**John 1:29-42 (ESV)**

**29** The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! **30** This is he of whom I said, ‘After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.’ **31** I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel.” **32** And John bore witness: “I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. **33** I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ **34** And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.” **35** The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, **36** and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God!” **37** The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. **38** Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, “What are you seeking?” And they said to him, “Rabbi” (which means Teacher), “where are you staying?” **39** He said to them, “Come and you will see.” So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. **40**  One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. **41** He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which means Christ). **42** He brought him to Jesus.

**“Pro-life Points To Jesus”**

 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen. Epiphany is a season about bringing things to light. Primarily, the focus is on showing that Jesus is truly God sent to be the Savior. Secondarily, the focus on Jesus as God also shines light upon our lives. We note this especially well on the third Sunday of January. “Sanctity of human life Sunday” continues to mark the now 41 years since abortion became legal in our country. Of course, Scripture teaches God creates life in this world regardless the circumstances we see. It is also the holy way God’s Son came to be among us by being conceived in the Virgin Mary. Isaiah shared this miracle of life, “And now the Lord says, he who formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him; and that Israel might be gathered to him…” The sanctity of life is cut and dry to God, but a sinful world makes a mess of it and this goes double for us in the Church.

 Sadly, evidence since last month has shown Thrivent financial had opened funding to Choice Dollars as well as directly supported pro-abortion groups. Initial actions by Thrivent stopped all funding to either side of the conflict. The LCMS response shines light into this darkness, “We encourage Thrivent to clear up confusion with its members by unequivocally stating that it supports pro-life and pro-family values. We urge them to follow those words with action by restoring funding to the pro-life organizations that lost funding in December and by developing a policy that denies all funding for Planned Parenthood and NARAL Pro-Choice Minnesota Foundation.” Money makes a mess of things in life and we cannot serve God and money. Patients, prayer, and protest are what Thrivent members can do until a final answer comes of it all. Just remember when facing whatever threatens life. Jesus is pro-life for He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the World.

 There is no life apart from what God gives by baptism. This is what John the baptizer made known to his disciples when He saw Jesus. The water that called all to repentance connected all to the Word made flesh to save sinners. They would not have life by John or any man, but only life that came from Jesus. It is why the baptizer stood still at the presence of God’s Son because preaching never points to the preacher but only to Christ. “…He looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, ‘Behold, the Lamb of God!’ The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus.” There was no other life, no other way baptism proclaims but faith in the gift of God’s Son and His Word.

 Baptism has changed of our existence in this world. Rather than one of death and separation from God and man, it is one of life and unity shared in Christ. St. Paul did not tackle the horrible issues facing life at Corinth without first saying, “…to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ…” You see the promise of baptism always holds true already having placed all your sin and death on Jesus. Luther states, “There are only two abodes for sin: it either resides with you, weighting you down; or it lies on Christ, the Lamb of God. If it is loaded on your back, you are lost; but if it rests on Christ, you are free and saved” (Bul’s Notes 3). Baptism always brings us to Jesus. Those who hear what the water says have life in His Name.

 There is a right to life where baptism lets us be with Jesus. Since John only prepared the way, He did not stand in the way of God’s salvation. He made it a point to later say about Jesus, “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:29-30). Yet, the two disciples following John’s words about the Lamb of God had the Word of life say to them, “What are you seeking?” This was a question going straight to the heart. Nothing could hide from Jesus. The baptizer had told them, “And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.” Rather than taking offense at the question they said, “Rabbi, where are you staying?” In these words, the focus turned back to Jesus. It was to be with Him. Learn from Him. Receive from Him. The time spent that day unpacked that promise, “Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.” It would lead to Jesus being more than a Rabbi for life, but the Savior of their lives.

 Our baptism is alive with Jesus asking us every day, “What are you seeking?” Who sets the agenda? Is it His Word or another answer to hear? Jesus is not a life coach helping us to live perfectly to the Law. If that were the case, He would not be the Lamb of God who takes away sin great and small. St. Paul says, “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” Galatians 2:20. The life of a Christian rests in the forgiving power of Jesus and His Word for our lives. He shapes us not first by what we do, but what He is always doing for us. His true body and blood remains in the sacrament proving nothing else makes us right with God. This salvation turns us not back to sin, but to Him who saves sinners. The Lamb of God says, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:31-32).

 There is opportunity from baptism to be pro-life toward others in this life. As welcoming as Jesus was to the two disciples saying, “Come and see.” Andrew would make known to his brother Simon the welcoming message from God saying, “We have found the Messiah.” Since Jesus was the Lamb of God, He brought redemption. Yet, it would be greater than a victory for Israel, a particular problem to solve, or even living for a moment in time. This Lamb of God takes away the sin of the whole world from beginning to end, from one side to the other. The Savior could deal with this deep darkness for God promised, “I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.” What God shined on Andrew allowed him to be a preacher of light to his brother Simon. No longer was it to answer, “What are you seeking?” Instead, the presence of Christ and His Word gave confidence to say, “We have found.”

 A chasm exists today between the church and the public square where people work and live. There are people who the called ministers of Christ will never reach, but you are a bridge for God to those people just like Andrew to Simon. Pro-life in terms of baptism is confidence in Jesus. It is saying, “We have found.” We have found Him in His Word, found Him in His Sacrament, found Him in His ministry, found Him in His Church. As one missionary puts it, “In today’s global village, the church’s narthex literally is the marketplace.” Our narthex, the meeting area outside these doors, is too small for a Lutheran confession in our life. Let alone, the character of hospitality is to take on our everyday life. The sacred space where God reconciles Himself to us by His Divine Service leads the baptized to declare, “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world have mercy, grant us your peace.” This peace from God can pierce lives that have no peace, see no light of truth, and hear no Word able to save sinners. Thrivent posed a threat to what is life on God’s terms. Yet, life wins one way or another no matter the darkness. Jesus is pro-life for He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the World. Amen. Now may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting, Amen.