

Emmanuel Ev. Lutheran Church—Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod
Second Sunday after Epiphany
January 18, 2026
Sermon by Pastor Allen Schroeder
The Lamb asks what you are looking for

John 1:29-41

The next day, John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look! The Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! This is the one I was talking about when I said, ‘The one coming after me outranks me because he existed before me.’ I myself did not know who he was, but I came baptizing with water so that he would be revealed to Israel.”

John also testified, “I saw the Spirit descend like a dove from heaven and remain on him. I myself did not recognize him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘The one on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, he is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’ I saw this myself and have testified that this is the Son of God.”

The next day, John was standing there again with two of his disciples. When John saw Jesus passing by, he said, “Look! The Lamb of God!” The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. When Jesus turned around and saw them following him, he asked, “What are you looking for?” They said to him, “Rabbi” (which means “Teacher”), “where are you staying?” He told them, “Come, and you will see.” So, they came and saw where he was staying. They stayed with him that day. It was about the tenth hour. Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of the two who heard John and followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his own brother Simon and say to him, “We have found the Messiah!” (which is translated “the Christ”).

Dear Friends of the Savior,

An opinion poll was taken among America's rich and famous, among the powerful and influential. It included CEOs and CFOs, government leaders and bankers, university chancellors and college presidents, Hollywood luminaries and professional sports stars, media moguls and political action committee movers and shakers. The survey had just one question. Name one thing which you do not have which you wish you did have. In plain words, *“What are you looking for?”*

That is a valid question. It forces an evaluation of your priorities. It requires an examination of what may be missing in your life. It demands a fresh look at what brings you satisfaction. Name the one thing which you want more than anything else. In plain words, *“What are you looking for?”*

Today, that question is not being asked by an influential pollster like Gallup, Pew, or Barna. Today, that question is being asked by Jesus, the Lamb, the Lamb of God. *“What are you looking for?”* The question is significant. In John's gospel, *“What are you looking for?”* are the first recorded words of Jesus. It is this question of Jesus which John wants you to consider as you read his entire gospel. Last Sunday, we heard how God the Father called Jesus of Nazareth into his ministry as the Christ of God at his baptism. As Jesus began his ministry as the Christ, he asked two men, *“What are you looking for?”* He asks that question of all who read John's gospel. It is Jesus' one question opinion poll for you today. **The Lamb asks what you are looking for.**

1. Look.

Your attention is directed to one day in the ministry of John the Baptist. It was the day after John confessed to the Jewish leaders that he was not the Messiah. One who outranks him was coming. It is the day before Jesus asked the two men, *“What are you looking for?”* The day between those two events was a remarkable day. John was without doubt preaching repentance and baptizing for forgiveness on that remarkable day. However, there is no mention of the people who were present. The crowds of people who came to John are not mentioned. Neither are the Jewish leaders who questioned John the day before. Also not mentioned are the men whom Jesus would ask the next day, *“What are you looking for?”* All these people are in the silent background.

What we observe on this remarkable day is John the Baptist presenting the Lord's Christ to the world. The focus is on the message not on the people. John opens his message with the words, "*Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.*" He closes his message with the words, "*I have testified that this is the Son of God.*" That is Jesus' identity revealed.

John highlights the divine nature of Jesus in his writings. His gospel contains seven witnesses who clearly state that Jesus is the Son of God, God himself. Today we have the second witness in John's gospel to the divine nature of Jesus. John the Baptist said, "*I have testified that this is the Son of God.*" As John reveals the identity of Jesus Christ, he wants to make sure that there is no doubt that the Lamb of God is the Son of God and that the Son of God is the Lamb of God. If that were not true, there would be no forgiveness. The Bible declares, "*No man can by any means redeem his brother.*"

As God's Son, Jesus came to do what no one else could do. He came to "*take away the sin of the world.*" "*Look!*" Don't miss it! John the Baptist makes it clear why God sent his Son as the Lamb of sacrifice. He identifies the problem. The problem is "*the sin of the world.*" It is the collective sin of the world. It is original sin and actual sin; sins of thought, word, and deed; sins of omission and sins of commission, venial sin and mortal sin. It's your sin. It's my sin. It's all sin. Every dirty thought. Every lie. Every bit of arrogant pride. Every taking the words and actions of neighbors in the worst possible way instead of the kindest possible way. Every misuse of the name of the Lord. Every tidbit of juicy gossip. Every ounce of envy. Every sidelining of God's Word. It's all there, an enormous load of sin, a load too heavy for you or me to take away.

The sin of the world is serious. One Sunday after church, a young man asked me a question. He said, "In the Confession of Sins, we confess, 'I a poor, miserable sinner.' Pastor, I know that I am a sinner, but I don't feel like a poor, miserable sinner. Can we not use those words?" That was an eyeopener for me. I was accustomed to confessing I am a poor, miserable sinner. Truth be told, I am a poor, miserable sinner. Among other things, I shared with him the words of Lenten hymn speaking about Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. "You who think of sin but lightly, nor suppose the evil great, here may view its nature rightly, here its guilt may estimate. Mark the Sacrifice appointed. "*Look!*" See who bears the awful load. 'Tis the Word, the Lord's Anointed, Son of Man and Son of God." If you want to see how poor and miserable your sin makes a person, "*Look. Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.*" Look! The Lamb of God. See on the cross the seriousness of the sin of the world, of your sin.

