



Jan. 19, 2020 John. 1:29-42 & Is. 49: 3-6

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#### ENTERING THE SCENE:

Much happened in the early church between Mark's early gospel and the gospel of John. Jerusalem is no more and persecutions have already become a part of being a Christian. The "Lamb" has been slaughtered, but the Holy Spirit has come in fire as the people experience the risen Lord in their midst. The task is to share this truth. Now each baptized person is a "John" who proclaims his or her baptism of fire. We are invited to join those witnesses in our own time. John loses no time pointing us to Jesus and then setting us on our way, leaving the testifier behind. The pace is breathless. The response needs to be immediate. Everything is changing. You have been listening and following John the Baptist, and now he is telling you to follow Jesus. You find it difficult to understand. John sounded so right, so on target. Many people are convinced that he is the Messiah. You have been looking for an opening for your hope. What to do? Now when you ask Jesus where he is "coming from", he simply invites you to "come and see". But the time has come to decide. You see the brothers of Andrew taking off to check things out. Are you going too?

John 1:29-42

The next day he [John] saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, "Here is the **Lamb of God** who takes away the sin of the world! 30 This is he of whom I said, 'after me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me.' 31 **I myself did not know him**; but **I came baptizing with water** for this reason, that he might be **revealed** to Israel." 32 And John testified, "**I saw the Spirit descending** from heaven like a dove, and it **remained on him**." 33 **I myself did not know him**, but **the one who sent me to baptize with water** said to me 'He on whom you see **the Spirit descend and remain** is the one who **baptizes with the Holy Spirit**.' 34 And I myself have seen and have **testified** that this is the **Son of God!**"

*The following verses are included in the Revised Common Lectionary*

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**. 38 When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, "**What are you looking for?**" They said to him, "**Rabbi**" (which translated means **Teacher**), "**where are you staying?**" 39 He said to them, "**Come and see.**" They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about **four o'clock** in the afternoon. 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, who looked at him and said, "You are **Simon** son of John. You are to be called **Cephas**" (which is translated **Peter**).

**DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Andrew invites his brothers to "check Jesus out". If Andrew had asked you along, would you have gone?

**PRAYER:** Come and see. This is our invitation today. There is an awesome immediacy in this invitation. It does not allow us to theorize about something, it requires us to actually experience someone. Lord, we long to see, but most of the time from a safe distance. We like Simon, have to be brought to you by someone who has already found you. We take a moment now to thank those someone's who have brought us to faith, and pray that we have the strength and courage to share what we have found with others. Amen.

#### WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

**JOHN / ANDREW:** John proclaimed Jesus to his disciples, one of whom was Andrew. Andrew proclaimed Jesus to his brother Simon, and the two become the first two disciples of Jesus in John's gospel.

*Who has proclaimed Jesus to you? How have those people made a disciple of you? Are you an Andrew or a John for someone else?*

**LAMB OF GOD / SON OF GOD / RABBI / TEACHER / MESSIAH / ANOINTED:** All these titles connect Jesus with the hopes of the people who were anxious to have the promise of old fulfilled.

*Take some time and reflect on each title to see what hope each reveals. Which one attracts you the most? Why?*

**I MYSELF DID NOT KNOW HIM:** Twice John tells us that he did not know Jesus, and needed the guidance of the Holy Spirit to help him recognize him.

*Why do you think John emphasized this fact so much? Does this set the stage for the rest of the gospel in any way?*

**TESTIFY /REVEALED:** John brought together all his experience of God. Then he witnessed to what God had revealed to him about the one who was to come.

*How do you bring together your experience of God in order to witness to what God is revealing in and through you?*

**I CAME TO BAPTIZE WITH WATER / ONE WHO SENT ME TO BAPTIZE:** John is very definite about who he is and who he is not. He is equally sure of his role in creation history.

*Are you sure about who you are and who you are not? Can you see why this assurance is needed in order to know your own role in creation history?*

**I SAW THE SPIRIT DESCENDING / REMAINED ON HIM:** It was thought that it was a sign of God's peace within a person if a dove would light and stay on someone.

*Do you have any signs that help you to know that God's Spirit lives in someone? What are they? How do you describe this quality to others?*

**BAPTIZE WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT:** John's baptism was a preparation for what would come next in the baptism of the Holy Spirit. It is not enough to just remove obstacles to God's love; we must then go on to share the Holy Spirit.

