven and there is God who is on His throne and God is holding a book in His hand. The book is closed and this is the big question. Who is worthy to open the book? What we understand later is the book is the rest of history. Who is going to be in charge of history? The Bible says they looked all around and nobody in heaven and nobody in earth could open the book until finally this is what it says. "Do not weep, the one who is the Lamb is able to open the scroll. Then I saw a lamb looking as if it had been slain standing at the center of the throne encircled by four living creatures and all of the elders. Then I looked and I heard the voice of many angels numbered thousand upon thousands and ten thousands times ten thousands. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elder and in a loud voice they said, *worthy is the lamb who was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and honor and glory and praise.* Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, singing worthy to Him who sits on the throne and unto the Lamb be praise and honor, glory and power for ever and ever Amen. Who is at the right hand of God? Who is in charge of all of the rest of history? The Lamb, the Lamb, the one who came to be our Savior, the Lamb of God.

R. G. Lee was one of America's most famous ministers. For the last thirty years of his ministry, he was pastor of the famed Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis. One day, he took for the first time a trip to Israel and he went up on the place where the crucifixion took place. He had a private guide and Dr. Lee had memorized all these scriptures so as he walked up it was a religious moment for him and so he quoted the scripture about all the crucifixion of Christ. The host, as they got to the top, turned to him and said, "You seem to know so much about this place, have you ever been here before?" Dr. Lee said "Yes, two thousand years ago." You see, what we as Christians understand is that two thousand years ago, when the lamb of God came and died on the cross, He was forgiving all of our sins. We, as Christians, our hope is in the lamb.

Notice the second word he said about Him. He is the Lamb who came to take away the sins of the world. If I were to ask you a question, what do you think is the greatest thing God can do for you?, I would get a variety of answers. When we come to church and I ask people, "What is the one thing you would like to pray for?" ninety-five per cent of the people raise their hand and what they pray for is that somebody will get well. We think the greatest thing God can do for us is make us well. Sometimes we have problems in our families and we raise our hand and say the greatest thing God can do is take care of the difficulty in our family. Sometimes we have economic needs and we raise our hands and say God we

want you to take care of our bills and have enough food. I want you to hear again what God thinks is the greatest need we have. God thinks the greatest need we have is not to do something for us but to do something in us. Not to take care of the circumstances of our life but to change the character of our soul. What Christ saw the greatest need was, is that He could change people within because He understood it doesn't make any difference what you have on the outside if you are not changed on the inside. Not living as God wants you to live, then we don't have the greatest gift of all. He came to take away our sin.

When I lived in Germany, a group of us took a tour of Eastern Europe. One of the places we went to is a place called Buchenwald. The reason we went to Buchenwald is it was the German concentration camp. It was there that ministers, priests, rabbis, most of them were taken to Buchenwald, so it was a Holy pilgrimage for me to go stand at the place where many martyrs had given their faith to Christ. I stood on a building that had been called the Parson's building and I recognized that there were many men there who had given their life for Christ. I went out of that building over to a huge, brick structure and went inside and realized what was there was nothing but ovens, one after another. As you went outside of that brick building there was a little railroad track and what was happening was that people were dying so fast at Buchenwald, they couldn't even take care of the bodies fast enough. They built carts and they would throw the corpses in the carts and roll them down and they would hit a little trap door and go into the ovens where they would burn. I stood at Buchenwald and I said, "The brutality of people is beyond comprehension." You are aware that about six million people died in ovens like that. Just keep going east. Stalin was in power at about the same time. Historians say not six million, but sixty million men, women and children died because of the brutality of another man.

Maybe you would like to go and talk to one of the missionaries I talked to from Rhowanda who was there when tribe turned against tribe and they began to attack each other with all kinds of weapons and realized that a million people's lives saw the sands of Rhowanda. You realize the brutality of this world.

