

"Yes, You"

Text: John 1:29-42a

May the love of God the Father fill you with wonder; may the sacrifice of God the Son fill you with gratitude; and may the indwelling of the Holy Spirit fill you with faith, hope, and love. Amen.

Dear Fellow Christians:

Did you ever play "Not it!" as a kid? The rules were pretty simple. If anyone said that someone had to do something, but didn't specify who that someone was, the last one to say "Not it!" was the guy. "Someone has to go out and see if that's a bear messing around in our camp site."

"Not it!"

I have a vague recollection of testing whether the rules might, perchance, apply even when my parents specifically assigned me, by name, to carry out a particular chore. "It's your turn to do the dishes, Mike." "Not it!" I somehow envisioned my parents turning to my brother and saying, "Well, Ross, rules are rules. I guess you'll have to do them." It not only didn't work, as I recall it was actually quite counterproductive.

Unfortunately, even if some didn't play the game as kids, we all still have a tendency to play it when we are older. We do it every time we read God's Word with that same "Not it!" mindset. We do that whenever we hear or read God's Word as though we are just spectators at an event that involves only others, as though the words are intended for others, and therefore as general entertainment rather than individual instruction.

In fact, see if that doesn't ring true as you read the words of our text for this morning, found in the Gospel of John, the First Chapter:

ESV John 1:29-42a The next day he (John the Baptist) saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, 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 before me, because he was before me.' ³¹ I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel." ³² And John bore witness: "I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. ³³ I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' ³⁴ And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God." ³⁵ The next

day again John was standing with two of his disciples, ³⁶ and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" ³⁷ The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. ³⁸ Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, "What are you seeking?" And they said to him, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?" ³⁹ He said to them, "Come and you will see." So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. ⁴⁰ One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. ⁴¹ He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means Christ). ⁴² He brought him to Jesus.

So far the verbally inspired words of our God. Since we know and believe that these are the inerrant words of our perfect God, therefore it is fitting and right that we give these truths our undivided attention. So also we pray: "**Sanctify us by Your truth, O Lord. Your Word is truth.**" Amen.

They say that the first step in overcoming a problem is admitting that you have one. Assuming that to be true, our first goal this morning is to admit that we have a problem when it comes to spiritual laziness. There are many things in life – many bits of information – that are safely forgotten or neglected. There is no shame, for example, in being really bad at Trivia or Jeopardy. Not so with God's Word. While I assume all would agree that this is true, we still have a tendency to read our Bibles (assuming we do actually read them), to "participate" in the worship service liturgies, and to "listen" to sermons with little or no thought; as if simply sounding out words and being where you are supposed to be holds great merit or benefit for us. God's Word teaches us with perfect consistency that Christianity is a matter of the heart, and that the thoughtless and heartless observance of certain rituals and mindless repetition is of little or no spiritual value. The fact is, being in God's Word is the most worthwhile part of every day. To put it another way, there is absolutely nothing better that anyone anywhere can do for himself beyond the time spent in God's Word. But "time" alone is not the key. Time has to include heart and thought.

Our problem is undoubtedly just another natural product of our passive entertainment lifestyle. We have grown so accustomed to an unhealthy dose of mindlessness in our lives that it's hard to be any other way. When is the last time you watched a television show that wasn't designed to be watched more or less in mental neutral, or that

was actually intended to teach you something worthwhile? Music, books, computer games, movies - nearly all are geared toward thoughtless, passive stimulation of anything but productive, edifying thought. This creates a new and difficult challenge for modern Christians as we struggle to let the Word of God occupy a higher, nobler position in our lives; as we struggle simply to *pay attention* at all the right times.

Perhaps not to the same degree, but our text offers evidence that the lack of thought and understanding also afflicted even the Godly men of Jesus' day. Our text tells us of the great John the Baptist doing what he was called to do in and around the Jordan River, which was to call the Jews to repentance and to baptize the penitent in preparation for the coming Messiah. As John was baptizing, Jesus himself came to him, and John in our text makes a rather incredible statement: **"Behold! The Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"**

How many times do we refer to Jesus as **"the Lamb of God"** without ever stopping to consider what that title means? We sang those words just a few minutes ago in our liturgy. Did anyone think about what we were singing? My rather imprecise estimate is that I *still* say or sing the term *at least* 100 times without thought or meaning for each time I really hear and contemplate those amazing words.

The sublime truth contained in those simple words is that God had no sin, and he therefore needed to make no sacrifice. He therefore needed no lamb, and yet provided one anyway. The term John coined for Jesus is, in fact, purest gospel. It explains in a single phrase exactly what our God has done for us. Though our Creator had no sin of his own and was in no way to blame for the sins of man and devil, he nonetheless provided the remedy for man's sin. The remedy, amazingly, was his own Son, whom God the Father sacrificed for the sum total of all the sins of his rebellious creation. God the Father saved every single one of us by sending his own Son to pay what he didn't owe – for us, who owed what we couldn't pay. Who could possibly have imagined such a plan for our salvation?

