

# Meet The Lamb of God

# John 1:35-51

Preached at 8.15 and C@10 on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2015

## Intro

I was reading during the week something that challenged the way that atheists define 'faith'.

They'll say that faith is a blind leap in the dark... believing something to be true despite having no evidence.

Richard Dawkins (who seems to lose more credibility every time he opens his mouth) even says that faith is believing something to be true in the face of evidence to the contrary.

But the writer of the article was pointing out that that's not even the way we use the expression 'faith' in common usage.

The most common usage of 'faith' in Australia is along the lines of 'trust or confidence in something or someone.'

If we have a serious health problem, we put our faith in the specialist we go to.

That's not a blind leap without evidence. You'd get a recommendation and you'd be looking to see he had some sort of qualification on the wall of his office, wouldn't you?

Nobody puts their faith in anything or anyone blindly!

A few weeks ago, John (our John) called the opening of John's Gospel the 'trailer' for the movie...

The trailer's set the scene for what to expect... who the star of the story is and how the other characters are going to interact with him.

And there's a big, big claim in v12...

*"Yet to all who received him, [and he explains what that means] to those who believed in his name, [that is, put their faith in him] he gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12 NIV)*

It's a call to put your faith in a man to give you the right to call God your father.

Who would do that without knowing that man?

Dawkins' definition of faith would say that to believe in him is a leap of faith without any evidence – how can you trust that a man who lived 2,000 years ago (if he lived at all) said that?... and if he did, what makes you sure he can deliver?

At the end of his book John says that he's written these things down – out of all the many things that Jesus said and did that he could have written...

*(so) “that you **may believe** that **Jesus** is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” (John 20:31 NIV)*

### ***Life as a child of God!***

Someone in our Growth Group last week said “what more could you want?”

John (the Apostle) has written down all the evidence anyone needs to believe or put their faith in Jesus.

But, on average, people don't just pick up John's Gospel (or any other) and start reading.

People are introduced to Jesus by people who already know him.

### **Look – the lamb of God!**

At the start of this passage, John's just pointed Jesus out to two of his own followers again, saying “Look, the Lamb of God”.

He's excited... “look!... here he is!

“Here's the man God promised to send, who's come to sacrifice his life to take away the penalty for sin that is death, and to give new life as sons and daughters of God to everyone who believes in him.”

Do you think you'd be excited to introduce your friends and family to that man?

When the Rolling Stones were starting out, they mainly covered the songs of the great blues musicians.

I saw a clip once of them introducing their fans to the great Muddy Waters... listen to this guy! They were excited to introduce their fans to him.

John's excited. He just says "look, there he is". And they start following him.

But Jesus asks them "what do you want?"

...obviously more than a couple of quick answers because they ask Jesus where he's staying.

That's a question we need to ask is "do we want to get to know this man?"

If you really want to trust this man, Jesus, with your eternal future you need to know him personally.

Jesus just says, "come and see".

Come and see... come and spend some time to see who he is.

All of John's Gospel is for us to come and see who Jesus is.

Getting to know Jesus is essential to trusting him.

And the way we normally get to know people is through a personal introduction.

### **Biblical Evangelism**

36 years ago I was introduced to a young lady who worked on the checkout at (what was) Flemings Supermarket in Padstow.

I was working there at the time too, and I thought she was pretty nice, but I didn't know her... until one of the other casuals introduced me to her.

Her name was Sue. And for the past 36 years I've been getting to know her better and better.

That introduction was the beginning of a life-long relationship.

It surprises a lot of us I think that the most common and effective way that people get to know Jesus is through the personal introduction of a friend or a family member.

But that's what we see happen here in the case of these first men to follow Jesus.

Andrew first goes and finds his brother Simon and says:

*“We have found the Messiah” (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus. (John 1:41–42 NIV)*

I think the longer we’ve been Christians, the less likely we are to do something like that.

When I was a new Christian I wanted all my friends and family to know Jesus as well.

I was excited about what I’d discovered about him.

I thought I knew what I needed to know about God and Jesus until I was introduced to him.

Then I wanted everyone else to know what I knew.

What makes us less excited about introducing people to Jesus over time?

Maybe you haven’t even been conscious of it. Talk about that in your Growth Groups this week.

Andrew was excited that he was off to find out more about this man that John had pointed them to – the one he called the Lamb of God, and the Son of God.

The first thing he does is finds his brother and tells him who they’ve found.

The word ‘messiah’ that Andrew uses was a word meaning ‘anointed one’, which is translated into Greek as ‘Christ’.

The New Testament together eventually shows Jesus is the Messiah in the full sense of the word, but Andrew couldn’t have understood all of that meaning at this stage.

He just means that Jesus has come from God.

But he excitedly gets his brother and brings him to meet Jesus.

As soon as he meets him, Jesus gives Simon a new name!

His new name, Cephas, translated into Greek for John’s readers is ‘Peter’, and it means ‘rock’.

I don’t know how many people you would be introduced to who you’d be happy for them to give you a new name!

