

Being Consumed by Christ

by Dennis Kinlaw

The sermon emphasizes the importance of fully surrendering to Christ and understanding His true identity as the sacrificial Lamb of God.

Duration: 40:33

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Luke 7:22, John 1:29, John 6:5-6, John 6:15, John 7:46, John 10:20

Topics: "Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the significance of Jesus being referred to as the Lamb of God. He explains that a lamb is typically used for food and clothing, but the people were looking for power and rejected Jesus as a sacrifice. The preacher then gives an example of a missionary conference where A.B. Simpson spoke about the concept of being consumed for the sake of others. He emphasizes that Jesus laid down his life for his sheep and challenges the listeners to be willing to be broken and consumed for the world's sake, just as Jesus did.

Transcript

We thank you, Lord, that when you were here, you said that if we would ask, we would receive, and that if we would seek, we would find, and that if we would knock, a door would be opened unto us. So we come today in our need, and we ask. We come today with our hungers, and we seek.

We come today with our blindness, and we knock, and we ask you to give to us yourself today. And when you give yourself, let us recognize you and not miss you. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.

For some now, thought has intrigued me, and I found myself developing it first from one angle and then from another, but always with the same allurements. And that's the question of how it was that they missed him, because they did. On Palm Sunday, they said, This is the one we've been looking for for 1900 years.

And on Friday, they crucified him. And they had been looking for him for 1900 years. From the day that God said to Abraham, I will give you a son, and out of that son will come a seed, and in him will be the blessing of the world.

The thing that had characterized these people was their anticipation of the Messiah. That's what made a Jew a Jew. And so for 1900 years, they had waited.

The picture had clarified as the centuries passed. God in his compassion had made that picture clearer. With Moses, you will remember, before he finished his life, he said, You've seen me, and you know what I'm like, but a greater than I will come, a greater prophet.

And when he comes, if you hear him, you will live. If you don't, you will die. You will remember that David came and was a king, not a prophet.

And he was a king, we are told, after God's own heart. And God gave to him the capacity to build a great and noble kingdom. And Israel had a great sense of identity, and they were proud of who they were.

And God said, But I'm going to send you somebody better than David, David's greater son. He will be a king like David, but he will be a greater than David. And so they said, He will be a great prophet, and he will be a great king.

Then the day came when Isaiah said, But he'll be different from other kings and other prophets. Some prophets speak the word, but this one will be the word. And kings rule, but this will be a king who sacrifices himself.

And so the picture clarified until John said, That's he, the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. You think about the attestation that came to him. John the Baptist was the most authentic voice that they had heard in 400 years.

In fact, there are some who would dare to say that the scripture says that he's the most authentic voice they had ever heard, the greatest of the prophets and the greater than the prophets. But you will remember that when he spoke and said, This is he, Israel, some turned to follow, but that was not enough. In addition to the witness of John the Baptist, there was the witness of Jesus' own works.

Blind were given their sight, lame were healed, deaf were made to hear, lepers were cleansed and restored to their normal relationships, and even the dead were called forth from their death. So that people said, If he's not the Christ, when the Christ comes, what can the Christ do that he hasn't done? So in addition to that attestation of John and of his incredible works, there was his teaching. They sent a group of policemen one day to arrest him, and they waited until after the sermon.

And that was their mistake, because after the sermon they went back empty-handed and said, We never heard a man speak like this. Are you sure you want to arrest him? You will remember it was not only his words, but his life. They put the FBI on his trail and they followed him for three and a half years, and at the end of three and a half years, he looked at them calmly and said, Which of you convinces me of sin? They had seen incarnate love, divine power, and holiness itself.

And then they crucified him. Now why did they do it? I've come to believe that they did it because he didn't come the way they expected him to come. And the essence of what I want to say is summed up in John the Baptist's introduction to him.

You will remember the delegation came from the temple and said, Are you the Christ? And he said, Heavens no. And they said, Well, then who are you? He said, I'm his voice to introduce him. And they said, Well, where is he? He said, He's out there in the crowd.

And the next day, you will remember, John said, There he is. And then he identified him. He said, Behold the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world.