We cheat ourselves and we deny the Word of God full admission into our own hearts whenever we fail to reflect on such things. We repeat phrases that are both good and true (like grace and faith and redemption) but we rob ourselves of their power and blessing through our own thoughtlessness and laziness. So also we read passages like: **"God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself"** with barely a thought as to the incredible truth those words convey. Think of it! God

sacrificed his holy Son so that you and I might escape hell and inherit heaven.

John's disciples had similar problems. They undoubtedly heard John's great testimony and endorsement of Jesus *the first time he said it*. Yet they still remained with John. John had to repeat his striking witness again the next day and this time we see the kind of "hearing" our God wants to see in each one of us. This time Andrew (Simon Peter's brother) and another disciple with him *acted upon* the words of truth that they heard from John. This time they abandoned the Great Forerunner in favor of the One whose way John had been called to prepare. Our text says simply, **"The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus."** That is the kind of *hearing* our Father wants to see in us. Not the thoughtless, heartless, passive reception of words, but the true "take it to heart" hearing of those words of truth, together with the heartfelt action that results from such *true hearing*.

Nor do we want to pass over the masterful question Jesus asks of these two men, as though Jesus' question lacks importance or depth – both to them and to us. Note that he does not ask them, **"Whom are you seeking?"** but **"What are you seeking?"** With this simple question the Master encouraged Andrew and his companion to search the depths of their hearts. In effect, he was telling them to take a good hard look inside and to ask themselves just what it was that they were *really after*. Maybe at this point in their spiritual development they didn't even know the answer, but they quickly learned where such answers could be found, and they followed *and listened to* the only One who could teach them.

The point is that the Word of God – including also *this* Word of God – is much more than just history or entertainment. God's Word is, and is intended to be, living and active in our hearts, minds, and actions. This morning, for example, we are to hear the title used by John the Baptist to describe Jesus and marvel anew at the depth and meaning of such a title – God, sending his own Son as the innocent sacrifice for our sins. We are to hear our dear Lord Jesus asking of *us* the very same question that he asked of Andrew: *What is it that you seek during your time of grace on this earth?*

So also Jesus this morning asks us not *whom* we seek (we all know the answer to that question) he reaches down through the centuries to tell us to ask of ourselves *what* we are seeking as his children – what our goals and aspirations really are. When we really ask that

question of ourselves, we recognize and acknowledge that we routinely struggle stupidly for what is of no lasting value. Our Savior wants more for us than to wander through life as the godless do – futilely trying to grasp one demonic mirage after another in a never-fulfilled attempt to find meaning, satisfaction, and peace. It is God's Word alone that provides such gifts.

From our text we are to learn both to listen to and act on what God's Word tells us. We also here taught not to walk through this life as the godless do, but to examine what it is that we are really all about and to let God determine our walk and purpose.

Our text offers one more critical lesson. Just what do you imagine Peter's reaction to have been when his brother walked up to him and spoke those incredible words recorded in our text: **"We have found the Messiah!"**? Would anyone really have blamed Peter had he reacted with thinly veiled skepticism? Think of it. Since the Fall in the Garden of Eden, mankind had been waiting 4000 years for the promised Messiah. Kings and emperors had longed to witness the fulfillment of God's own promise. The centuries had come and gone. Great men and women were born and died. Countless false messiahs had come and gone. Still the One promised did not come. And then the promise is suddenly fulfilled and the long-awaited King of kings reveals himself to a couple of small-time fishermen in Galilee?

Put this into modern perspective. Who here today would still be waiting for a promise that was given in 2000 BC? Would or could such a promise or prophecy even be remembered? And then what about the announcement? Who here would ever imagine that the fulfillment of that promise would be revealed to a plumber in Mott, to a used car salesman in Rugby, or to any other unknown, "inconsequential" human being – as the world reckons such things?

The reality is that Peter, on his own, would almost certainly have dismissed the idea. You recall Nathanael's reaction: **"Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"** The reaction of both Nathanael's brother Philip and Peter's brother Andrew was the same: they brought them to Jesus. It was from Jesus himself that Peter was convinced of the truth. It was the working of the Holy Spirit through the words of Jesus that Peter came to know not only who he was looking for, but what.