*Where are you in this process of being someone who can share the Holy Spirit with others? Are you aware of any obstacles that prevent you from being a witness of God's love in the world?*

**FOLLOWED JESUS:** John now points his disciples toward Jesus, and they immediately follow him.

*Do you have a John in your life? Are you a John for someone else? Are you ready and eager to follow Jesus as Andrew and Simon were?*

**WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR?:** This is the first thing that we hear Jesus say in this gospel. There is a saying; "You find what you are looking for". John, Andrew and Simon were all people on the lookout.

*If Jesus were to ask you this question today, what would be your response?*

**FOUR O'CLOCK /WHERE ARE YOU STAYING?:** Four in the afternoon on a Friday, would be on the threshold of the Sabbath observance. Once the Sabbath began, people were not to be moving about. Andrew and Simon seem to be saying that the answer to Jesus' question would take some time, so they needed to settle in with Jesus in order to observe the Sabbath properly.

*When was the last time you needed to settle in with someone in order to accomplish a deep sharing? Where did you go? Why did you go there? Where do you go now to have a deep sharing with Jesus?*

**COME AND SEE:** Jesus does not give Andrew and Simon directions to his place, but immediately invites them to come with him.

*Read on in this chapter and find what they saw. What was their response to what they saw?*

**SIMON / CEPHAS / PETER:** Once again we find someone getting a new name in order to proclaim a new reality in their life. Simon becomes Cephas/Peter (rock). In the first chapter of John's gospel we are given a rock to stand on.

*In what way does Peter the rock, give you something solid to base your faith on? If you were to be given a new name today, what might it be? What would that name reveal about God's action in your life?*

**PARALLEL TEXTS:** **Jn. 1: 30** // Jn. 1:15; Mt. 3:11; Mk. 1:7; Lk. 3: 16; **Jn. 1:32** // Is. 11:2; Mt. 3:16; Mk. 1:10; Lk. 3:21f; **Jn. 1: 33** // Mt. 3:11; Mk. 1:8; Lk. 3:16; **Jn. 1: 34** // Is. 42:1; Mt. 3:17; Mk. 1:11; Lk. 9:35;

**OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK:** Is. 49:3, 5-6; Ps. 40: 2,4, 7-10; 1 Cor. 1:1-3; Jn. 1:29-34;

Revised Common Lectionary: Is. 49:1-7; Ps. 40: 1-11; 1 Cor. 1:1-9; Jn. 1:29-42;

#### **SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:**

Behold the Lamb of God, says John, pointing to someone that will lead us where we have not yet been. But we know that there is where we want to be. Pg. 46. Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle A 2014.

The Holy Spirit is the point of contact between God and ourselves. The Holy Spirit gives us a transfusion of divine life by which we live spiritual lives. Whereas the Holy Spirit is God as Gift, the human spirit is creature as receptor, the vehicle created by God within the human person that is able to receive the Divine Persons. Through the Holy Spirit, God breathes out. Through our spirits, we breathe God in. Pgs. 12-13.

The more we realize the Spirit within us, the more we become who we are, namely, partakers of the divine nature where this "second nature" is existentially the source of actions. Pg. 156.

The Spirit interiorizes what the Word unveils. Pg. 212.

The Holy Spirit is God, but the distinctive character of the Holy Spirit is its "givability." Pg. 204.

Goergen, Donald. *Fire of Love: Encountering the Holy Spirit*. NY. Paulist Press. 2006.

When all nature is at rest, not a leaf moving, then at evening the dew comes down -- no eye to see the pearly drops descending, no ear to hear them falling on the verdant grass -- so does the Spirit come to you who believe. When the heart is at rest in Jesus -- unseen, unheard by the world -- the Spirit comes, and softly fills the believing soul, quickening all, renewing all within. - Robert Murray M'Cheyne

The Spirit of God has been present to creation from the beginning of time. The Spirit is divine energy deep within God's evolving creation, the source of its creative evolution, its increasing complexity, its growth in consciousness, its unity, and its diversity. This creative Spirit breaks through from within creation, not only as the energy of evolution but as the indwelling Spirit within each of us... Pg. 106. Goergen, Donald. *Fire of Love: Encountering the Holy Spirit*. NY. Paulist Press. 2006.

John 1:29 recalls early Jewish interpretations of Exodus 1:15. In these Aramaic retellings of Moses' infancy, Pharaoh dreams that a lamb placed on a balance outweighs all of Egypt. His court interpreters proclaim the lamb will be a Jewish liberator. Hence, John's "lamb" imagery not only evokes the Passover offering, whose blood wards off the angel of death, but also associates Jesus with that earlier savior, Moses. Levine, Amy-Jill. *Peeling Back the Layers: The Changing Faces of Jesus*. Bible Review. 10/2002. Pg. 54.