Then look again. See how willingly, how effectively, and how lovingly the Lamb of God takes away the sin of the world. As God's designated Lamb of sacrifice, he is the one and only fulfillment of all the Old Testament lambs, goats, and bulls that were sacrificed for sin. Only Jesus, the sacrificial Lamb of God, takes away the sin of the world. "*Look!*" See how Jesus takes away your sin, my sin, and the sin of all. Luther translates the verse, "*Look! The Lamb of God who bears the sin of the world,*" or "*Look! The Lamb of God who carries the sin of the world.*" The sense is that the Lamb takes away the sin of the world by carrying it or bearing it away. Luther's word is a word that might be used for a vehicle moving your belongings from one house to another. Your sins are not taken away by a U-Haul, where you load your sins on Jesus, where "you haul" them away as Jesus' driver, and where you unload them. No. Your sins are taken away because the Lord has placed the sin of all on Jesus, just as the high priest ceremonially placed the sin of the people on the scapegoat on the Day of Atonement in the Old Testament. Isaiah says, "*The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*" Then, like the scapegoat, Jesus the Lamb, without any assistance, transports all sin away. Jesus unloads the sin of the world at its final destination, at Calvary, where he nailed all sin to his cross. "*What are you looking for?*" John the Baptist directs you to the right place. Look! Look outside yourself. Look to the Lamb, "*the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.*"

2. Come!

Last Sunday, Pastor Buchholz reminded us that Jesus' forgiveness has both a universal side and a personal side. At that first day in our text, John the Baptist spoke of the universal work of Jesus as the Lamb of God. We look from afar and see Jesus as he carries the sin of the whole world. That includes your sin and my sin. Now on the second day, we see how this message is carried out personally.

On this second day, two men are identified. One is Andrew. The other, though unnamed, was undoubtedly John the writer of the gospel. He never calls himself by name. Again, Jesus passes by John

the Baptist. Andrew and John are with him. John again points to Jesus and says, “*Look! The Lamb of God.*” This time, he doesn’t mention that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. This time, he is emphasizing that Jesus is the Lamb of God for Andrew and John as individuals.

Do you notice how easy it is to warm up to the universal truth that Jesus is “*the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world,*” yet how hesitant Andrew and John are when they are personally confronted with that truth? One would think they would have run up to Jesus to be with the Lamb of God, the Son of God, the promised Messiah. Instead, they followed Jesus. They followed at a distance. Jesus knows they are there. He turns and asks our question, “*What are you looking for?*” Like the wealthy and influential in the poll referred to at the beginning of the sermon, they could have asked for anything: a miracle, Jesus’ genealogical pedigree, insight in God’s law. How would you answer if Jesus asked you, “*What you are looking for?*” Winning the lottery? Advice on how to improve your life? Validation? How did they answer that question? “*Rabbi, where are you staying?*” Really? You can ask the Lamb of God anything you want, and you ask, “*Where are you staying?*” How hesitant they were! How hesitant we can be! Are you hesitant to approach Jesus because you do not know how he will react? Will he be judgmental? Will he show his displeasure with your sin? Will he welcome you?

Jesus’ answer was simple. Now it wasn’t “*Look!*” It was “*Come!*” “*Come and see.*” Come to Jesus. We do not know what Jesus told Andrew and John that day, but it changed their lives. They came to Jesus hesitantly, not knowing what to expect. They left Jesus filled with the joy of people who found their hearts’ desire. Andrew immediately went to his brother Peter and told him, “*We have found the Messiah.*” In Jesus’ word, they found what they were looking for, “*the Messiah,*” “*the Son of God,*” “*the Lamb of God who takes away sin.*” They found their Savior who takes away their sin.

The Bible has a lot to say about the way lay people carry out evangelism. Andrew and John were still lay people on this day. Jesus would later call them from their fishing boats to be fulltime disciples. Still later, he would appoint them to be apostles. But on this day, they were lay people who came to Jesus and found what they were looking for. Their first response was to tell others. It wasn’t that Jesus commanded them to tell others. But, as Jesus would later say, “*Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks.*” That is evangelism in its purest form. When Jesus’ saving word abundantly fills your heart, your mouth cannot keep silent. Lord, forgive me when it does.

Jesus invites you to come, “*Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*” Do not hesitate to come to Jesus. Come to Jesus wearied and burdened with sin and guilt, and with all the cares of mortality. Be yoked with Jesus through that saving faith which comes from hearing his message of forgiving love. Find relief, relief from sin and guilt. Find the spiritual relief that rejuvenates and invigorates. Find in Jesus what you are looking for.

Let me tell you the outcome of the poll of the rich and famous, the powerful and the influential. What did they want that they did not already have? One answer rose to the top. It represented about 85% of the responses. They wanted peace of mind. The one thing that money and fame, power and influence can give no one is the one thing you have found in Jesus. Listen to John’s proclamation, “*Look! Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.*” Listen to Jesus’ invitation, “*Come!*” Come, spend time with the Lamb, listen to his saving word. There you find what many are looking for but can never find without the Lamb of God. There you have that peace which only comes from the certainty that your sins are forgiven in Jesus, the Lamb of God who was sacrificed for all. “*What are you looking for?*” You find it in Jesus, God’s Lamb. Amen.