



Second Week Ordinary Time 2005.

Isaiah 49: 3-6 1 Corinthians 1: 1-3 John 1: 29-34

In the Gospel today three names are used of Jesus. Jesus is called Lamb of God, Jesus is the One on whom the Spirit descends and rests, and Jesus is the Chosen One.

In Australia and New Zealand most people are still familiar with the image of a lamb. Lambs are a sign of spring. Each year we catch glimpses of the exuberant energy that lifts our souls. What did the people understand when John called Jesus, Lamb? In the scriptures the lamb is the chief symbol of the celebration of Passover.

The lamb of Passover was a sign of protection; its blood was to be smeared on the door posts, so that death would not enter the house. It was also food for the journey and there were rules and rituals around the meal that commemorated the journey to freedom. One of the rules which is echoed in Jesus' story was that in preparing the meal the lamb's bones could not be broken. So as this image is understood Jesus is both food for the journey and a sign of eternal life which begins in discipleship.

The second great symbol associated with the lamb is found in the suffering servant poems of Isaiah.

"Like a lamb led to the slaughter, or a sheep before the shearers, he was silent and did not open his mouth."

Isaiah wrote of the true disciple as one who was prepared to suffer on behalf of the people. The image of the scapegoat as carrying the sins of the people has also become part of the Lamb imagery and so we have the prayer before communion, *Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world...*

John's gospel carries no account of Jesus' baptism, rather he focuses on the relationship between Jesus and the Spirit. Isaiah proclaimed that the Spirit of the Lord would rest upon the anointed one. The coming of the Spirit on Jesus was a confirmation of the presence of God with, and in, this servant-of-the-Lord.

At the end of the Gospel John will develop his understanding of the Advocate who becomes Jesus' abiding presence. The Sanctifier, whom the Father will send in the name of Jesus, will be our teacher and remind us of all that Jesus taught.

Jesus is the Chosen One. This is the title that is given by John the Baptist. When we think of someone as *chosen* it has passive overtones. To be chosen in the sense that John uses it is to enter into a relationship. The "choice" remains inactive until there is a response.

John catches sight of Jesus as he starts out on his journey. This sight is the intimation of the beginnings of something new.

The next day in the presence of John the Baptist, Jesus calls his first disciples. There is a suggestion of the passing on of the prophetic cloak. This reminds us of the story of Elijah and Elisha. When Elijah's work was over Elisha, his disciple, asked him for a double portion of his spirit as a farewell gift. In Jesus, the prophetic line would reach its full flowering and rather than a double portion of the spirit Jesus will become sender of the Spirit.

The Spirit who comes from the Father is missioned to the world through Jesus.

Today we have been given some "names" of Jesus to reflect upon. As Jesus says to Peter, "Who do you say I am?" so we might reflect on how we name Jesus. The image we choose at this time will reflect something of our growing understanding of the one we have pledged ourselves to follow.

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