Like many biblical writers, John understands history as the arena in which God's purpose is fulfilled. It is the stage *on* which God, through Jesus, reveals himself. That revelation can only be received by eyes of faith. Some see and do not perceive or receive the revelation. Again a Johannine paradox: the initiative lies wholly with Jesus, who says, "You did not choose me, but I chose *you*" John 15:16. Yet the movement from the divine side must be accompanied by a movement from the human: "My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me; if any man's will is to do his will, he shall know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking *on* my *own* authority" John 16: 17. God is the first cause in history, but God's causation does not exclude human causation. They are held in paradoxical tension. John then is a theologically centered historian. Smith, P. Moody. *John: Historian or Theologian?* Bible Review. 10/2004 Pg. 45.

Jews can gain insight into Christ's atoning crucifixion by recalling the contexts of the biblical notions of purity and impurity and the sacrificial system of the priests, the rituals of the sanctuary, and the Temple. Jews can understand Christ's atonement as a liturgical event with some parallels to the Jewish liturgy of the High Holidays, particularly Yom Kippur – the Day of Atonement. In referring to Jesus as "the lamb who takes away sin" John invites his readers to make a connection between Christ and the slaughtering of lambs for the purpose of the expiation of sin, something we find throughout the Torah. Pg. 297-98. Ochs, Peter, et al Ed. *Christianity in Jewish Terms*. Boulder CO. Westview Press. 2000.

**BAPTISM-** The Qumran Scrolls now indicate that baptism was practiced by the sect of Qumran before John the Baptist; and a connection between John and this group is not excluded In the Manual of Discipline it is stated that mere ablution cannot really cleanse a man; only by submission of his soul to all of God's ordinances can he become clean and thus be sprinkled with the waters of purification. God Himself will finally purge all the acts of man and refine man's substance, destroying every spirit of perversity within his flesh and cleansing him by a holy spirit and sprinkling upon him the spirit of truth like waters of purification to cleanse him -- a phrase remarkable similar to Mk, 1:8. The Manual, however, forbids any one to go into the water in order to attain the purity of holy men, which indicates that the sect did not regard the rite in itself as effective, it had no value except as a token of the sincere inner disposition of repentance. McKenzie, John. *Dictionary of the Bible*. Macmillan Pub. Co. NY. 1965. Page 79.

Baptism means immersion. If our mission as Church is to baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Spirit, it means to discover and help others to discover the immersion of God in our world, or rather, that our world is immersed in God. Fr. David Bock

The only time we were ever really unified was when we were one-celled organism, before we began dividing, and the incredibly small number of people in history who have entered the state of unity and stayed there tend to have religions named after them. Pg. 63. Levoy, Gregg. *Callings: Finding and Following an Authentic Life*. NY. Random House. 1997.

It was not forgiveness so much as the dramatic once-for-all conversion which John's baptism symbolized which was new. William Loader

Perhaps Christians need to say something different to their children. "My child, the world is always a dangerous and threatening place where death surrounds us. When I brought you for baptism I acknowledged that I could not possibly guarantee your future. I handed you over to the God who loves you and with whom you are safe in both life and death. There is no security to be found elsewhere, certainly not from me or those like me. Live with courage, therefore, and, if it must be, do not be afraid to die in the service of what is good and just." Meilaender, Gilbert. *After September 11*. Christian Century 9/36-10/3, 2001 Pg. 8.

"a holy community has its center outside itself, in a transcendence whose social analogue is the stranger. Thus a holy community defines the human in terms of an otherness that gives birth to an ethic of hospitality....Compassion binds the individual within the holy community to the individuals in the society beyond its borders." Darrell Fasching

But in fact after the birth from the virgin Celsus, who professed to know everything, goes on to criticize our story about the appearance of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove at the Baptism; then after this he attacks the prophecy about our Savior's advent, and after that runs back to what is recorded after the birth of Jesus, the story about the star and the magi who came from the east to worship the child. And if you were to look yourself, you would find many muddled statements of Celsus throughout his book: so by

this those who know how to preserve and to look for order may prove that he was very arrogant and boastful when he entitled his book *The True Doctrine*, a title used by none of the distinguished philosophers. Plato says that a sensible person will not be confident about such obscure questions. [Origin: Against Celsus](#). (Chapter 40) Celsus wrote a first century attack against Christianity as a:” Religion composed of simple-minded, uneducated members of the lower classes who had been hoodwinked into abandoning the revered traditions of their ancestors by reports of Jesus, a disreputable magician of dubious character. Ehrman, Bart. [After the New Testament](#). NY. Oxford Univ. Press. 1998. Pages 82f.

