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# Jesus the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world

**Sermon • Rev'd Andrew Hoggan • 25 January 2026**

**Psalm 103:6-12 • John 1:29-42**

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Let's pray, Heavenly Father, open our minds and hearts to the truth in your word. By your Holy Spirit help us to understand and live out the wonderful freedom that we have in the salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

As we look this morning into the gospel of St John, let me begin by saying that if we think there is an expiry day on kingdom usefulness, John was in his late 80's or maybe even his early 90's when he wrote his gospel.

No matter our age or stage our contribution matters. Prayer, encouragement, mentoring, providing resources for gospel ministry, there is no expiry date on such things.

In the apostle John's case, his age and insight gave us the most profound and instructive of the four gospels.

John draws on Genesis as he begins. He also wrote Revelation so it can fairly be said that he knows the story from beginning to end. And Jesus is at the heart of it.

Just prior to our passage JB has been busy deflecting attention away from himself and towards Jesus.

Now he sees Jesus coming towards him and declares "here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" Jesus identity and mission are succinctly summed up in that single vs.

Let's dive a little into the OT to help us understand what's going on. There is for sure much in the OT that raises questions for us.

Why the need for sacrifices and the shedding of blood? Why do innocent creatures have to be slaughtered as a way of people gaining forgiveness for their sins?

The first recorded death in the bible gives us a clue.

Genesis ch 3. Humanity has rebelled against God and something new and alien has entered into the story.

Freedom, trust and connectedness with God have been replaced with alienation and shame. Adam and Eve now hiding the bushes having sown fig leaves together in an attempt to cover their shame and nakedness.

Fig leaves are not going to fix this. This is the context of the first death to be found in the bible.

Ch 3:21, "and the Lord God made garments of skin for the man and for his wife and clothed them." You generally don't get a skin without something dying.

That first death signals the seriousness of sin. It also signals the solution. That solution is fully identified by JB as he exclaims, "here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world".

The OT sacrificial system can only be understood, and justified, in respect to it's pointing to the ultimate sacrifice that God provides.

So from that skinned animal in the garden, to the Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world, the seriousness of sin is shown. And the solution to sin is signalled.

In between the first and last sacrifice everything points to the provision and work of God.

Let's highlight one special OT ceremony that contained a visual illustration to help the people understand that God had indeed dealt with their sins. More, God had taken them away.

The Day of Atonement. It was that time when once a year, the high priest could enter into the most sacred place in the temple, the holy of holies. There he would sprinkle blood on the mercy seat.

Another part of that ceremony, a part that the people could see, was where sin would be symbolically laid upon the head of a goat which would then be sent off into the desert.

That's where we get the idea of a scapegoat. Someone paying for and taking the consequences of another's action. That symbolic action was given with the aim of helping us better understand the fact that God can remove our sin from us. As we understand that we can live in the freedom that that freedom and reality makes possible.

Someone tried to put that in modern language. It's like God dumping our sins in the deepest ocean and putting up a sign saying no fishing.

Jesus the Lamb of God is our scapegoat. Our sins are laid upon him. Psalm 103, "As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our sins from us."

The better our understanding and acceptance of God's work, the better able we are to take to heart the wonderful encouragement of the Apostle Paul, "it is for freedom you have been set free".

Conviction of sin is one thing. It leads us to repentance, gratitude and holiness. Guilt is something else. Guilt has no place in the life of a follower of Jesus.

There is therefore now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus. So starts ch 12 of Romans. Heb 8:12 For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, or their sins, and I will remember their sins no more.

Who's heard the saying, God forgives and forgets? It's not in the bible. God doesn't suffer from amnesia.

"I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more." This is about the OT principle of "God's remembering" being a very active thing. For God to remember, is the same as for God to act.

"Remember your steadfast love O God" it's the psalmists way of saying "act towards us in accordance with your steadfast love O God"

Just so, not remembering sin is the same as not acting as sin deserves, the reason being God already has in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

We talked in another message about Substitutional Atonement. God, in Christ, taking upon himself the punishment for sin. Jesus is our substitute. Our Scapegoat if you want to link the Day of Atonement with Good Friday.

There is a pastoral application of God forgiving, but not forgetting that I want to draw attention to. I have heard well meaning Christian's encouraging folk to "forgive and forget."

I have not forgotten any of the bad things that have happened to me. Have you? But we are able to forgive with God's help.

Forgiveness can even change the way we remember. It can help us heal. It can stop others having power over us. We can encourage people to forgive. Forgetting is another matter.

It's also worth saying, that even when there has been genuine forgiveness, in some situations ongoing contact with those who have hurt or damaged us is not a great idea.

I have heard of some pastors, I dare say with good intent, getting survivors and perpetrators together and that has proved to be somewhat re-traumatising.

I raise that because sometimes we misinterpret what we read in the bible. Probably more than sometimes. As is the case when we equate God "not remembering" with God "forgetting". And from there expect others, or ourselves, to be able to do something that even God doesn't do.