Now the Gospel of John does not develop the Lamb motif as the Lamb motif. In fact, the word which is used there for Lamb, I think, is used only twice in the Gospel of John, and it's used both times out of the mouth of John the Baptist. But I've come to suspect that John, carefully, deliberately, under the inspiration of God, identified who Christ was and how he was to minister and what his mission was to be in that title.

And that was a surprise. You see, I've come to believe that they were looking for the Lion of the tribe of Judah, and that's what they wanted. Now you will remember that he was to be David's son, David's greater son.

He was to be the King of Israel, and as David's son, he was to come from the tribe of Judah. And the symbol of the tribe of Judah was a rampant lion who stood on his hind feet with his forepaws extended and his claws out, ready to fall on his foes and the foes of the people of God and deal with them. And the Jews had the problem of these Romans.

They had Roman legions led by Roman generals and centurions that paced the streets of Jerusalem and kept all Jews under control. And no Jewish king could reign as long as Rome was there. And they said, when the Messiah comes, the Christ, the King, will get rid of these Romans.

And John said, yes, that's right, there he is, he'll lead you, the Lamb of God. But how much good is a lamb in a battle? How much resource can you find in a lamb if you're in conflict? And how much deliverance can a lamb give to you? Anybody knows that a lamb exists for only two purposes, really, ultimately. One is to eat, and the other is to provide clothing.

John said, there's the answer to all your problems, one for you to eat and one for you to dress yourself in. And they said, that's not what we were looking for. That's sacrifice.

And they said, we're looking for power. And so they rejected him. Now it's interesting that that theme is developed in the Gospel of John.

It's developed in many different ways. Let me illustrate two. One of them is when he found himself out on the hillside with thousands of men and women around him, and they were three days away from food.

And so he said to his disciples, these people will perish unless somebody gets some food for them. And they said, that's impossible, there is no place to get it and we wouldn't have the money to buy enough to feed this crowd if we could get it. And Jesus said, have them sit down.

And one of his disciples said, there's a boy here that has five loaves and two fish. And Jesus took the five loaves and the two fish and fed that multitude of people. Now I don't know about you, but in my mind there is no question but that that crowd was incredibly excited.

I think that that crowd said, for heaven's sake, there was a day when Moses gave our people manna and we're getting a reproduction of that model. Do you remember Moses said, one greater than I will come, like me, but greater? And so with five loaves and two fish he fed them. And then he disappeared.

And when he disappeared, they had a consultation and they said, this is the guy. This is the greater than Moses. This is the king and we will crown him.

And then they couldn't find him. So they went down to the shore and found his boat was gone and his disciples. So they went around the sea and the next day they located him.

And they came to crown him king and say, you are the Messiah. Do you know it's not enough to believe that Jesus is the Christ if you've got a false notion of what the Christ is? They were perfectly ready to crown him as king as the Christ. But Jesus said, you've got the wrong notion.

He said, you ate the bread and saw the miracle, but you didn't see the sign. I suspect we've eaten his bread and not seen the sign either. Because he said, you see, if you're to live, you have to eat my flesh and drink my blood.

And they said, run that past us again. And he said, if you are to live, you have to eat my flesh and drink my blood. And they said, who does he think he is? And it's interesting that the Jews began to murmur.

They couldn't handle that. And that increased the opposition to him. It's interesting what bread is, isn't it? Do you know what you have to do to get bread? You have to take grain and crush it.

And when you've crushed it, you have to grind it. And when you've ground it, you have to cook it, put it in the fire. And then for it to accomplish its purpose, somebody has to eat it.

And the grain loses its identity and gives life to somebody else. And as it dies, somebody else lives. And who wants to lose his identity? I don't want to lose my life or identity.

I don't want you to threaten it. And they said, that's too much for us. That surely is too much for God.

You know, it's very difficult for us to realize how radical what he said really is. You see, it's the exact reverse of everything that we believe. Take for instance, sacrifice, eating, is a normal part of every religion in the world.

