

The Pathway of the Lamb

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing Jesus as the Lamb of God and following His example of obedience and selflessness in our daily lives.

Scripture: Genesis 22:8, Isaiah 53:7, Isaiah 53:12, Mark 14:35, John 1:29, John 1:35, 1 John 3:16, Revelation 14:4

Topics: "The Cross", "Christian Living"

Description

T. Austin-Sparks delves into the significance of beholding the Lamb of God in two distinct aspects: as the sin-bearer for the world and as the pattern for believers to follow in their daily walk. He emphasizes the importance of daily beholding the Lamb, not just rejoicing in Him as the sin-bearer, but also seeking to emulate His selflessness and obedience in practical matters. The sermon highlights the Lamb's complete submission to God's will, His continuous laying down of His soul, and the ultimate victory and ascendancy that come from following the Lamb's way of the Cross.

Transcript

Reading: Rev. 14:1-5; John 1:29,35-37.

This is the second actual view of the Lamb personally in the whole revelation. We were seeing in our previous meditation that the first is of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, taking us back to those counsels of God which were secured against all the subsequent eventualities, the breaking in of adverse forces and of sin. Here is the second view of the Lamb personally. In the fullness of the times God sent His Son. Of course there has been typology and prophecy previsioning the Lamb. The features of the Lamb have been set forth in numerous symbolic ways in the Old Testament and prophetic utterances. But this is the second view of Him personally and this is marked by a twofold "Behold!" "Behold, the Lamb of God!"

The first is a fuller utterance -- "The Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world". That seems to have been uttered in public. At that time the multitudes were coming to Jordan to be baptized of John and in a public and general and open way John made his declaration -- "Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the WORLD!" This is a world matter.

But the second occasion, where the final clause is not repeated, is apparently to disciples, and now it is John looking upon Jesus as He walks and he says to these disciples, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" There is that presentation of the Lamb for the world in relation to sin and sin-bearing, but there is also the

presentation of the Lamb to followers as the pattern for their walk -- "He looked upon Jesus as he walked, and saith, Behold, the Lamb of God!" It was not only as the sin-bearer; it was "Behold the Lamb" AS HE WALKED, and I think that takes us right up to Rev. 14:4. The hundred and forty-four thousand have, of course, beheld Him as their sin-bearer, but they have also beheld Him as One to follow closely all the way, following the Lamb wherever He goes. Whilst we may be rejoicing in the first beholding, rejoicing in the Lord as our sin-bearer, I trust it can also be said of us all that we are beholding as John beheld on the second day. There was a first day in our experience of the Lamb; there was a first beholding. But there is a second day and a day after for beholding, beholding with a view first of all to seeing how the Lamb walks, and then to following. The one hundred and forty-four thousand were those who had done both.

God's Lamb

"Behold, the Lamb of God!" We will recall the words of Abraham to Isaac -- "God will provide himself the lamb" (Gen. 22:8). God's Lamb. He is God's Lamb before He is ours, God's Lamb before He is anything else. God had need of a Lamb, for in His Son, in the great vocation and service, or transaction, of a Lamb, the primary thing was accomplished of God's rights being honoured. God has rights, and those rights are the rights of His eternal conception of what man and the world, the creation and the universe ought to be -- seeing that it belongs to God, seeing that it came from God, seeing that it was conceived in the heart of God. He associated certain ideas and ideals, standards and ways, a certain nature, with His creation, and He has a right to all that, and His rights have been taken from Him. He is not having His rights in man's nature and in man's life, in the world and in the creation, since that interference, since that terrible diversion from God. The Lamb of God, God's Lamb, as the very first thing in His work, recovers and establishes the rights of God.

God has the right to absolute, unquestioning submission. That right has been taken from Him, and we know -- oh, we know so well; it is the very plague of our hearts -- how in our very constitution there is that lack of submission to God. What difficulties, what battles, what agonies, we go through in coming into absolute submission to God. It is our nature -- it is not our deliberate, conscious insubordination, rebellion or will against God, but it is there in spite of ourselves, in spite of all our desires; it is there, this unmanageable something that is in the very nature of the creation which does not submit to God. Utter and immediate obedience to God -- that is His right; and disobedience is the very nature of man, it is shot through this universe. Selfhood -- we call it selfishness; it is selfhood. It would take a long time to try to compass the whole round of self-aspects. The Lamb -- the very designation, the very word, the very idea, is the opposite of all that -- it is the very picture of submission, obedience, selflessness. God gets His rights of submission, obedience, selflessness, in the One known as the Lamb.