Take strength and comfort from this. God the Holy Spirit has seen fit to reveal the true nature of Jesus Christ to you. You do not just know of Jesus; you really do know him for who and what he is – the Son of God

and Savior of the world. Having come to know Jesus as the who, it is he who has taught us also the what. We are ambassadors of Jesus Christ on earth. Our calling is simply to introduce the world to their Savior, trusting that God the Holy Spirit will take care of the rest. God grant us strength and resolve for our life's work. Amen.

Scripture Readings

^{ESV} **Isaiah 49:1-6** Listen to me, O coastlands, and give attention, you peoples from afar. The LORD called me from the womb, from the body of my mother he named my name. ² He made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me a polished arrow; in his quiver he hid me away. ³ And he said to me, "You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified." ⁴ But I said, "I have labored in vain; I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity; yet surely my right is with the LORD, and my recompense with my God." ⁵ And now the LORD says, he who formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him; and that Israel might be gathered to him-- for I am honored in the eyes of the LORD, and my God has become my strength-- ⁶ he says: "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."

^{ESV} **1 Corinthians 1:1-9** Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and our brother Sosthenes, ² ¶ To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours: ³ ¶ Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ⁴ ¶ I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, ⁵ that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge-- ⁶ even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you-- ⁷ so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁸ who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

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The Second Sunday after Epiphany – January 19, 2020

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn – 40 (Red Hymnal)

"The God of Abram Praise"

The Order of Service – Supplement page 12ff. (Brown Hymnal)

The Scripture Lessons: (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

The Old Testament Lesson: (Isaiah 49:1-6) Truly God's Son was great enough to pay for all sin, not just the sin of the Children of Israel. We hear in our first lesson how God even from ancient times had planned for the salvation of both Jews and Gentiles in the promised Messiah. During this Epiphany Season we thank God both for sending His Son for all sinners and for making that Son known to us, personally.

Psalm 100 (Supplement page 35) (Brown Hymnal)

The New Testament Lesson: (1 Corinthians 1:1-9) Note how Paul opens this Letter to the Corinthians in part by assuring them that they share fully in *all* of God's grace and in all of God's gifts. This Letter could well have been addressed to our own congregation. God has been so good to us. We give thanks unto you, Lord, for you are good! Yet we also acknowledge that to whom much is given, much more is expected – even as we seek to thank our God with more than just words.

The Confession of Faith -

The Apostolic Creed – page 15. (Brown Hymnal)

The Pre-Sermon Hymn – 353 (Stanzas 1-4) (Red Hymnal)

"Lord Jesus Christ, My Savior Blest"

The Sermon – John 1:29-42a (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

"Yes, You"

The Offertory – (Supplement page 16 insert)

The Post-Sermon Hymn – 353 (Stanzas 5-7) (Red Hymnal)

"Lord Jesus Christ, My Savior Blest"

The Offering

The Prayers followed by the Lord's Prayer

The Closing Hymn - 398 (Red Hymnal)

"Renew Me O Eternal Light"

Silent Prayer

Welcome! - We warmly welcome any visitors who might be with us this morning and invite you to join us every Sunday at this time. St. Paul is a congregation in fellowship with the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) – a conservative Lutheran synod with churches and missions throughout the United States, as well as Canada, India, and Africa. We are glad you are here. Thank you for letting us share the Word of God with you. Please record your visit in our Guest Book, and come again!

Attendance – Sunday (30) Average (40)

This Week at St. Paul:

Today	-9:00 a.m.	– Sunday School and Bible Class
	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship and coffee hour
	-11:20 a.m.	– Church Council Meeting
Wednesday	-6:00 p.m.	– Confirmation Class
	-7:00 p.m.	– Midweek Bible Study
Next Sunday	-9:00 a.m.	– Sunday School and Bible Class
	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service w/Holy Communion
	-11:15 a.m.	– Fellowship and coffee hour
	-11:30 a.m.	– Outreach Committee Meeting

CLC News – Berea of Sioux Falls has called Pastor David Schaller.

Pastor Michael Wilke has returned the calls to Redeemer of Bowdle and Zion of Ipswich. Pastor Caleb Schaller has returned the call to Trinity of Spokane. Teacher Paul Tiefel is considering the call to Holy Trinity School of West Columbia. Through a combination of congregational and special offerings, the CLC General Fund deficit of \$100,000 was erased in November and December.

Church Council Meeting – The Church Council is scheduled to meet this morning during the fellowship hour. If you have any questions or concerns, especially regarding the use of screens during our worship services, please speak to any Council member or to the Pastor prior to the meeting.

Care Packages – A reminder that we are collecting materials for care packages for our four students attending school out-of-town.

Convention Delegates – Since this is a convention year, St Paul is looking for two laymen to represent our congregation at this summer's CLC Convention in Eau Claire, WI. Travel, food, and lodging will all be provided. Please prayerfully consider if you might be able to serve in this capacity.