

Theme: “Look!”

John 1:29-34 (EHV)

²⁹ The next day, John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look! The Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! ³⁰ This is the one I was talking about when I said, ‘The one coming after me outranks me because he existed before me.’ ³¹ I myself did not know who he was, but I came baptizing with water so that he would be revealed to Israel.” ³² John also testified, “I saw the Spirit descend like a dove from heaven and remain on him. ³³ I myself did not recognize him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘The one on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, he is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’ ³⁴ I saw this myself and have testified that this is the Son of God.”

Our eyes are pretty amazing creations. One could argue that they are the most amazing part of our body. Think of all the amazing things we can see with our eyes! Think of the vibrant colors, the beautiful landscapes and nature scenes that we can see and observe with our eyes. Think of the amazing things we can see that are beyond what our naked eyes can see: The tiny objects that we can see through a microscope, or the fascinating stars, planets, and galaxies that God has created when we look through a telescope. When we see something amazing, what do we usually do? We get excited and we say, **“Look!”**

“Stop, Look, and Listen!” is the overall theme for our worship services during this season of Advent. Last week, the focus was on the Lord’s Words through His prophet Isaiah, **“Stop doing evil. ¹⁷ Learn to do good.” (Is 1:16b–17a)**. These words were a reminder that Advent is a season of repentance, a time when God desires that we **Stop!** the sins that we are committing, and **Stop!** to examine our thoughts, words, and actions and focus on Jesus, who came to wash our sin-stained souls **“as white as snow” (Isaiah 1:18)**.

Today, we will **Look!** at ourselves through the Word of God—and what we often see doesn’t get us “excited.” As we look at ourselves with the mirror of the Law, the Ten Commandments, we see very clearly our sins. We see that we have not always done what God expects of us in our actions, our words, or our thoughts. The Law reminds us of just how far we have fallen as human beings. It reminds us that we are selfish, self-centered, sinful people who spend much of our time **looking** inward at ourselves; **looking** out only for our own interests and welfare. The Holy Spirit uses the Law to expose any notions we might have that we’re “really not all that bad,” or that we are somehow “OK,” or even “good” spiritually by ourselves.

The problem is, when we become aware of our sinfulness, we sometimes **look** in one of three wrong directions:

- ✠ First, when confronted by our sin and how offensive it is to God, we **look** only at our sins and dwell on them. When this happens, it is easy to feel hopeless and overwhelmed by our sin and by what we deserve from God. Guilt sets in and we might begin to think that we are beyond His forgiveness.
- ✠ Second, when confronted with our sinfulness, we are tempted to **look** for hope in places not directed by God. For instance, we might be tempted to **look** for hope in the Law, which has convicted them of sin in the first place. “Maybe if we just try harder,” we think to ourselves, “maybe I can do enough so that God will overlook my sins, or I can work them off somehow.” Some even **look** to other religions, other “gods,” or other types of “spirituality” that have no power to remove sin or to save their soul.
- ✠ Third, is denial. Sometimes we simply blind ourselves with denial and hardened hearts that reject God’s Law, or ignore it altogether, as it confronts our sinfulness. We may **look** to ourselves for truth and wisdom and decide that we know better. We may distort or try to “spin” what we’ve done or not done into a positive light in order to justify or excuse ourselves.

When we face the reality of our sinfulness, God does not want us to dwell on and **look** only at our sins. He does not want us to **look** for hope in the Law—or from false gods, or to look within ourselves for the answers. There is no hope for salvation or joy in the Law. The Law makes us aware of our sins. And, while God does not want us to deny our sinfulness, He also call us to **look** to Jesus Christ alone for forgiveness and salvation. In our text we read that when John the Baptist saw Jesus coming toward him, he exclaimed, **“Look! The Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29).**

John, like so many others, had been waiting for—**looking** for— the coming of the One who had been promised by God, the sacrificial Lamb that all those Old Testament sacrifices were a picture and symbol of. The One the prophet Isaiah wrote about who would come into this world and would be oppressed and afflicted and killed, taking on Himself the punishment we deserve.

How did John the Baptist know that Jesus was the One—the “Anointed One,” the Christ, chosen by God to be the Savior? God told him what to **look** for. When John baptized Jesus in the Jordan River, what he saw and heard was proof that Jesus was the One chosen by God to be the Savior of the world. John, an eyewitness of these things, tell us to **Look!** We read in our sermon text, **John also testified, “I saw the Spirit descend like a dove from heaven and remain on him.”³³ I myself did not recognize him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘The one on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, he is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’ I saw this myself and have testified that this is the Son of God.” (John 1:32–34).**

As the Son of God, true God and true man, Jesus has accomplished for us what we because of our sinfulness could never do. As the Lamb of God He has given us the cleansing forgiveness that we need. By His perfect obedience of the Law and His innocent death, Jesus has **“[taken] away the sins of the world” (John 1:29)**—your sins, my sins, *all* sins!

God the Holy Spirit opens our eyes to **Look!** and see all that Jesus has done for us and brings us out of the spiritual darkness and deadness in which we were born and into the light and life of salvation—not by giving us corrective lenses, or a microscope, or a telescope—but through the Word Spirit brings us to faith in Jesus Christ and enables us to **look** only to Christ as the Lamb of God who not only takes away the sins of the world, but also takes away *your* sins and *my* sins and the punishment that we deserve from God because of them. He opens our hearts and our eyes to the truth of what He says in His Word—certainly about our sinfulness and how He would have us live, but also the truth that we need **look** only to Jesus for forgiveness, eternal life, and salvation.

“Look! The Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29) John exclaimed in our text. **Look!** the writer of Hebrews also tells us, **“Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, who is the author of our faith and the one who brings it to its goal. In view of the joy set before him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of God’s throne.” (Hebrews 12:2 EHV).** Yes, let us **look** to Jesus. Thanks be to God that because of Jesus, we may also **look** forward to eternal life in heaven! Amen.