Wherever you find religion, you find sacrifice. From the early days of Sumer before Abraham, you go back and read the flood story that preceded Abraham, and you'll find, you know why the flood came? Because people weren't killing enough animals and offering enough sacrifices to feed the gods properly. So the gods were unhappy with the diet they were getting from their worshipers, and so they started the flood to straighten everybody out and get them to perform better in feeding the gods.

Sacrifice is a universal part of human religion. To be religious is to sacrifice. They understood that.

They'd done it for hundreds and hundreds of years. In fact, as human beings, they'd done it for thousands of years. And now he comes along and says, yes, there's sacrifice in this way, but it's not the way you expect.

You see, whereas everybody else sacrifices to their gods, the true God sacrifices to you. And so here I am, to be consumed like that lamb. And if you don't consume me, you will never live.

Your life is in me. Now take a second one. The passage that we read a few moments ago about the good shepherd.

Everybody knows what a shepherd keeps sheep for. This fits, of course, a little more closely with the lamb motif. Everybody knows that every shepherd keeps sheep to eat the sheep and to provide clothing for him and for his family.

You think of how many thousands upon thousands upon thousands upon thousands of shepherds there have been in the history of the world. Without an exception, every shepherd kept the sheep so he could

eat them, consume them, and so he could be clothed with them. And Jesus comes along and says, I'm the good shepherd.

I've come to lay down my life for my sheep. And do you know it was so radical it rolled right past them at first? And it's rolled right past us ever since. We think of him as the one that cares for us, but the text says nothing about him providing for us.

It says he dies for us. He said, this is the reason my Father is pleased with me, because I laid down my life for my sheep. The hireling uses the sheep.

The thief uses the sheep. I live for them and die for them and give them my life. And do you know what they said? They said it created quite a commotion among the Jews.

They murmured. And then it says they drew a conclusion. They said, he has a devil in him.

Isn't it interesting? You meet God and think you've met the devil, and a world meets the devil and thinks it's met God. But God's own people met God and said, we've seen a man full of the devil, because his ways are so totally reversed from ours. Now I suspect that that's the hardest thing there is in the gospel of Christ.

I suspect it's the thing that we shun and from which we run continually. I suspect that is a supreme evidence of our fallenness and our sinfulness, that when God speaks, we don't even hear him, and we refuse to hear because it's a threat to us. Because you see, somewhere there is that notion that if God does that for us, then what ought we to do for him? The supreme shaming of us in our self-interest is the self-giving of God.

And if God will go that far for me, how can I ever justify my partial surrender to him? You see, they were afraid of this, because that's how sinful we are. When God begins to talk this way, we feel threatened. We think we're going to lose the things that are precious to us.

We think we're going to lose the things that really make life worthwhile and that add color and joy and security to it. And so when he comes with these kinds of claims, we panic and grab and hold on. And don't know that we are so reversed that where we think is our joy is really our desert and barrenness.

And where we think is our fulfillment is really where our destruction is. This past week I was in a board meeting of OMS, which some of you may know as Oriental Missionary Society. And we were honoring a man who had spent, I think, 30-some years on that board.

You know him, and probably many of you have heard his testimony. His name is Stanley Tam. And I had the responsibility of paying tribute to him.

How do you do that? It's interesting when pygmies have to pay tribute to giants, isn't it? And that's exactly the way I felt. And if I felt that way before, I felt more that way afterward. Because Stanley stood up and said, as retiring from this board, I'd like to just share with everybody on this board how I got caught into this.

He said an OMS missionary was taking me to the Orient, and we went through California. We stopped in Los Angeles, the headquarters of OMS was there in those days. And my friend said, I want you to meet a lady.

And he took me to see Mrs. Cowman, the author of *Strings in the Desert*. So he said, I found myself a humble layman in the presence of this regal lady. And he said, before I left, she insisted on telling me about what had happened that led to OMS.

She said, my husband was a telegraph operator in Chicago, young, aspiring, climbing. In fact, he was manager over his office there in Chicago and had a great future, we felt. We're riding the streetcar down the street, and we passed a church, and we looked out of the window of the streetcar, and there was a sign that said, Missionary Conference A.B. Simpson speaking.

