

SERMON: "A LAMB FOR A LEADER"

TEXTS: OLD TESTAMENT ISAIAH 53:4-9
NEW TESTAMENT JOHN 1:29-34

July 2, 2023
Sermons in Stained Glass – 4

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INTRODUCTION

Maybe you've noticed the pattern in TV shows and movies

There are usually a couple of stories being told – one major story
and one or more minor stories. They are the plot and sub-plot

I think the stained glass windows along the western wall do the same

Each window features two primary images – one higher, one lower

I see the connection between the images in some windows clearly

The stories of Moses in the first window, a focus on healing in the third window

Other windows I think there is one plot and one sub plot

After my sermons of the past few weeks focusing on what I see as the plot

one attentive member, each week, has asked me about the other image

Good question. Let me answer those questions now

In the second window, the top image is a set of initials in Greek

The Chi and Ro are the first letters (think initials like last week) for Christ

And the lower image from last week. I'd guess that is fire, a symbol of the Holy Spirit

Our forebearers didn't include that in their description

You may also notice that fire is framed by three triangles linked together

That's certainly an image for the Trinity – three and one, three in one

That imagery carries over to the window for today in these sermons in stained glass

The top of this window is also a representation of the Trinity

It features three interlocking circles and a triangle with an eye in the middle

The imagery in both this window and the third wants to emphasize the unity

of the Trinity – the three circles fit together. Think of a relay race.

One runner passes the baton to the next. Now kick that up several notches.

Unlike a relay, don't think of the Trinity in a strictly chronological way

first there was God the creator then Jesus, then the Spirit.

They weren't passing a baton. One wasn't clocking out while another clocked in

Jesus often talked about being one with the Father and about the work of the Spirit.

Three are one and one is three. That's the math, theologically

And that's enough, for now, on the Trinity imagery.

MAKING A SACRIFICE

Moving on to that image of the lamb, let's go back in time

Maybe you've watched a movie or read a book set in another time
and you've wondered, "How would I have fared living back then?"
You ever do that ... or am I just that much of a history nerd?

I think I would have been a pretty good Old Testament priest

Priests in those days were religious leaders ... and butchers and cooks
I could see myself doing that. I've included talk of the grill / smoker we are building
in several sermons and conversations. Even referenced how we are going to
get in touch with our Old Testament roots and offer up sacrifices

A sacrifice is the oldest and most basic form of worship

It is giving from what we have, an animal from our flock, a share of our harvest
a chunk of our valuable and limited time. It is sharing. It is giving
And like every other act of worship ... it is a response
Our giving, our sacrifice is a response to God's giving, God's sacrifice.

I want to focus on that, making sacrifices, as we focus on the fourth window

This is the description written by our forebearers. You see it in your bulletin.

*This window at the top is the Holy Trinity with the eye of God in its Center.
This symbolizes the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, and teaches that our
salvation is the work of the son of God, which is the lamb in the lower part
of the window standing on the book of Revelation. The lamb symbolizes
John 1:29. Behold the lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.
Also, Isaiah 53:7.*

The focus of the window is on the lamb, a sacrificial lamb. The lamb of God.

That is how John the author has John the Baptizer introduce who Jesus is

**The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and declared,
"Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"**

John uses imagery that would be clear to these future disciples

Hearing Jesus called the lamb of God would make them think of what Isaiah said
about the suffering servant whose suffering would take away their sins
It would remind them of the Passover lamb and of the exodus

What John makes clear to them about Jesus is who he is – He is the lamb of God

And what he will do since he is the Lamb of God. He is the sacrifice.

This man, Jesus, will deliver the people (all of them)
and do so by way of his sacrificial love. John says it succinctly,
"Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world"

LOVE LANGUAGES

Are you familiar with the idea of love languages?

It is a popular and helpful resource for couples

It helps to know what your primary love languages are ...

what you need / appreciate and what you are good at

And, of course, it helps to know the same for your loved one

Those love languages are ...

Words of Affirmation - Saying supportive things to your partner

Acts of Service - Doing helpful things for your partner

*Receiving Gifts - Giving your partner gifts that tell them
you were thinking about them*

Quality Time - Spending meaningful time with your partner

Physical Touch - Being close to and caressed by your partner

I bring this up because I think it might help to talk about the love languages
we hear from God - in the bible, in these passages, and in these windows

I think 'sacrifice' is God's primary love language. This is how much I love you.

You know, 'for God so loved the world he sent his only Son'

And what did that Son come here to do? To take away the sins of the world!

And God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) did this how? By making a sacrifice

I remain convinced, as I have told you before, that the truest measure of love
is not whether or not something is worth fighting for

It is when something or someone is worth suffering for

That is what this Lamb has done for us.

Still does ... daily mercy to go with our daily bread

This window featuring a lamb is a love letter captured in stained glass

We can look at that lamb, the lamb of God, and think of Jesus

and his sacrifice for us. No more need for regular animal sacrifices

and priests who are religious leaders, butchers and cooks

Jesus has made a sacrifice sufficient for all time ... and for all of us

God has shown a love that takes away our sin, that defeats death

And God did this by making a sacrifice ... the lamb of God

Let me try this example to illustrate sacrifice as a love language

One I think fits these biblical texts and our context on this 4th of July weekend

I think I told you about going to see what would become one of my favorite movies

'Saving Private Ryan.' You know the sign of a good movie?

It is when people stay behind and linger through the credits

SUMMARY

That happened that day with that movie in a very unique way

I stayed through the credits even until the theater lights came back on

As I made my way up the aisle toward the exit I noticed lots of other people

As I looked closer I noticed they seemed to be gathered in small groups

Each group stood around an older man – a WWII veteran

It was a powerful image that will stick with me a long time

A reminder of people whose love for country included great sacrifice

I see those reminders of love shown through sacrifice in lots of places

I think of it every time I vote ... and when I see voting rights rolled back

I know ordinary men and women died fighting discrimination and apathy

to secure that right for themselves and for others

I see it in those who have gone before us and those beside us

I saw it in history and in my own history. I saw it in my parents.

You've seen it in many places too, haven't you?

In our history. In your own story. In the struggles and sacrifices of today.

I pray you take the time to notice the sacrifices made out of love

Don't walk out of the theater too quickly.

Don't walk past pictures of your parents and grandparents without looking

Don't sit in the pew without noticing the sermons in the windows

without looking at the lamb ... and remembering how much God loves you