

Sermon – Sunday, January 15, 2023

Rev. Randi

I want to start today with the words of Teresa of Avila, a 16th-century Spanish mystic.

Christ has no body now on earth but yours,
no hands but yours,
no feet but yours,
Yours are the eyes through which to look out Christ's compassion to the world;
Yours are the feet with which he is to go about doing good;
Yours are the hands with which he is to bless men now.

The point of Teresa's poem is that we are to be Jesus in the world. We are to love as Jesus did, forgive as Jesus did, show compassion as Jesus did. We are to participate in Jesus's mission as the Lamb of God.

John the Baptizer uses the phrase Lamb of God to refer to Jesus. That title for Jesus is a powerful one that refers to Jesus giving Himself as the Passover Lamb to atone for or wash away our sins and those of the whole world. The title also has other origins relevant to our call to be Jesus in the world.

According to both Jewish and Roman cosmology, God created the lamb (or Aries) as the first celestial body, so the lamb symbolized the leader of cosmic changes in the universe. The ancient people believed that when the sky returned to its position at the time of creation, the Lamb would be at the head of the cosmos. So, by ushering in a new sky and land, the Lamb of God wipes away everything that occurred before. So, all the sins of the world and evil ways of living cease to exist. It is a new beginning. [\[1\]](#) So when we live as if Jesus is embodied in us, we become a part of that new beginning. We became co-creators in God's re-creation of a different world.

Our calling as Christians is to live as new creatures in a new world of love, forgiveness, and compassion. Our calling as Christians is to pray for the transformation of the world and to do all we can to bring that new world about, starting with ourselves. In this way, we have the same call as Isaiah, Andrew, and Simon Peter. We are called to embody God and to bring God's love into the world.

Of course, loving as Jesus does isn't as easy as it sounds. We often fall short of that goal no matter how much we try to embody Jesus. When we do, we can remember that God forgives our mistakes. We also can remember that the very act of following Jesus faithfully every day leads to transformation. The more we faithfully follow Jesus, the more we will look, act, and embody Jesus. Consider Simon. He spent time with Jesus and became a new creature. He became the Rock. His faith became the foundation of the Church.

Also, like Isaiah, we may find that we keep loving and trying to move the world to be a more loving place only to have our work rejected by the world. We may be frustrated because God calls us to continue to love and encourage others to love despite that rejection. We may, however, be comforted as we realize that Andrew and Peter

experienced the same frustrations. Indeed, even Jesus did. Jesus's vision of a loving world was just too much for the leaders of His time.

We also may find comfort when loving is difficult in knowing that the call to embody Jesus isn't just to us as individuals. It is also to the community – St. Paul's and St. Andrews -- and the whole community of saints. The community is to bring about the transformation of the world. As individuals, we gain encouragement in community, and we gain power in community. When we all work together to be Jesus in the world, we can make a difference.

We are called to be Jesus in the world. Indeed, as "Christians," we share His Name. Our call is to see the world through compassionate eyes, to bless others, and to love as Jesus did. Our call is to practice this love no matter what, just as Jesus did. Our call is to this love as individuals and as a community. As we faithfully answer this call, God will transform us. And, in that transformation, we'll be part of creating that new world.

[\[i\]](#) Malina, B. J., & Rohrbaugh, R. L. (1998). *Social-Science Commentary on the Gospel of John* (pp. 51–52). Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.