And she said, we made the mistake of going. So the place was packed, and there was an unusual sense of the presence of God. And at the close, instead of giving an invitation, Dr. Simpson took an offering and said, so the first offering plate passed us, and as it did, to my shock, I watched while my husband reached in and pulled out the paycheck he'd received that day for two weeks' pay and dropped it in the offering plate.

And with panic, I thought, there goes the food money for the next two weeks. When the offering was taken, Dr. Simpson came back to the pulpit and said, God is here, we must take another offering. I'd be interested in how many ladies would be willing to give their diamond rings and men any jewelry that they have that could be used to reach the world.

And she said, I thought, that's unusual. Be interesting, the plate came past, and Charles reached over and took her hand and pulled her diamond ring off and dropped it in the plate. She said, I said, that's my diamond ring.

But it was gone. She said, the offering was received, and Dr. Simpson came back to the pulpit and said, God is here, we must take another offering. There are some of you men out there with gold watches.

We have some steel watches that will work just as well, and we will exchange one if you will give us your gold. And so the offering plate passed again. She said, as he took out his gold watch that he used in the telegraph office to keep time with, I remembered how many months we saved to buy that exquisite timepiece.

But she said it was gone. Then she said Dr. Simpson came to the pulpit and said, God is here, we must take another offering. There are some people who should give their lives, and he gave an invitation for people to come forward.

And she said, my husband arose and went forward. She said, there I was, what do you do? She said, I had to make the decision. She said, I had promised to follow him, and so not on the basis of any conviction within me, but on the basis of my responsibility to him, I went forward and stood with him.

Do you know that the largest Protestant seminary in Japan today is the result of that? There is a seminary in Seoul, Korea, that has 1,600 students in it. The third largest denomination in Korea is the result of their labor. The closest thing to a Union theological seminary of evangelical character in Latin America is the result of their work.

There are believers around the world, because of A. B. Simpson crossing the path of Charles Cowman and saying, if you're going to save your life, you've got to lose it, and you've got to lose it all. You think for a moment, a paycheck represents security, doesn't it? A diamond ring represents our delights and our pleasures, and a mission call represents your life. It's interesting, God consumed him.

See, God had already done that with A. B. Simpson while he was pastoring Chestnut Hill Presbyterian Church in Louisville, Kentucky. And when God got him all, it was possible for you to hear. You know, some way or other we need to see that our thinking is wrong, and when he moves in on us to make his claim, he is not our enemy, he is not the devil, he is God who has come to redeem and to save.

And no claim he ever makes will hurt. The least claim or the greatest claim that he ever makes will be redemptive. You know, there are times when a phrase will pick up the mood and the basic beliefs of an age, of a generation.

It's interesting to get old. There are certain advantages in getting old. There are certain treasures that you have that young people don't have, memory.

A bank of experience. There's no way you can get it without living through it. If you've never seen a country, you've never seen it.

But you know, I've seen most of the twentieth century, and I have seen most of evangelicalism in the twentieth century. I think if there is any phrase that would sum up mid-twentieth century, earlier twentieth century, mid-twentieth century, later twentieth century evangelical Christianity, it would be the expression, Receive Christ. And we've preached it far and wide.

Now, I believe that every person needs to receive Christ, but I think there is a subtle heresy in the very expression, unless it is put in proper context. Because you see, Receive Christ points this way. I have guilt, and I'd like to get rid of my guilt.

So you say, Receive Christ, he's the Savior, he will take your guilt away. I've lived in sin and in self-centeredness, and now I reap the tragic consequences of my own self-centeredness, in my own personality structure, in my marital relationship, in my family, in my relationship with society at large. Life just isn't what I hoped it would be.

You say, Receive Christ, he'll bring some peace and some blessing and some healing. Receive, receive. And then you say, After all, sin is a serious business.

Moral transgressions have eternal consequences. Salvation is in Christ, and if you don't receive him, you're going to be damned eternally. Receive Christ and get yourself saved.

