

Tape 16  
Behold the Lamb

The Christian vocation is about hope. The Christian vocation is about working for the impossible. One of the fathers of the church, Tertullian, said that the word impossible is not found in the Christian dictionary. For nothing is impossible for God. Hope is seeing possibilities of something good in the future. You're only speaking in that little 2 by 4 that we live. We are taught to keep our hopes reasonable. However, Christianity, Jesus teaches us that our hopes should not only be beyond reason but beyond imagination. Jesus comes to give a different kind of hope. The hope that Jesus comes to give us is the hope that evil and death in every form and every manifestation will be conquered. And what I would submit to you today is - that is the only hope. Christ hope is the only real hope. It is the hope that each human heart longs for. Take any one of the reasonable hopes in the 2 by 4 World. The greatest of them. Suppose you hope to become president of the company or president of Ireland, or president of your religious order. And it comes and you get it and here on Saturday you become president of whatever it is you wanted. Or you win a million pounds or whatever it is in the lottery. Your greatest hope in that little 2 by 4 world has come to pass this Saturday. Now suppose on Monday you got the diagnosis that you have terminal cancer. What you know and what I know is that hope, that great, great hope in this little 2 by 4 world, would be irrelevant. It would be nothing. It would be dust.

Jesus comes here to save the world. And we as people who were chosen by him to be baptized into the Lamb of God, that is what we are given the mission to do also. I can hear it being said inside all kinds of minds, "I'm not interested in saving the world." "I'm only interested in saving myself, and my children and those that I love." But that's really not so. When you stop and think about it, what you want, the good things that you want for those that you love and for yourself, you know as sure as your sitting there, every other human being in the world wants those same things for those that they love for themselves. Jesus comes along and says, "I will show you a way that will lead beyond those little 2 by 4 world hopes. I will show you a way that will lead to the conquering of evil and death so that you and those that you love will be able to live in peace, an joy and happiness eternally". We as Christians in the mystery of Gods plan for salvation play some part in that process of bringing salvation to the world. The Lamb of God into whom we are baptized is a symbol of God's desire that all be saved. The Lamb of God is also the means by which all are saved.

The word diabolical comes from the root word that means to divide. What divides people against people is diabolical. What unites people with people, what unifies people is holy. The diabolical divides, the holy makes whole. All throughout the history of life, religion has professed in one way or another, that God is on the side of this group and against this group. Religion, which supposedly is about God the holy, has been as an instrument to divide people. That's not genuine religion, that's hierolatory. Genuine religion, the religion of one God who is father of all, in all, and for all, as the gospel says, genuine religion unites, the holy makes whole.

St. Theresa Avalon said that all sin – all sin, begins in the loss of the consciousness of the presence of God. All sin begins in the loss of the consciousness of the presence of God. What she did not mean is that God is sitting up there like some tyrannosaurus rex, some tyrant king waiting for us to make a mistake, and he's going to crush us. What she meant is, God is our father who created us out of love. And when we lose consciousness, that that all loving God is with us. And working with us, and surrounds us and is with others and surrounds others. When we lose consciousness of the presence of the father among us and his love, we begin the process of choosing sin.

Our Christian life at some very fundamental level, our spiritual life, is simply the process of doing what Jesus did – staying attentive to the presence of the father moment in and moment out. The father who is my father and your father, the father who's the father of my friends and the father of my enemies. The father who is holy, the father who does not divide people against people, but the holy one who makes whole. Staying attentive to that presence is the beginning of genuine holiness and is the end of division and destruction. The mind of the Lamb of God as we have said, is the mind that is filled from the center to the circumference and everything in between. It is a mind that is utterly filled with the father. And the father's love, and the fathers desire to save.

Consider – the little ditty – Jesus loves all the Irish, loves us all with all his might, green or orange, black or white, they are precious in his sight, Jesus loves all the Irish, all day and night. That's a fact of the gospel. That may not be a fact that has been proclaimed from the pulpits of various churches, but that's a fact of the gospel. If there is any Christianity in a church, its whole effort is to unite those who are baptized into Christ. Its whole effort, its whole struggle is to give concrete truth in history to Jesus prayer that all be one. Every time a church uses its prayers and its buildings and its sacraments and its ministers in even the subtlest way, to set people against people, it is not doing the work of Jesus, it is doing the work of the diabolos – the diabicle. It is up to the business of dividing and not uniting. But Jesus just doesn't love all the Irish, Jesus loves all the Moslems and all the Jews, and all the Hindus – all people who are ever drawn out of the God of love out of nothingness and given existence. The Lamb of God comes to save all. We worship the Lamb of God every night during our adoration here. Every afternoon during our adoration. Every day during our Eucharist, we worship the Lamb of God. But we are to become what we worship.