THE EARLY PERIOD. (Before the Jewish revolt until some point in the 80s) The pre-Gospel formation began with separate homilies, e.g., a homily underlying John 1:35-49 wherein a preacher sought to persuade (fellow) Jews, who had well-formed messianic expectations, to *come* to Jesus and *find* him to be the Messiah. The miracles of Jesus were narrated as signs that he was the Messiah. Success in conversions at first produced relatively little alienation from the Jewish heritage, viz., no debates about the validity of the Torah nor about the Gentile mission. The resultant Johannine group consisted of *Christian Jews* who stood "in relatively untroubled stream of social and theological continuity precisely within the synagogue." One of the preachers in this inner-synagogue messianic group gathered the traditions and the homilies about Jesus into a rudimentary written gospel, somewhat similar to the Signs Gospel or Signs Source posit scholars. Brown, Raymond E. *The Community of the Beloved Disciple*. NY. Paulist Press. 1979. Page 172.

Already in the first chapter of John there are remarkable differences from the Synoptic picture of Jesus' ministry. All four Gospels show respect for John the Baptist (henceforth JBap), but the Fourth Gospel attributes to him a knowledge of Jesus' pre-existence. Since the exalted Christology of pre-existence never appears even on Jesus' lips in the other Gospels, its appearance in J Bap, 's proclamation is surely the product of Johannine theology. A second difference involves the first disciples. The three Synoptic Gospels have Peter, Andrew, James and John called early in the ministry; the cast of characters in John 1:35-5 is somewhat different: Andrew, Peter, Philip, and Nathanael. But markedly different is the disciples' comprehension of Jesus as indicated by the awesome collections of titles they heap on him within three days (Rabbi, Messiah, the one described in the Law and the Prophets, Son of God, King of Israel). By contrast, in Mark no follower of Jesus that he is the Son of God before his death, and in Matt 16:16-17 Peter is singled out as the recipient of divine revelation because in the middle of the ministry he recognizes Jesus as the Son of God! What is more startling, however, than the easy access to Christological titles at the beginning of the Johannine ministry is the indication that Jesus regards these titles as inadequate and promises a greater insight-they will eventually see that it is in him that heaven and earth meet 1:50-51. Brown, Raymond E. *The Community of the Beloved Disciple*. NY. Paulist Press. 1979. Page 26.

At the beginning of the Gospel, John the Baptist testifies: "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it *abided* on him. I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and *abide* is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit'" 1:32-4. Jesus is understood as someone on whom the Spirit abides permanently and as someone who then acts in the power of the Spirit'. The first disciples are presented as asking Jesus: "Where are you *abiding*?" He responds-, ' "Come and see." Then we are told that they "came and saw where he was *abiding* and they *abided* with him that day" 1:38-39. The message is abundantly clear. We are to understand that discipleship is about abiding with Jesus. Page 18. Edwards, Denis. [The God of Evolution](#). Mahwah, NJ. 1999.

In 1962, however, the German Catholic scholar Heinz SchiArmann pointed out that there was also a pre-Resurrection community of disciples who had known Jesus personally and who had preserved memories of what he had said and done. The post-Resurrection community, according to SchiArmann, was simply the continuation of the group that Jesus had gathered around him. The dominant members of the pre-Resurrection community became the leaders of the much larger post-Resurrection community. These were the Galilean fishermen, and it is precisely at this point that what we have learned about them becomes significant.

When read carefully against the background of this ancient industry, the scattered references to Simon Peter and Andrew coalesce into a coherent picture. They came from a prosperous, assimilated Jewish middle-class family. Speaking both Aramaic and Greek, they were brought up to serve in an administrative as well as a practical role in an essential major industry. They knew how to plan and organize. As experienced businessmen, they were astute enough to move their home in order to take advantage of a tax break. Such shrewdness, one can be sure, also manifested itself in the way they handled competition from the many other fishermen on the Sea of Galilee and the Jordan River. They were anything but "uneducated, common men."

Business and profit, however, did not completely satisfy them. They looked for something more spiritual and were prepared to make sacrifices to attain it. Their background and training, however, ensured that they would carefully balance risk against gain. They were not gullible, and nothing in their personalities even hints at a tendency towards self-deception.