The Lamb Laying Down His Soul

In Him as the Lamb, as we have previously said, we can so clearly see the complete reversal of the whole course of fallen nature, the thought of God for man recovered, humanity reconstituted on another principle -- that of the Lamb; a changed nature. It is not our nature to lay down our lives. Remember that that very phrase about laying down the life can equally well be translated "we ought to lay down our souls for the brethren" (1 John 3:16). We sometimes use the word "life" in that connection so that it means what, of course, it is meaning for many today on this earth -- just dying a martyr's death, laying down our life for the gospel of Christ in a single act. But laying down our soul is a lifelong act, an every day act, a thing which challenges our very disposition, yes, our constitution, for we are immediately affected and influenced by how men of this world will think. They will say it is meek, weak, namby-pamby -- you ought to stand up for

your rights, you ought to fight for your ends; that is the way of the world. Take a view of the world today and see what that is producing. But the Lamb laid down His soul. When He was reviled, He suffered it, He endured it, He answered nothing. "As a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before its shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth" (Is. 53:7). That takes some doing, that represents a strength that is not in you and in me naturally. We have another nature. You say that is weak? I say there is no strength like it. You do not know what strength is until you can stand right up against the whole nature of this world and its judgments and standards and take the opposite view and the opposite course. He did that. That is the Lamb, laying down His soul.

To say to these feelings of ours, these uprisings of our souls, these strong hot feelings, these resentful feelings -- to say to them, Now then, you get down, you stay under -- that sometimes means a real battle when you are taking everything into account, as to what it is going to involve of cost for the time being, until God vindicates that attitude.

"Behold the Lamb"; follow the Lamb. The way of the Lamb may be the way of the Cross and the crucifixion of the natural life continually, but the end of that way is the throne, and the throne is not some merely geographical scene or spot. Do not interpret thrones in the Bible literally. It may not interest you at all to sit upon a literal throne -- it does not interest me -- but to come to a place of spiritual ascendancy where there are values, where there is wealth, where there are riches, dignity, strength, honour and glory to be dispensed to others, that is something, that is the throne -- the end of the course of the Lamb, the way of the Cross.

Beholding the Lamb Every Day

Behold the Lamb walking, today and tomorrow and the day after.

So many Christians have stopped with the first day. They have beheld the Lamb, the sin-bearer, and they rejoice, as we ought to rejoice, in Him as the sin-bearer. We have stopped with that view, and today and tomorrow and the next day and all the days following we still keep our eyes on day one, forgetting that every day there is to be a beholding of the Lamb in very practical matters. It will require that you and I many times have to withdraw from the scene, as being too much for our natures, and get away with the Lord for a little while and fight that battle out -- the battle of our souls, of our reactions, of our provocation. We may have to fight it out and get clear and come out with the Spirit of the Lamb, leaving it in the hands of the Lord to give an answer in His own time. That is following the Lamb. The Lamb repeatedly withdrew to be with His Father because of the situation, because of what He was meeting. He fought out the battle right to the end. He went a little further. "He went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass away from him. And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; remove this cup from me: howbeit not what I will, but what thou wilt" (Mark 14:35-36). The cost was great. He fought it out and came forth serene, with an amazing serenity, resultant from that secret battle with His own soul. "He poured out his soul unto death" (Is. 53:12).

The Lamb at Jordan

So God's Lamb is one that is wholly unto God. We see here two aspects of that: firstly, as He came to Jordan to be baptized of John, and John said, "Behold, the Lamb of God". That is the initial and consummate attitude and committal. The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world is now declaring publicly, in the world, that that has, from eternity, been His attitude toward God's interests. "I am come to do thy will". I have not come to debate it, to question it; I have not come to contemplate it; I have come

committed to it, fully, utterly committed. And Jordan was but a declaration; it was not an acceptance of the will of God -- that had been done before the world was; the Lamb was slain then. Will you just dwell upon that statement -- "The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world". What does that mean? It only means this: that in the counsels of God, when the great design of God, that eternal purpose, was being "talked over" (speaking after the manner of men), and decided upon, then the Father said to the Son, "You know what is going to happen, you know the challenge that is coming, you know the result of that interference, that it will be an utmost cost to secure what we are talking about now -- it will cost us everything"; and the Son said, "Father, I will pay the price". That is the slaying of the Lamb. The Father said, "Very good, we will share it together; it will be My cost and Your cost". And there it was that "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son". And when the Son came into the world, He was only taking publicly, on this earth, the position that He had taken then, and declaring it. It was an utmost committal, a consummate attitude, declared at the Jordan.