Do you know what interests me? There's nowhere in the gospel where Jesus ever said, Receive me. But do you know what he did say? He looked at an Andrew, and a John, and a James, and he said, Follow me. And do you know there's a whole different psychology in following from receiving? Because the one has to do with what I can get, and it orients itself this way.

Which when you get right down to it, is the essence, the essential characteristic of sin. But follow Christ, that means to turn out and get our eyes on him and the path that he walks, walk after him. It's interesting, he says, we are to be his body.

He said to the world, Except you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you can have no part in me and you cannot have eternal life. If you want to live, you must eat my flesh and drink my blood, and so I'm willing to be consumed so you can live. You know, it doesn't take much intelligence to know that what he was saying was, you're my body, and if the world out there is to live, you've got to be willing to be consumed, too.

And if the way the sheep live is by the shepherd laying down his life for his sheep, if the world is ever to live, the shepherd's body is going to have to lay down its life. Other sheep I have which are not of this fold, and they must be brought to, how? By the sacrifice of his body. I'd like to ask, if you're willing to be the world's bread, and are you willing to be broken and drowned and cooked and consumed, I'd like to ask if you're willing to be the body of the good shepherd.

Jesus said, if any man will come after me, let him follow me. Are you receiving or following? You know, I've come to believe something. I don't always have evidence to prove it, but I like to believe it.

Occasionally I get a glimmer that it's true, and so I hold on tight to it. It's very personal, and that's this, that when God lays something on my heart, I'm not the only person he talks to. And if he's called me to speak in a certain congregation, what he lays on my heart is what he wants somebody in that crowd to hear, and that may be presumption.

But every once in a while I get a little evidence that that's true, so I hold on tightly to that. All of us want to be worth something and useful. And we like to think we're in league with him, working with him, not just standing up on our own.

If that's true, you see, that happened when A. B. Simpson spoke in Chicago and Charles Cowman heard him. Because if you go back and dig out the life of Charles Cowman, God was getting him ready so that when he sat in that church in Chicago, he could hear, and here he did. And the world's different.

Could it be that God has been getting one person in this audience today ready to hear this? One person who says, I've kept my hands on my life. I've been willing to receive, glad to receive, grateful to receive. But I see God's been getting me ready.

I know I need to take my hands off and say, God, you can send me where you please. You can give me anywhere for anything you want. I'm yours.

The same way Jesus gave himself to the Father and said, spend me as you will. I wonder if there's a single person here this morning who says, you know, God's been getting me ready to hear that. I think I hear it, and that's what I need to do today.

Take my hands off and say, Lord, here I am. Take me. Possess me.

Spend me. You know, the interesting thing is, every biography or autobiography that I've ever read of anybody who ever came to that place said, you know, the funny thing is, when I lost my life, I found out it was what I was looking for. And that for the first time, I was really free and life was complete.

Shall we bow our heads together? With heads bowed and eyes closed, I'd just be interested before I pray, if there's anybody in the crowd who says, you know, I believe God has been getting me ready to hear this word. I've had my hand on my life, and I need to get it off, and I want him to work in my heart this morning and set me free. I wonder if there's anybody.

With heads bowed, eyes closed. Keep your eyes closed. This is a covenant between the individual and God.

Is there one? Would you just flip up your hands and say, God's been speaking to me. Yes. Yes.

Yes. Yes. There's enough response there that I dare to wait a moment, because I was always the slow type who sat and fought a while before I could ever take the step.

Anybody who's been fighting, take your courage in your hand, stick that hand up and say, yeah, this is speaking to me, and I need his help. Yes. Yes.

Yes. Lord Jesus, you said if two of us would meet together to talk about you, before we finish, it'd be three. And if there were 300 meet together to talk about you, before we finish, it'd be 301.

Thank you that you've kept that promise, and you've been in our midst today. Now Lord, don't let one of us fail to finish the business we need to do this morning. Let every person who needs to say, Lord, here I am, possess me.

Where I've got my hands on my life, you crack my knuckles until I turn loose. Where I grasp myself and my control of me, break my hold until I'm released to be wholly yours. And Lord, let somebody know that freedom this morning as we pray in Christ's name, amen.

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