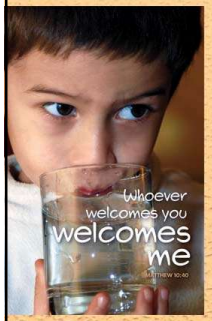
Reflection – Pastor Paul Nuechterlein
July 2, 2023

1

Behold the Lamb of God . . .



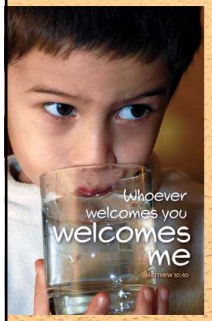
- In John 1:29, John the Baptist proclaims, as he sees Jesus coming, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"
- It's so familiar to us, have we ever noticed it says "sin" in the singular? Is there one sin above others that Jesus came to take away?
- "Lamb of God" provides a clue that it might involve the ancient reality of ritual blood sacrifice which modern anthropology tells us was at the heart of all human religions for thousands of years – example: Göbekli Tepe (or Stonehenge or many other examples)

2

Göbekli Tepe – 9600 B.C.E. (in modern-day Turkey)

3

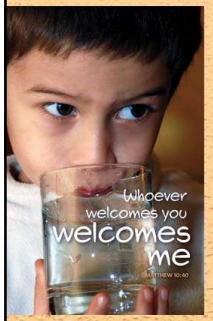
. . . Who Takes Away the Sin of the World



- It has changed my life to come upon a Christian anthropology which explains both:
  - Why all human religion evolved with ritual blood sacrifice at the center
  - And why the logic of our evolutionary religions continues to shape us for harm even today – why it's *the* sin Jesus came to take away
- I'm also trying to be briefer in my sermons and will supplement them with "Gospel Talks" between the services and other adult educational opportunities

4

Behold the Lamb of God . . .



- Two main goals today:
  - Sketch out how the sin which the Lamb of God came to take away from us is all human religion as it originally evolved – offering instead a revolution to redeem our religions (with our First Reading today from Genesis 22 signaling a first big step)
  - As LCR seeks to be more welcoming (the theme of the Gospel Reading, understanding the difference between evolutionary religion and revolutionary religion makes all the difference to be truly welcoming

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The Sin the Lamb of God Takes Away

Evolutionary Religion

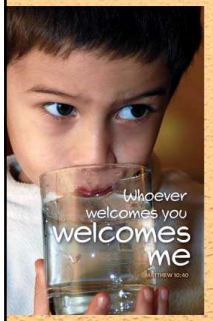
- God's of wrath who command the central religious practice:
- Ritual blood sacrifice – shedding someone else's blood on an altar
- Central value: Law – to define the boundaries of our community (Us vs Them) and to justify upon whom it is OK to inflict violence (our enemies)
- Cornerstone in human reigns

Revolutionary Religion

- God of love who offers a replacement for the central religious practice
- Holy Communion – an open table of bread and wine, remembering the blood shed for us
- Central value: Grace – to ground the equality of all human beings before God and to work for the reconciliation of the whole human family (especially the "least" who are usually left out)
- Cornerstone of God's reign in Jesus

6

Behold the Lamb of God . . . Who Welcomes All



- We're right in the middle of examining our welcome to LGBTQ people – using a process called "Reconciling in Christ"
- We're farther down the road of examining and changing our welcome to Holy Communion
  - We excluded by denomination
  - We excluded by age
  - Is the last hurdle of exclusion on the basis of being baptized or not?
- We need to learn about the culture of exclusion based on our evolution – that God in Jesus is redeeming our very evolution as a species!

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