Jesus says in the gospel, about the Jews at the time, or some of the Jews at the time, they worship with only their lips, but their hearts are far away. What we adore is what we should commit ourselves, whole heart, whole soul, whole mind, whole strength to imitate. Sometimes when we look at the world and we look at history and we look back and we see the Greeks and the Romans with their many, many Gods, we think how childish polytheism is. How stupid, having 10, 20, 30 40 Gods. And then we kind of wonder, why did it take so long for people to see that there was only one God. Why did it take so long, to see there was only God – monotheism? Then we thought a little bit about it, and we realized that God, the reality of God, as people understood it was this: God is that reality that rules our lives. God is what rules our lives, that is our God. And what the Greeks and the Romans, and so many other polytheistic religions in the history

of the world have seen, is that peoples lives in the different moments in the day, and different moments in their lives are ruled by different things. And so Rome had Mars the God of war because war was an important factor in the Roman Empire. And so much of life was given over to it, so Mars ruled that much of life that was given over to it. And then they had Venus, the God of romantic love because so much of life was given over to that kind of sexual love. And they had Barkus, the God of alcohol or drunkenness, because a piece of life was given over to drunkenness and at that moment in time it was that spirit that was ruling the person, that was the spirit that was their God. And with Judaism comes along the insight of monotheism – that there is only one God and we should love that God with out whole soul, whole mind, whole heart and whole strength. That means that only one God should govern our daily activities – moment to moment to moment to moment. And when any other God is chosen to rule our lives at any given moment, it's not really God we are choosing to live out of an idol. And that is precisely what St. Theresa of Avila meant when she said that all sin begins in the loss of the sense of the presence of God. Moment to moment to moment, our life is meant simply to be conscious of the presence of God, Jesus, and to live out of that presence, to live as Jesus would love in the moment. To do what that God would do in the moment. And when we fail to do that, Theresa of Avila says that's when we begin to move into sin. Hence in our theology that's why we say in the end all sin is idolatry. It's choosing to live by some other spirit other than the holy spirit of Jesus Christ.

Its possible when you leave here after this weeks retreat and you go home, it is possible that what you might say to yourself is, well I've heard it all, it makes sense, it's the gospel, but I've just got to get on with my life as usual. When Jesus called Peter and James, when he called the apostles if you remember the stories, they're down by the water with their nets, with their fish, with their boats, with their families and he says follow me. They had a choice too. Whether just to get on with life, or whether to participate in following the Lamb of God. They choose not to get on with life as usual; they choose to make their first priority following the Lamb of God Jesus.

There is a reason why you should follow. Because when you are chosen to be Christian, you are chosen by God for his purposes and his purposes are to bring eternal life and happiness and joy to all. You are given a privileged position. It may be a position of suffering but it's an extraordinary position in human history. You are given a position of being a piece of yeast in the human dough. A piece of the yeast of the Lamb of God to raise the entire human dough into a hope and into a world that's unimaginable.

Did you ever think, in the gospel, what is the first moment where there is a full and entire proclamation of the gospel, the very first moment when the entire gospel is proclaimed and its fullness? In other words, Jesus tells parables here and he tells stories there. And he says things here and he does this there and he does this here. What is the very first moment when a human being has heard the entire proclamation of the gospel and experienced it in all its fullness and all its power? Did you ever think what the first, the very first moment was? When the good news becomes blazingly clear in its entirety. Jesus crucified. There is hardly anyone left. All the apostles have left in fear, betrayal, and anguish. It's well after 3 o'clock in the afternoon and its getting dark in the spring in

Jerusalem. And there's only a few there, Mary, his mother, Mary Magellan, John the evangelist, and a few women. Joseph ????. They have to take the dead body down. What an anguished thing that must have been. A limp dead body. For the people who loved Jesus, Mary his mother, Mary Magellan, John. It had to be a horrifying moment. We know that whatever is said in the gospel, Mary Magellan has a special place in the gospel. She's a terrible sinner, terrible sinner. And somehow through Jesus Christ the Lamb of God, and through divine providence she is brought into the presence of the mercy of God and that whole life of sin is intimate instantly dissolved and put behind her forever – literally dissolved. She is given new life in the love of Christ and it says she follows Jesus from that day on. She loved Jesus. Can you imagine what it must have been for her to have to wash the body, hold the body in a shroud and carry it the distance from Calvary to the tomb with the others? That good Friday night, when they rolled the stone in front of the tomb and each walked back to his or her own house, what must have been the feeling inside of people? The horror, the anguish, the utter incomprehensibility of the situation. What did Mary Magdallen think as she sat in her room, or wherever she sat that night, knowing that the one she loved was in the grave never to be seen again, torn apart, after that day of horror that good Friday.