Maybe you would like to go not far from here. Go with me with a police officer and look through his instrument and see a lady drive up in a nice car. She is well dressed, gets out of her car and punches a button and the lid of her trunk comes up. You realize that in that trunk there is enough drugs to pollute every child in this auditorium. Two teenagers come by, take a couple of packages, throw it in their jackets and get in their car and they are gone. Maybe you should sit down by these teenagers who have been so abused by a woman who wanted to make a little money that she didn't care if every kid in Bon Air ended up being in a drunken stupor because she made a few bucks and then you will understand how mean people really are. Maybe to go to a hospital where they will take a little baby and pull the whole baby out of the mothers womb, except its head, and then kill the baby and call that freedom.

You understand that when God said what I need to do for people is I need to change their heart on the inside. The greatest thing that God can do for you is to make you a different person within. What Christ came to do is take away the sin of the whole world. Hear the last word. He came to take away the sin of everybody. Christianity is not an eastern religion or a western religion. It is a religion for everybody. It is not a white man's religion, a red man's religion or a black man's religion. It is for everybody. Christ came for every person in the whole world.

I understand people come to me and say you are a Christian, you live in America. People around the world have their own religions. Why should we go and bother them? Because, we have the greatest news that God has ever done. God has come to die for everybody and to forgive everybody and to take away their sins. If you had a cure for cancer, would you just go to the black people in the United States? Would you say this is for everybody around the whole world. We go to the whole world. It doesn't make any difference this morning if you are an older person, a young person, whether you have a lot of money or no money, a lot of education or no education, it doesn't make any difference who you are. You need to understand that when Christ died as the lamb of God for you, your name was there and He died for you. I recognized that even more significantly last summer when I went to visit my missionary daughter in Mozambique. She lives in a little dusty Mozambican village of about ten to fifteen thousand people and she began to realize there were other people in the village who spoke English. She began to invite them over to her house on Sunday nights. Come, and although we are from many different places, come and we will have a service in English. I speak English sometimes fairly well, so she said, "Why don't you come and speak every night in English?" I walked in the door and I walked around and shook hands with everybody. I shook hands with a girl from South America, I shook hands with a young man from the Philippines, I shook hands with a man from Europe, I shook hands with people from different countries in Africa and I realized that in the living room of my daughter's house, there were people from eleven different countries.

In that room that night was a man who had given his adult life as a missionary pilot and flies missionaries all over Africa. He was there that night because he had flown one in. He said, "I have been flying people all over Africa for years, and he said, "There has been a war here and a famine there and a problem here and I wondered if the message of Christ would ever get out to this continent. I have prayed for this place and this country that these people would come to know Christ." Here was a man fifty years of age, an airplane pilot, who began to cry in our midst. He said, "You don't know what it means to me to have people from all over the world, right here in this little, dusty, village telling people about Jesus Christ." It reminded me Christ came for the whole world. While I was there visiting my daughter, I would go to the various churches in the area and on Sunday morning I got up real early and went to Catholic mass. As you know I was raised in Louisiana, and for many years, even though my father was a Baptist preacher, I would go to Catholic mass with my friends because all of my friends were Catholic. I am very familiar with a Catholic mass and how it is done. I got up real early to go to mass and the church was over flowing. There was no room for me to even get inside so I determined I was going to stand outside and watch. I was the only person with white skin who was there so somebody came up and tapped me on the shoulder and led me around. The next thing I knew I was sitting next to the priest. I had a real good view of what was going on. I went through the mass and then they came to the Lord's Supper communion. He came down and as you know people come down the aisle and they give you a wafer. I was right there and could see everybody. I noticed the priest get down on his knees and I knew enough about the mass to know it was not the time to do that. I couldn't figure out what it was and he stayed there. I was the only white man there and was already singled out so it didn't make any difference what I did. I couldn't cause any more stir than what I had already caused so I went and stood right by him. I was anxious to know why he would get down on his knees and do this. What I saw was a man who had obviously been in the war and had no legs. The cathedral I was in was twice the size, length wise of this. That man with no legs had already crawled his way down to the front and the priest was bending down on his knees because all the man could do was get up on his elbows and he took him and gave him the wafer. I knew then, you don't have to be president of the United States, you don't have to be educated, all you have to be is a person who says, "I want this and Christ came for him as much as he came for me."