

Greetings to you! Our theme for this morning's meditation is, "Jesus is revealed as the Lamb of God". In the gospel of John we note that when John saw Jesus coming toward him he said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" What do we understand by the phrase 'The Lamb of God'? Normally we associate lambs with innocence. However, in order to understand Jesus as the Lamb of God we need to understand the meaning of the phrase from the book of Exodus describing the fruit Passover.

When the Israelites were about to be delivered from the Egyptians there was a final plague to come. This was the death of all the first born sons of Egypt. In order that the angel of death would not kill the first born sons of the Israelites, they were to slaughter a lamb without blemish which was a year old, and they had to smear their door posts and lintels with the blood of that lamb. Because this animal had lived in the household, its death would be sobering for everyone.

On the Passover night the Lord would pass through the entire land of Egypt and kill all the first born to judge the gods of Egypt. But when he sees the blood on the door frames of the houses where the Israelites were, he will pass over them, and everyone inside will be saved. The blood is used symbolically for protection from the Lord's judgement. By obediently putting the blood on the door frame, the Israelites demonstrated their faith that the Lord will save them from death (Hebrew 11:28). Each family has to do this in order to appropriate God's saving act for the entire nation.

Jesus understands himself very much in the light of the Passover ritual. The Last Supper which Jesus had with his disciples according to Matthew, Mark and Luke was on the night of the Passover. John however depicts the death of Jesus as though it happened on the day of Passover. In John's gospel Jesus is portrayed as the Passover lamb who was slain for our sake.

Paul writing to the Corinthians reminds us that God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21). Even though God's wrath is upon us because of our sin and we deserve to die, God did not allow us to face that wrath. It is in the cross of Christ that we see the wrath of God being dealt with. Christ takes upon himself the wrath of God that was directed against sin. Paul writing to the Romans says, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God: they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward, as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood effective through faith. He did this to show his righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over the sins previously committed." It is God who put forward Jesus Christ as a "sacrifice of atonement by his blood." In the book of Isaiah chapter 53 Jesus is shown to be the servant "who took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows." He also reminds us that the Lord had laid on him the iniquity of us all.

In the New Testament reading from the letter of Peter we are reminded to keep our minds alert and sober. He calls us to be obedient children, not to conform to the evil desires when we live in ignorance but to be Holy because God is Holy. He reminds us that we were not redeemed from our empty way of life with silver or gold but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

Because Jesus came into the world as the Lamb of God he took our punishment upon himself and died on the cross for the sake of our sins. May we appropriate the blood of the lamb and receive the forgiveness of sins and the gift of eternal life. Amen.