It must have been torment in the extreme and yet billions of us, literally billions of us are Mary Magdellens. We are sinners and we have received the forgiveness of God and we have all buried those that we love and felt the anguish and the worry and the concern over them and the terrible sense of loss. And so, 3 days later, on that first Sunday after the crucifixion, Mary Magdellen it says in all 4 gospels, all 4, Mary Magdellen went to the tomb to do the last thing that she could do for the loved one, the person that she loved – to give the final anointing to the body. And she gets to the tomb and to her shock and further horror; she finds out that the body is gone. So even the last thing that she could do to do the anointing is denied her. And we can feel the pain in her words when she says to the gardener, she says, they have taken his body, tell me where they have taken it and I'll go get it. Those are the words of love. That's not reasonable, that's love speaking. Where have they put his body? I'll go get it. And then comes the greatest moment in the history of the world. The moment that every human heart longs for – the movement that ends all nightmares and all terror, the moment when the gospel of Jesus Christ is proclaimed for the first time in all its fullness to the world. After Mary Magdellen says in love, they have taken the body tell me where it is, I'll go get it. There is silence and it says, she hears the word; Mary – not Mary like anyone would say Mary, but Mary the way Jesus said Mary to her – Mary the way someone who loves says the name of someone they love. She heard Mary, her own personal name being spoken in love by the one she loves, with love, from the mouth of love. Can you imagine what that moment must have been like? From total and complete despair with no hope to the impossible existing right there in front of you. Beyond all concept and imagination, she knows evil has been defeated, death has been conquered, love is almighty, life is whole – that God is more fundamental than evil. That Good Friday must always give a way to Easter Sunday. She knows it in one word, not by a ton of theology books, she knows it because Christ has risen and has spoken 1 word – Mary. Its all - the entire proclamation of the gospel – is in Mary. It is the good news in its fullness that she receives. And remember who she is, she is a person like us, a sinner. Struggling not to sin and asking

God's forgiveness and receiving it. Is it an accident that God puts the paradigm of sinner in the New Testament as the one in all 4 gospels who's there at the resurrection. And the communication comes with the name Mary. We know what her reaction was, it says it right in the gospel – her reaction was she turns around and yells with joy as you and I would. Overwhelmed with joy and hope, not because its in the mind, its in the heart, its in the person, the impossible is real, its physically in front of her. It is all over. The hopes and the longings and the cravings and the desires of all the centuries of all humanity have been fulfilled. It is true what Christ said, he is the way, he is the truth, he is the life. Everything he said is true – God is father. And it's all there in 1 word – Mary. Jesus has gone infinitely beyond the hopes of the 2 by 4 world. Just like in the way he talked, it was infinitely beyond the way of the 2 by 4 world. The Lamb of God who is slayed is risen. And his proclamation comes in the most human of all forms. He speaks the name personally of the person with love.

And so, all of us, all of us, long to hear what Mary Magdellen heard. All of us, who have buried mothers or fathers, or brothers or sisters, husbands or wives, grandparents, friends. All of us long for that day when we hear them say, John, Bridgett, Mommy, Daddy. Whether you be muslim or Jew or atheist, whether you be Hindu or Shinto, protestant or Catholic or orthodox – every human being beyond all hope, beyond all politics longs to hear their name as it was spoken by that person that loved them. We know that until that day comes life will never be whole. You know and I know, talking back to a previous talk, you know and I know, that the longing of Richard Kelvin's mother, the longing that consumes her whole life, although she can never talk about it, is the longing to hear her son Rich say Ma, Ma. And that's what the Lamb of God promises. Nothing short of that. That is the hope and the truth and the good news of Christianity – Ma. Therefore, his way, which is the way to eternal life, his people who are us, his chosen people – we are here and we are chosen to follow the way of the lamb of God, not for ourselves, but so other people, all other people, will 1 day here what we so much want to here – Mommy, Daddy, Bridgett, Sean, Ma – that's what's at stake at following the gospel as Jesus teaches it. Make no mistake about it, the empty tomb, the empty tomb in 1 word – Mary – is the ultimate proof that the way of the Lamb of God is the way of life. And the way to conquer evil and death. And that's why we commit to it moment in and moment out, so all those billions and billions of people, whom we don't know, no more than St. Theresa knew the missionary out there, that she was suffering for, so that they will 1 day here – Ma, Mary.

If when you leave here, you are tempted not to follow the way of the lamb of God, not to proclaim the way of the lamb of God by word indeed. To return to life as normal in the 2 by 4 world. To choose some other way in a given moment other than the way of the Lamb of God. Ask yourself this before succumbing to the temptation; does the way you're choosing have the empty tomb at the end of it? Does it have Richard Tevlin and his mother re-embracing in love?

Christianity is a religion based on an improbability and based further on impossibility. Christianity is a religion based on the utter improbability that Christ is risen. We have all buried people, no one has come back. But Christianity says Christ is risen, it's the central

proclamation. Easter is our great feast. As improbable as it is that a human being died and rose, that's what we proclaim. But Christianity beyond that utter improbability is a religion based on other impossibility – that God, the creator of the Universe, God the holy, God who made every atom, every molecule, sustains this whole thing from galaxies to the blade of grass, that God became human in Jesus – that's impossible. But look, if we accept the utter improbability that Christ is risen. And if we accept the utter impossibility that God became human in Jesus Christ, which is what we do every time we pray to Jesus and through Jesus. If we accept the utter impossibility and the utter improbability, isn't it a little late in the game at that point to say, his teachings are impractical. That following the Lamb of God, the non-violent Lamb of God is naive and fantasy. It is not naive and fantasy. It is the way to eternal life. It is the way to the empty tomb. It is the way of hearing love speak your name personally and tell you with that 1 word that all is well for you and for those you love. Following the Lamb of God is not fantasy; it is the way to eternal life for more than we know.

Our lamb is conquered, hymn let us follow.