I leave that with you, because there are some who feel guilt, and think they are not spiritual enough, because they can not completely wipe a memory from their mind.

The best we get is grace and in the forgiving the potential to recalibrate the memory or experience.

Let's look briefly at the next section. The next day. That is the day following John's identification of Jesus as the solution to the sin of humanity.

Two disciples, Andrew, and possibly the gospel writer John, hear JB statement about Jesus and understood that they were being encouraged to change allegiances.

It was the custom of the day that students would search out and align themselves with teachers they wanted to follow. These two literally begin following Jesus. He turns and asks “what are you looking for?”

In other words, I think. Do you understand what I’m about? Do you know who I am? Do you know what following me might mean?

They give a great answer. Teacher where are you staying?  
They understand that there is only one way to truly learn from Jesus.  
Spend time with him.

Jesus gives an equally good answer because he knows the same thing. “Come and see.” Before we look at the ways we can spend time with Jesus today, let’s note the immediate effect.

They can’t wait to share their discovery. Andrew, goes and finds his brother, Simon Peter, and brings him to Jesus with the claim, “we have found the Messiah.”

When you really spend time with Jesus it’s pretty well impossible to keep it to yourself. And if we are tempted to say yep but it’s different now.

- People are not open to the gospel.
- People will laugh at us.
- Or if they don’t outright laugh or in some way give us a hard time they will simply ignore us.

Let’s say we were transported back to Jesus day, what would we find.

- The majority of the religious leadership were unfavourably disposed to Jesus.
- Pluralism and synchronism was the norm and people all had their favourite gods, deities and idols.
- The Roman authorities were not favourable to people giving their allegiance to anything in a way that undercut the authority and power of the a Roman Empire.

We might find return to our own time and say, “gee maybe it was harder to be a follower of Jesus when he was literally walking the earth”.

Add to that, when these two disciples of JB changed their allegiance to Jesus:

- he didn’t have a reputation as a worker of signs and miracles.
- The cross and resurrection hadn’t happened.
- The HS had not been sent.

Are we comparatively really at a disadvantage as we seek to share the gospel?

Okay, how to spend time with Jesus today?

- We're doing it right now. We are two or three are gathered in my name there I will be in your midst.
- We do it when we open the word of God and pray that the Holy Spirit would in life and enlighten it to us.
- We do it as we talk to God in prayer.
- We do it as we recognise the image of God in every person we meet believer or not.

Most wonderfully and profoundly, we do it because as believers, there is never a time that Jesus is not personally with us. Let's think about that.

I remember in the 80s reading the books of Richard Wurmbrand, a Romanian pastor who spent 14 years in prison with the communist guards trying to break his faith. Three of those years he spent in solitary confinement. He made it out. Many others did not.

His 3 years in solitary confinement were put to good use. Every night he would construct sermons and preach to God and the angels. He said was free in his prison cell to preach from the heart and not worry what the reaction might be.

Here is my question about his years in solitary. Was he truly alone? Or was he, in the truest sense of the word, in better company than he had ever been in?

Is it in fact possible for one who is born again, who has invited Jesus to live within them, who is inhabited and empowered by the HS, can that one ever truly be alone.

- We might feel alone.
- We might feel abandoned.
- We might be fearful, or despairing as Richard undoubtedly felt at times. But was he ever alone?

Or was Jesus with him in a special way in that dank dirty cell 30 feet underground?

"I will never leave you." "I will never forsake you," said Jesus. It is also true to say, the more the believer lives in obedience to Jesus, the more they will understand and experience that truth.

We who believe in Jesus have been set free from sin and death. We have forgiveness of sins and the promise of eternal life. I can't think of news that there's any better than that.

And in our world, where:

- confusion and fear,
- anger and alienation,
- injustice and power abuse,

seem day by day to be gaining control, do we not more than ever need to hear the message of the Gospel?

As I was preparing this message, and a book I read 40 years ago came to mind, I wondered if I still had it and searched it out on my bookshelf.

There it was, a first edition of "Sermons in Solidarity Confinement." I read the introduction and the first sermon. Then I burst into tears.

Not just because of the spiritual insights shared by one that went through what Richard Wurmbrand went through. But because I was suddenly overwhelmed by God's faithfulness and goodness in my life.

The way he keeps showing me he has always been with me and he always will be. Just as he has always been with you, and always will be, if you have handed your life to him.

Let's finish by saying this. There have been many dark times through history. It's not looking great environmentally, economically, or politically just at the moment either.

But let us always remember that God is sovereign. No matter what it looks like God is in control. That said, things don't just come right by themselves.

We have a part to play. The best thing we can do is direct people towards Jesus as we live lives of gratitude and grace, fully knowing that Jesus the Lamb of God who has taken our sins away, gives us a freedom that is very attractive and very powerful. It is for freedom we have been set free. In Jesus name, amen.