

**Sermon, January 15, 2023**  
**Isaiah 49:1-7; John 1:29-42**  
**“Thru the Water: For All the World”**  
**Rev. Dr. Brian Jones, Senior Pastor**



The game show Jeopardy has been on for 39 years. I don't know how many of you watch Jeopardy, but I'll assume enough of you know how it works. They give the answer, and you have to phrase the right response in the form of a question. But I've discovered a few clues to the show. I mean, it's been on for 39 years, so they run out of ideas and questions after a while. They often give you clues in the answer trying to do a pun. Categories that give you some of the clues are easier. If it's a question about an opera winner, it's almost always Wagner; if it's an Opera, The Magic Flute is almost always a good answer. If its 18<sup>th</sup> century adversary, guess Robinson Caruso or Gulliver's Travels. If it's the author, guess Hawthorne. 20<sup>th</sup> century, guess Jack London or Kerouac. And if it's a female scientist, almost always guess Marie Curie.

Madam Curie is a great answer because she was so incredibly influential. She and her husband discover two new elements. Not one new element, but two of them. Poladian and radium. Their work with radioactivity was revolutionary. She won the Noble Peace Prize. Twice. She helped create in the field radiological units in World War 1, realizing that the quicker something could be assessed, the better the chance of survival.

What's tragic, of course, if you know her history, is that in the end, what she worked in will eventually bring about her death. Long term exposure to x-ray to radiological elements over a long period of time brought on aplastic anemia- from which she died.

Now in that loss, her story isn't that different from the story of many people. Long time exposure to anything is bound to have an effect on someone. You only have to watch television to see commercial after commercial asking if you have ever had long term exposure to something, because if you did, it has probably affected your health, and our attorneys would like to speak with you. Of course, long term exposure affects us because it's long term. We may not notice it right away, it's subtle, but it slowly transforms us into something else. As humans, we cannot be exposed to anything for a long period of time and remain as we are.

But that's also true for positive exposure, as well. I have seen many children who come from abusive situations are withdrawn and damaged. But when an adoptive family, a foster family, brings them in and exposes them to love, exposes them to safety and trust, they are very often transformed by it. Not in a day, of course. But long term exposure can change someone's life. Especially when we are exposed to Jesus.

Last week, we celebrated the Baptism of Jesus. And we said we are using this as a launching pad for our new series through the year. What does it mean to be a baptized Christian, is it just a rite, an act we do, or is this a sacramental moment, a true moment where we encounter the living God. What happens to us when we come through the water?

Our Gospel lesson brings us back to the next day after Jesus' baptism. John the Baptist sees Jesus and says "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." Or in some of your Bibles, it will say "behold the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." I like that better. *Look* suggests a glance. *Behold* says stop. Hear this. Don't let this pass you by. This, this right here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Of course the people here knew what's lambs did in conjunction with sin. They were the sacrifice to cover sins. But John says Jesus, this Lamb, hasn't come to cover sins, cover them up, out of sight, out of mind. But this Lamb has come to take away all of your sins. John is unequivocal, Jesus has come to take away your sins.

As powerful as that is, it's possible, though, we short our understanding of what John is saying. Many of us read this or hear it and see the forgiveness of all of our sins. And that true. The cross and resurrection take away the guilt and punishment for every sin in our lives. But John the Baptist doesn't say He takes away the guilt of sin. He says Jesus has come to take away your sins. He takes away the sins you are struggling with right now. The sin in your life that goes against God's best for you, that push you away from

God, that are causing you to be miserable. Jesus has come to take away every sin you struggle with right now as you come and sit with us today.

Jesus loves us. Jesus accepts us. But Jesus never leaves anyone unchanged. Jesus has come to transform your life. Don't short change Him by thinking all He has come to do is make you feel good about yourself and give you assurance you get to go to heaven. He has come to transform you. He wants to transform you by a long term exposure to His presence. Remember what we said at the beginning of our message today. You are designed so that if you are exposed to something for a long time, it will change you. Sometimes slowly, sometimes subtly. But the more you are exposed, the more you will be affected. The more you are exposed to Jesus, the more He is going to transform your life. Behold the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

This is why we try to give you so many opportunities to worship, to be discipled, to be in ministry. We want to give you as much exposure to Jesus as possible so that He can change your life. Because the opposite is also true. Jesus cannot transform you if you are not exposed to His presence in the Holy Spirit. Hold Him at arm's length and you will not be changed or changed very slowly. Embrace Him, and He will transform everything about you. How much do you allow yourself to be exposed to Jesus? Have you been transformed?

I think, though, this is also our call as we witness to people. Your role in witness to others about Jesus is simply this. You are to bring them into a long term exposure to the presence of Jesus. And it's long term. If you want the people you know to be Christians and have their lives changed, then you have to start acting like Jesus. If you are the primary way for them to be exposed to Jesus, then start acting like it. If you want people to know God loves them, then you better love them. If you want them to know Jesus can forgive them, you better forgive them, if you want them to know Jesus can transform their lives, you better let Him transform yours.

If you want your children to grow up with a healthy relationship with Jesus, to be transformed by Him, then you have to expose them to Jesus. You need to take them to church, find them a way to grow spiritually and be discipled. Pray with them. Your children will not become people of prayer if they never see you pray. They will not be readers of the Bible if you never read it to them. They will find it hard to find Jesus if they are never exposed.

Behold the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Does Jesus love you as you are? Yes. He sees your sins and loves you anyway. Does He want to leave you as you are? No. He wants a lifetime with you, exposing you to His grace and love. It's not always changed in an instance, it takes time as we are exposed to His love, His power. But whatever your sin, He takes it away and frees you from it.

Do you have people in your life who need Jesus? Begin a long term exposure of Christ in their lives. But be in it for the long haul. Our scripture in Isaiah notes how hard it is to speak prophetically. People don't always like it. Do it anyway. Just expose them to what you have found in Christ. As we do, Jesus will transform the entire world, and we will know others can behold the Lamb of God in us. Amen.