

V.O.C. – September 2017

September 24, 2017: the Word of God – a word of forgiveness

Dear Listeners,

In the past three weeks we have listened to the gospel account of John, and we have seen the Son of God, Jesus Christ, introduced as the Word of God. John shares with us that He was already in the beginning and that by Him the world was made. John also presents Him as the Word of life and the Word of Light. And so we have seen Him, too, as the Light of the world and the Word of God who came into the flesh to bring the light. Then we read next in John 1, “there was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to bear witness to the light.” He himself was not the light, but came to bear witness to the light that every man, enlightened, would know and see that the light had come into the world!

When the Jews sent a delegation to John, John the Baptist that is, as we know him even better, to ask him who he is actually, John had answered, “I am not the Christ; neither am I Elijah or the prophet.” “Well, but who, then, are you,” they’d asked. “I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the LORD,’ as the prophet Isaiah said.” I am the herald, the forerunner of the promised one, who already is standing among you! Hence he called the people to repentance, to prepare themselves for the coming one: the Light is there already; the Saviour is here, and the Redeemer of the world is already in your midst!

The next day, John sees the Lord Jesus coming to him. Apparently Christ has been baptized already in the Jordan, and He will have endured the temptations by the devil in the wilderness. At this time, however, Jesus is approaching John that he may introduce and present Him to the people! No, there won’t be a welcoming committee, neither are there special preparations to be made; He is there! The Word had come into the flesh (as we saw last week!) and is now dwelling among them: the Saviour, the Redeemer of sinners! This is perhaps the last official act that John the Baptist may perform. He points out the Word Incarnate and presents the Lamb of God! After that the work of the Saviour, the Son of God, will start: preaching the gospel of the kingdom, manifesting Himself as the Saviour from God by His miracles, the wondrous deeds of salvation, restoration, and the beginning of the Year of Jubilee. After that, however, there will be the rejection by the Jews, the betrayal, the arrest, and the cross at Golgotha!

“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” With these words, dear listeners, John the Baptist presents the Lord Jesus to the Jews. When you hear the designation “the Lamb of God,” you are reminded of the OT Passover celebration that was introduced at the time of the exodus from Egypt. The people of Israel had to put blood on the doorposts and lintel as signs that the Angel of Destruction could pass by their homes, and God will spare their first-born sons! God will come in judgment to the Egyptians, but He grants His people Israel the blood of the lamb as a substitute to take away their sins and to spare them His wrath and the death of their first-born. It’s the same that happened on the Day of Atonement, when the High Priest would place his

hands on the heads of the animal that was sent into the wilderness, carrying the sins of God's people. The prophet Isaiah also speaks of this in chapter 53, about the servant of the LORD who will be led like a lamb to the slaughter. Indeed, the whole Word of God teaches us that there will be no forgiveness without the shedding of blood; yet, also, that the blood of bulls and goats cannot take away the sins of man!

Dear listeners, God promised to give a Lamb, and He Himself sent the Lamb into the world, while the Lamb came freely and willingly to make the true and complete atonement for the sins of the world, the world of sin and guilt, of suffering and death. And now, the day is here, John the Baptist shows: "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world!" He is here! There He is, John points Him out! That's what a herald does, today also, in the church as well: they are ministers of the Word, who proclaim the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who has come from God, and who as the Lamb of God takes away the sin of the world! That's the way you, too, dear listener, are confronted with the gospel, with the only true and glad tidings of salvation, so as to save you from your sin and guilt, from your sin and death!

Then it is a marvellous gospel indeed, dear listener, when the Lord Jesus indeed steps forward and begins His ministry. As we read in the letter to the Hebrews [10:7], "Then I said, 'Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.'" In his announcement, John presents Jesus as the Lamb of God in the present tense, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who *takes* away the sin of the world." He is the Lamb and He is on His way to the cross, where He will offer Himself as a sacrifice to God, to take away the sins of the world! Sin, dear listener, is the cause of all the misery and death in the world, and Christ has come to take this entire sin, comprehensive sin, total and compact mass of sin, upon Himself! Yes, John is speaking of the sin of the *world!* That is the sin of the whole human race, since He is the Saviour of the world: of Canadians, Americans, Japanese, Chinese, Europeans, rich and poor, black and white, etc. That's what He came to do; that's why He came into the world, but as we saw last week, the world did not receive Him, did not accept in Him the light and life for the world but preferred darkness over light, death over life! Yet, God so loved the world that He gave Him, His only Son, that whosoever believes in Him will not perish!

When the Lord Jesus started His work, dear listeners, he began with preaching and He called His first disciples. Everyone who believes in Him and is baptized will be saved. Everyone who seeks his life outside of himself in Him, and is washed in His blood, the blood of the Lamb, will be saved! There will be many who do, dear listener, an innumerable crowd, and they will sing [Rev. 5:12], "Worthy the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!" Why? His sacrifice was sufficient for the sin of the whole world; hence also the proclamation of the Lamb of God is world-wide. Those who are called are called seriously, also today, you also, dear listener! Behold the Lamb of God, He still takes away the sins of the world, forgiving also your sin when you confess them and believe this forgiveness with your whole heart! This Lamb of God today is in the throne of God, our High Priest, who presents His own blood for the forgiveness of the sins of you and me! That's the gospel, the only gospel! That's the only way of salvation, the only name given

under heaven by which you can be saved! Hear Him, dear listener! Believe in Him and your life will be changed, renewed, in all its aspects, now and forever!