The Lamb as He Walked

And then again, it was a matter of beholding Him "as he walked". The position that He had taken was the position in which He remained every day, meeting the cost of it. Every kind of test came to the position that He had taken. The world tested Him, and I do not mean only the world as a sphere and the people in it, but the spirit of this world, the ideas and conceptions and standards of this world, all so contrary to His. The prince of this world betrays the standard of this world when he suggests to Him that, by falling down and worshipping him, He should receive all the world's kingdoms. The spirit of compromise -- "If only you will drop your level a bit and forsake your utter and ultimate standard, if only you will do a little compromising, you can get so much more; do not be so utter, so absolute, so consummate, it is not to your interests". That is the world. He was up against that all the time. He was tested by the world spirit, the world's concept, which is so completely different from that of the Lamb.

He was tested by the evil powers. Very often the evil forces come nakedly, not through men and not through things. They seem somehow or other to break right in upon us, apart from other people and apart from other things, and we sense an awful working of evil. It seems as though the evil powers have got inside of us, ourselves. At other times they are in other people, provoking us; now they somehow seem to be working WITHIN. "Christian, do you see them, how they work within?" Yes, they do; that is how it seems. I am not talking about demon possession in the case of Christians, but it seems sometimes as though they have their grip upon our very vitals. He knew soul-travail in conflict with the evil powers; oh, if it were known what a secret history the Lord Jesus had! We only read of His doings and His sayings and see some of the incidents in His life, but there must have been a tremendous secret history, battles and conflicts and sufferings and issues being fought out. He was here for that, but the position taken initially was maintained day by day in His walk, in His going, in His progress, and we must constantly in every situation follow the Lamb.

Thank God, we have not to fight this out alone. The Spirit Himself helps our infirmity, we have One alongside, we have the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, we have grace which is sufficient. But nevertheless, it is a bitter fight sometimes -- this laying down of the soul, this selflessness. "These are they which FOLLOW the Lamb whithersoever he goeth".

Firstfruits unto the Lamb

I close by repeating that these are said to be the "firstfruits unto the Lamb". That is, in them God's rights, God's thoughts, God's desires, God's intentions have their first full expression. These are they who have met in an initial way the blaze, the heat, of ripening suffering, spiritual suffering, and have responded. These are they who have passed along that peculiar way where others have not passed. I cannot explain this; I cannot tell you why it is that the Lord does this -- the operation of the principle of election seems to be here also. Somehow or other God has laid hold of certain people to satisfy Him in a certain way, and He takes them through certain experiences deeper than others. How sorry we feel for people like that. We cannot do anything about it, we cannot help them. We see them going through unusual difficulties and adversities. Somehow or other, if anything can go wrong, it goes wrong with them: if there is any trouble, they are the people who get it. Of course that may not be exclusive to such as we are thinking about. There are a lot of foolish people about who get into all the trouble that there is going. I am not speaking of those. But there is no mistaking the fact that there are people on this earth who have peculiar and unusual experiences under the hand of God. They are sometimes tempted to cry out against that hand, cry out with the Psalmist, "Is his lovingkindness clean gone for ever?... Has God forgotten to be gracious?" Oh, the agony! Not every Christian goes that way. Multitudes of the Lord's children have an easier way than that. But here are these in our midst who so suffer. What is the explanation?

I think it is the hundred and forty-four thousand -- of course, not necessarily that actual number, but a marked out company, to be unto God's satisfaction as a firstfruits unto the Lamb. I do not see any other explanation. Maybe we shall be given more light upon it, but I do feel that this touches many of our questions and problems. It is God's intention to bring near to Himself, by unusual methods and means, some to serve Him and His satisfaction in a peculiar way. That, I think, explains this company, and it may explain something in our experience. The Lord make us in any case those who follow the Lamb -- as we have already seen, it is in the present tense -- who KEEP ON FOLLOWING the Lamb wherever He goes.

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