

“Continue...Come...Close-r!”

“Come...Closer...and See!”

John 1: 29-42; Psalm 40 1-11

January 19, 2020

Our journey in this new liturgical year so far:

~O Come...away...to the manger.

~O, Come ...Close

~Continue...Come...Close-r!

Through Advent trusting, we found ourselves once again in a Christmas ...stunned to know and embrace this new reality:

Even when we are not able to come to grips with our lives,

Not able or knowing how to come close to

God: Fear Not!

God comes. To Us. Intentionally Close to us...

an unconditional, universal love birthing in us possibility

we never could have conceived of on our own.

To show us the way to continue, this

Universal Christ energy

is given the human face of Jesus.

And now we begin to let all this settle in a bit with some extraordinary Ordinary

Time...a growing, greening time

as we Continue the journey coming closer and closer.

So, today, ask yourself:

What exactly is it / AM continuing?

Allowing to continue in my life?

~How does this align with... who / long to be...my authentic

Christmas self?

~Is this what my soul longs to continue?

~Am / willing to consider a different way home to

continue a different aspect of my longing?

John the Baptizer bears witness to Jesus as the Lamb of God.

His use of the image of “the lamb” resonates given the story of the Hebrew peoples. But used now in a new way.

In the stories of the Exodus, a lamb serves as a symbol of God’s deliverance. Families marked their doorposts with an innocent lamb’s blood...so the ordered killing of the firstborn, of those innocent, would pass over them...

and so the ritual of Pass-over begins to be shaped, which is the springboard of our communion ritual.

Later, the lamb is the animal priests sacrifice annually at the time of Passover as a symbol of God's redemption of Israel...

the sins of the people would be absolved for that year as the lamb absorbs them.

It's as if somehow there is a magical/mysterious link between an animal's death and our life...

as if this would reconcile us with God...

as if this would appease God and right what is wrong in us in a way that would turn us around.

as if God needs to be appeased!

Later in John's gospel,

Jesus is crucified on the afternoon before Passover.

As the paschal lambs were being slain, Jesus is crucified.

John the writer uses these images to upend the usual meaning of sacrifice, of Jesus as the lamb... "one who will take away the sins of the world".

Confirming a very different understanding those present begin to grasp. No more sacrifice! It's not what God wants!

But John the writer doesn't help us modern hearers figure out how that works exactly.

More on this in a minute!

In today's wisdom teaching, John the Baptist sets the stage for this new meaning of "Lamb of God" taking away the sins of the world.

He reveals this new meaning as he usurps traditional meaning of a lamb sacrifice referring to Jesus as the Lamb of God.

We've heard it so many times it sounds normal to us, even though it may rub us wrong or we don't get it.

When John proclaims it, it was not a norm and was unprecedented and shockingly absurd.

A person...a lamb?

You wouldn't sacrifice a person? So...

does this mean...no more burnt offerings! Done with that?

Sacrifice is not called for? Won't fix what is wrong?

That's right...a living lamb!

Through Jesus, this misperception is meant to come to an end...that God wants us to make “a sacrifice” and somehow this sets straight what is wrong.

There is no longer to be a sacrificial lamb...or person!

Jesus would upturn that image once and for all
by how He lives.

He did not see himself as a sacrificial lamb, born to die, magically releasing all people
from our sins...

Confess in words and all is made right and just keep on going without a need for a
serious self-look and do-over.

This is not the point of His life or his death.

Come on...think! O Come closer...continue to think on this.

Sacrifice doesn't in and of itself change a single thing.

Then or now. It's not magical release or absolution.

Instead of an outward sacrifice and supposed outward release,
what is within us, at our core, needs to be released
into the light of each day no matter what
the foe or possible risks involved.

Jesus did not die for our future sins.

He died because of the sins of those in power
and a sense of powerlessness amongst the peoples.

When the original users of the phrase “Jesus died
for our sins” said this, it was an expression of faith.
Not a release from the consequences of future actions.

Jesus death meant nothing can stand between God and you...
no church, no government, no system...
no sin/flip/brokenness.

No one can legislate or dictate your relationship with God or keep you from living your
integrity and Oneness with God.

There is no intermediary needed. No lamb.
We have a direct access, direct deposit, God.

It wasn't a syrupy sweet formula that meant you were in the right “club” and could get
away with sinfulness because a lamb was slain.

It was about a God who loves each of us so powerfully, that we cannot die, our souls can withstand...

standing up in the face of oppression/standing up to what is wrong with the world and in our lives...

empowering us to be able to change our daily choices
and so the world.

But here's the thing...

The people of Israel, like most people throughout history who suffer imperial oppression,

longed for a powerful heir to set them free...a king!
(Don't you!)

They wanted someone else to get it all straightened out for them. (Don't you!)

So when John announces Jesus is the one,
calling him the "Lamb of God",

it is about as far from people's expectations as you could get. A lamb? Our King a lamb?

It's no wonder the two disciples followed to try to
figure it out! They were expecting a lion!

To get the impact, imagine John proclaiming in the face of great oppression, "Look, the bunny rabbit of God!"

Not the king of the jungle, but a seemingly defenseless, harmless creature.

Calling Jesus "Lamb of God" announces God's power is utterly different from the world's power.

**It is not great violence,
but enduring self-giving love
that conquers evil and darkness.**

The Universal Christ energy incarnate in Jesus
teaches us where
the hope of our redemption lies: **in us!**

...teaching us how to live with integrity and live just lives of right relationship...against all odds and perceived enemies!

And Jesus gives us a way and the courage to do this...
courage coming from the love experienced personally through your own relationship
with God. Oneness.

Salvation is a powerful, not wimpy, love knowing how to live out courageously from
within without outward violence!

You deeply know it is. You do know what is “right”.

God does not want you to be sacrificed or think sacrificing something or someone will
further a cause
or make you holy or better
or whatever we’ve been seduced or taught to believe.

God did not want to “sacrifice” Jesus by killing him...
what parent would do that?

Jesus’ integrity which brought him to his death in the face of what is evil or corrupt
(two words we hear a lot these days!)

was the ultimate NO! to the violence and corruption of the world...it was the world who
sacrificed Jesus, not God.

Burnt offerings is not what God wants.

What God wants is a good relationship with each of us
that empowers us to live the “law” found in our hearts
...and with delight!

...to share the glad news of salvation
...healing offered what ails you,
a healing in the great congregation.

We are not to stay hidden...living small lives!

God wants us to slow down, so God can catch up,
and live powerful lives that bring joy!

In Jesus we are to know nothing this world can do to us can keep us from God or God
from us.

Jesus later in the story himself says,
“I desire mercy, not sacrifice.”

Do you know what this means?

...when you are arguing at home?

...when you are full of judgment here at church?

...when you are second guessing friends and leaders?

...when you are in the process of making assumptions about people?

...when you have charge over others who make mistakes?

...when you call people family, friend?

Where is mercy? No one is to be sacrificed.

Do you know what it means to be yourself the “Lamb of God” in the face of the oppression of your world and our times? For we have been gifted such power!

Jesus sees you wanting to follow.

He turns to you and asks, “What are you looking for?”

If you don’t know, you won’t know when you find it.

When Jesus says to you, “Come...closer...and see”...

will you slow down, wait even, and go find out what opportunities for integrity lie right before you?

Will you continue to follow?

Will you open your ears to hear a new song?

Will you live into a new life in the life you already live?

We are to *continue...to come...close-r* and closer
to our God, to our truest selves...
to be pure delight...and more fully human.

Only you choose what it is you want to continue...