From what we know of their characters, it is clear that Simon Peter and Andrew would have functioned as a conservative control in the creative ferment of the post-Resurrection community. They had the authority of eyewitnesses, the sobriety to report accurately and the intelligence to discern between developments that Jesus would approve of and those that he would reject. Murphy O'Connor, Jerome. [Fishers of Fish, Fishers of Men: What We Know of the first Disciples from their Profession](#). www.biblereview.org. June 1999. Pages 22f.

The word "servant" that appears frequently in the bible should more correctly be translated as "slave". Moses, David and Elijah are referred to as slaves of God. Some scholars believe that John the Baptist originally referred to Jesus as the slave of God, not the Lamb of God. For more see: McKenzie, John. [Dictionary of the Bible](#). Macmillan Pub. Co. NY. 1965. . Pages 791-794.

**Gospel According to the Hebrews:** (in Jerome, *Against Pelagius III.2*)

The mother of the Lord and his brothers said to him, "John baptizes for the forgiveness of sins; let us go and be baptized by him." But he said to them, "In what have I sinned that I should go and be baptized by him? Unless, perhaps, what I have just said is a sin of ignorance."

**Gospel according to the Hebrews,** (in Jerome, *Commentary on Isaiah 11:2*)-When the Lord ascended from the water, the whole fount of the Holy Spirit descended and rested upon him, and said to him, "My son, in all the prophets I was waiting for you, that you might come, and that I might rest in you. For you are my rest; and you are my firstborn son, who reigns forever."

**Gospel of the Ebionites,** (in Epiphanius, *Against Heresies, XXX.13.7-8*)-After the people were baptized, Jesus also came and was baptized by John. And as he came up from the water, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Holy Spirit descending in the form of a dove and entering into him. And a voice from heaven said, "Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased." And again, "Today I have begotten thee." And immediately a great light shone around the place; and John, seeing it, said to him, "Who art you, Lord?" And again a voice from heaven said to him, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." Then John, falling down before him, said, "I beseech you, Lord, baptize me!" But he forbade him, saying, "Let it be so; for thus it is fitting to fulfill all things."

**Gospel of the Ebionites,** (in Epiphanius, *Against Heresies XXX.13.2*)-"There was a certain man named Jesus, about thirty years old, who chose us." Also cf. Justin, Dialogue 88:3-When Jesus went down to the water, fire was kindled in the Jordan; and when he was rising from the water, the Holy Spirit came upon him like a dove, as the apostles of our Christ have written.

The consciousness we possess as human beings, contrary to being a special endowment with which we seek to lord it over the rest of creation, needs to be freshly understood as an integral dimension of the 'intelligence' that permeates all life in the universe. We belong to a reality greater than ourselves, an envelope of consciousness informing our awareness, intuition and imagination-in what is essentially an intelligent universe. All our thoughts, dreams and aspirations arise from this cosmic wellspring within which we live and grow, and are empowered to realize our full potential as planetary, cosmic creatures. Anything short of this global engagement leaves us unfulfilled, frustrated and ultimately alienated from God and humanity. Diarmuid Ó Murchú Reclaiming Spirituality,

John the Baptist is the prophet who rejects the status quo without apology, eats the harsh food of that choice, and wears alternative clothing (why else do they take so much time describing it!) outside his own system of religion and culture—when his mom and dad were of the priestly class (**Luke 1:5-6**). He even changes the venue for transformation from temple to river, which was clearly a judgment on the temple system (**John 1:19**), and thus he was not trusted or liked by the authorities (**Matthew 21:23-27**) Richard Rohr

To be baptized means to make the passage with the people of Israel and with Jesus from slavery to freedom and from death to new life. It is a commitment to a life in and through Jesus. Henri Nouwen

Baptism as a way to the freedom of the children of God and as a way to a life in community calls for a personal commitment. There is nothing magical or automatic about this sacrament. Having water poured over us while someone says, "I baptize you in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit," has lasting significance when we are willing to claim and reclaim in all possible ways the spiritual truth of who we are as baptized people. In this sense baptism is a call to parents of baptized children and to the baptized themselves to choose constantly for the light in the midst of a dark world and for life in the midst of a death-harboring society.

Henri Nouwen

**SUGGESTED READINGS:**

Links to all the books mentioned in this guide are on The Ark web site: [www.theark1.com](http://www.theark1.com)

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle A 2014.. Pgs. 42-46. To order contact [Carol Oberfoell](mailto:Carol.Oberfoell@theark1.com)

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle A 2008. Pgs. 28-32. To order contact [Carol Oberfoell](mailto:Carol.Oberfoell@theark1.com)

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle A 2011. Pgs. 36-38. To order contact [Carol Oberfoell](mailto:Carol.Oberfoell@theark1.com)