

The sermon text for today is based on the

Gospel, John Chapter 1, verses 29 to 42.

Provided by The Lutheran Church of Australia

Hanging out with Jesus

The next day John saw Jesus coming to him, and said, "Here is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! 30 This is the one I was talking about when I said, 'A man is coming after me, but he is greater than I am, because he existed before I was born.' 31 I did not know who he would be, but I came baptizing with water in order to make him known to the people of Israel."

(John 1:29-31 TEV)

Here is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world.

John had caused quite a stir.

John had gone out to the wilderness, and the people had come out looking for him. They wanted to see what this strange man looked like. They wanted to listen to what he was saying.

He obviously had brought a message from God. They wondered if he might be the Messiah. These people had grown up with a hope that had been passed down through the generations: God was going to send the Messiah, and the Messiah would bring salvation to his people.

Now John was here. Was he the Messiah?

No! John went to great lengths to emphasize that he was not the Messiah. He was just a messenger.

But someone else was coming, much greater than him. In comparison, he was not even worthy to tie up the shoelaces of this great man. John says that even though they were waiting for this someone, this someone in fact had been alive from eternity: *He existed before I was born.*

And then this man Jesus arrived. John did not recognize him, until God revealed that this Jesus was the man he had been talking about.

John tells how God revealed to him who this Jesus was. John saw the Holy Spirit coming in the form of a dove, and revealing that this Jesus bore the Spirit of God in his very person.

So now John can tell all the people: I have seen him. God has shown me. God has sounded his voice and declared: *This is my Son.*

Now we know. This Jesus is the Son of God.

So the next time he sees Jesus, he declares: *Here is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.*

With that statement John draws on the whole story of the Old Testament. The Old Testament tells how the people of God were told to bring their lambs and offer them as sacrifices to God. With their sacrifices they were saying: *I have sinned against God, and I know that I owe my life to God. Please accept this life, given to you in sacrifice, and forgive me and spare my life.*

Each person would bring their sacrifice to God, seeking God's forgiveness.

Now Jesus is named: *Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.*

Not a lamb of God, but the Lamb of God - all of salvation history is pointing to Jesus, the one lamb who has come to give one sacrifice, and his sacrifice is his own life. These words declare that Jesus gives his life for the world, and offers his life to the whole world, to all people.

These words foreshadow the whole story of Jesus giving his life on a cross— and rising with a new life, that he shares with all who trust in him.

³⁵ *The next day John was standing there again with two of his disciples,* ³⁶*when he saw Jesus walking by. “There is the Lamb of God!” he said.*

³⁷ *The two disciples heard him say this and went with Jesus.* ³⁸*Jesus turned, saw them following him, and asked, “What are you looking for?”*

They answered, “Where do you live, Rabbi?” (This word means “Teacher”.)

³⁹ *“Come and see,” he answered. (It was then about four o’clock in the afternoon.) So they went with him and saw where he lived, and spent the rest of that day with him.*

What happens next?

What does Jesus do next?

This is what fascinates me.

The next day Jesus comes back and John repeats his great declaration of faith: *Here is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world.*

He has two of his disciples with him. One is later named as Andrew. We are not given the name for the second one. Some people think it was the disciple John, who is now telling this story. They hear what John the Baptist says, and they see Jesus walking past.

What do you do when you see someone famous? Do you go up and talk to them? Ask for an autograph? Or do you stand back and watch them from a safe distance?

Are you game to talk to them? Do you think that they will be interested in talking to you?

These two men are curious enough and game enough to follow after Jesus – at a safe distance. Jesus does notice them, and he turns around and waits for them. He talks to them, and asks them: *What are you looking for?*

They ask him: *Where are you staying.*

Which means: *Can we come and visit you?*

And he replies: *Come and see.*

Which is an invitation: *Come with me and spend some time with me.*

What does Jesus do after John has declared that he is the Son of God and the Messiah, Saviour of the world? He makes the time to hang out with a couple new mates. He invites them back to his place. They spend the rest of the day, hanging out with him.

What did they do? We are not told that. But I think they shared something to eat and something to drink. I think that they just relaxed together, and sat and talked.

What did they talk about? We would love to know.

But I think that Jesus was interested enough to ask them about themselves. I think that they talked about their lives, and their families, their hopes and their struggles, even the weather, and the seasons, and the local politics. I'm not sure if they talked about the football or the cricket.

But as they talked about all of these things, Jesus helped them to see everything in a new way. He helped them to see how everything fitted into

God's will and God's plans. Jesus showed them how God's grace was right there in their lives, covering their sins and failures, and always giving them hope, always opening the way for a new start, putting their lives into the context of God's plans that reach from eternity to eternity.