Even though Peter hadn't met Jesus, Jesus knew him already.

And he knew what he would call Peter to be.

Peter, Andrew and the other one of John's followers (most likely the John who wrote this Gospel) have now been introduced to Jesus.

See how it happened?

Someone else has witnessed to them (or told them) about Jesus... and they started following him to get to know him.

They're the first examples of the exceptions to the rule in 1:11-12...

*"He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:11–12 NIV)*

Not everyone rejects Jesus!

You'll be surprised often at the responses you'll get when you ask someone if you can introduce them to Jesus (e.g...)

Next is Philip. It's quite possible that the first sentence of v43 means that Andrew found Philip. So another person gets introduced to Jesus through someone who already knows him.

And Jesus extends the invitation to Philip to 'come and see'.

And Philip follows Jesus.

And now Philip finds Nathanael and witnesses to him about Jesus.

Friends, this is God showing us how people start following Jesus.

One follower introduces another person to Jesus, and they become a follower... then that follower witnesses to someone else and they become a follower.

I became a follower when a follower witnessed to me and Sue – sitting in our lounge-room.

He introduced us to the Jesus he knew.

And that's how Jesus gathers followers or disciples... as we heard at our weekend away with Ben Pfahlert – disciples making disciples is how the church grows.

[If you're wondering why Nathanael isn't mentioned in the other Gospels, it's likely it's the personal (first) name of Bartholomew.]

Philip tells Nathanael...

*"We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."*  
(John 1:45 NIV)

He means the same thing as Andrew in calling Jesus the messiah – the coming one promised throughout Israel's history is this man from Nazareth.

When we introduce someone to Jesus, we're not introducing them to a concept, or a system of morality or thought – we're introducing them to a man who lived and breathed and came from a family and from a place and time... a man we know and love.

Nathanael's honest question "can anything good come from Nazareth" would be similar to us watching the show 'Struggle Street' on SBS last week and asking 'could the messiah come from Mt Druitt?'

Philip doesn't feel obliged to give him an acceptable answer... he just says 'come and see'.

Why is it we always feel we need to have an answer to everyone's questions about Jesus before we'll try to introduce them to him?

Philip's answer is a model for people who want their friends to meet Jesus as well as a challenge to those friends – 'come and see'.

So Nathanael comes to meet Jesus.

And Jesus says to him "truly, here's an Israelite in whom there is no deceit." We might say he's a man who calls a spade a spade!

But he's a man who's willing to examine for himself the claims that others are making about Jesus.

The supernatural knowledge Jesus has about him combined with the witness of his friends removes any doubts Nathanael had about anything good coming from Nazareth!

In v49 he says:

... *“Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel.” (John 1:49 NIV)*

Nathanael (like Andrew) was saying even more than he understood at that point in time.

His expression probably meant something like “you’re like God”, as in ‘like father, like son’.

But we understand from what we go on to see, that that is exactly who Jesus is in every sense of the expression.

And ‘king of Israel’ – like Andrew and Philip – the one God had promised.

Nathanael believes!

As he’s introduced to Jesus, he hears and sees enough to believe and to start following him.

Does that mean he knew everything there was to know about Jesus?

Did Andrew, Philip and John know everything there was to know?

Did you know everything there is to know about Jesus when you began following him?

Of course not!

Jesus told Nathanael basically ‘you haven’t seen anything yet!’

And he alludes to the story of Jacob in the Old Testament where Jacob was the foot of the ladder between heaven and earth. Jesus now stands in that place. He is now the way to God’s heaven.

And everyone who comes to follow him will see the way to heaven standing open before them.

### **Following, evangelising and us**

It begins with an introduction to the person of Jesus.

Leading people to Jesus isn’t a specialised job.

If you know Jesus you can introduce someone else to him... so that they can ‘come and see’ and believe.

We don't have Jesus physically with us like Andrew, John, Peter, Philip, Bartholomew and all the first followers.

But John has written his book so that people will believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God...

We can introduce people to Jesus by taking them into John's Gospel – or Mark, Matthew, Luke... and eventually the rest of the Bible.

You can just start reading the Bible with someone.

You can just talk naturally in your conversation about your own relationship with Jesus – not just saving those conversations for Sunday morning.

If you're a new Christian, you know enough to introduce someone else to Jesus.

It's not what you know, *it's who you know*.

You know the One God sent to give people the right to become children of God.

You can introduce people to him, to extend his invitation to 'come and see', knowing that everyone who has faith in him will live forever with you, with Jesus, and our Father.

That excited those first followers.

It excited me as a new Christian. Why should anything be different now?

If you're not, come back and see for yourself. Read John slowly and spend time thinking about who Jesus is and what a great thing it is to know him and to know who you are through faith in him – until you are excited again.

You're not asking anyone to take a blind leap in the dark – you didn't, did you?

Let's pray that we'll know and love Jesus so much that, like Andrew, the first thing we think of is to introduce our friends, family and community to him...