When they were talking about themselves, Jesus was telling them what God was doing in their lives and through their lives.

⁴⁰ *One of them was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.* ⁴¹ *At once he found his brother Simon and told him, "We have found the Messiah."* (This word means "Christ".) ⁴² *Then he took Simon to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "Your name is Simon son of John, but you will be called Cephas."* (This is the same as Peter and means "a rock".)

It was one of those conversations that was quite ordinary yet wonderfully exciting at the same time. With Jesus they saw everything with new eyes, with a new faith, a practical everyday faith.

If it was exciting for them, then they wanted to share it.

Somewhere along the line Andrew thinks of his brother Simon. He knew that Simon would want to meet this Jesus too. He ducks off and he finds Simon. He tells Simon about Jesus.

He too makes one of those grand statements: *We have found the Messiah, or the Christ.*

He too connects with all the promises of the Old Testament, pointing to someone who would come and bring the kingdom of God.

And yet it is so ordinary, so mundane. Come and meet him. You would like to talk to him too.

And he does. Andrew introduces Simon to Jesus. But Jesus already knows him. *I know you. I know your name is Simon. I know that your father's name is John.* (That is what they used instead of a family name).

Jesus knows him and Jesus gives him a new name. *I am going to call you Cephas* (which is a Hebrew name) *or Peter* (which is a Greek name) – which both mean *Rock*.

I know that you are a rock, and I want you to be a rock, someone strong and solid. I want all of you to come and follow me.

So here we have something deep and profound, yet wonderfully simple. We have something with eternal significance, but so personal.

Today's Gospel is from the Gospel according to John. John includes in his telling of the Gospel many stories of Jesus meeting people. And he gives quite long conversations he has with people. They are conversations where Jesus shows his deep understanding of people. Jesus knows how to relate in a simple, personal way.

But there is often another dimension in these conversations. Jesus connects this care for people and his interest in people with the will of God. Through these conversations Jesus reveals great truths about himself and his mission, about God's will, about the way God embraces human lives and draws people to himself.

Through these simple conversations Jesus shows how the grace of God reaches into the ordinary places in people's lives, and transforms whole lives, all of life, into the exciting life lived with God.

Jesus turns and says: Come with me. Come and see what I am doing, and where I am going. Come, because I want to share in your life.

Come, because I want you to share in my life, and share the saving grace that I am bringing to the world— and that means you, each of you.

This gives us a clue to our own relationship with Jesus. Because faith in Jesus is a relationship to Jesus.

We can make lots of grand statements about Jesus.

We believe that he is the Son of God.

We believe that he is the Messiah.

We believe that he is so great and wonderful that we have no right to come to him. We are not worthy to untie his shoelaces.

We recite the Creeds of the church, and we do so with a sense of awe and wonder. God has revealed himself to us. God has revealed his wonderful ways. We believe that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

And yet Jesus is still just as open and just as keen that we can hang out with him.

Most of us like to hang out with people. We like to get together and share time with others, even when we have nothing special to do and nothing special to say. We still like to meet and talk and just be together.

We invite the friends over for a BBQ in the backyard.

We meet the other kids and go down to the water.

We sit down as a family around the dinner table.

We meet for coffee at one of the cafes.

We enjoy company, with family, friends, neighbours, new acquaintances. We hang out with people. Jesus wants to hang out with us too.

Jesus wants to be with us, to see what we are doing. Jesus wants to be in on our conversations. Jesus is interested in who we are, and what we are doing, in what is important to us, and what worries us.

When you know that Jesus is with you, it changes your perspective on life. It is exciting. There is always more, even when you think you are just doing ordinary things. You become aware that God is with you, and that God's grace is working in the ordinary things of your life. Everything has a purpose.

You are thinking what God is doing, and then how you can respond, how you can share God's love, how you can bring God's hope, how you can care and comfort, how you can take the ordinary things and see them fitting into God's big plan of life and salvation. You are learning that your life is covered in the forgiveness of God, that can face all your sins and failings. And then you learn to treat others with that same forgiveness.

When you know that you can hang out with Jesus, and that Jesus hangs out with you, then you want to talk about him, and introduce others to Jesus.

We are living in a society that tells us that if you want to believe in God, that is OK. But keep it to yourself. God belongs in his own little box. OK in church, but leave him there.

But when you know that Jesus hangs out with real people in real life, then you do not leave him in his church box. Now, alive with Jesus, you can't but help take Jesus with you. Our faith is simple and personal. But it is also deep and you get to know more and more the profound truths of who Jesus is and what he has done. And that's exciting!