Order of Worship for January 18, 2026

Prelude:

P: The Lord be with you.
C: And also with you.

Opening Hymn: *"I Lay My Sins on Jesus"* – **Hymn #606**

Confession and Forgiveness p. 203

Service of the Word

Entrance Psalm:

P: Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight,
C: O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.
P: The heavens declare the glory of God,
C: and the sky above proclaims His handiwork.
P: Day to day pours out speech,
C: and night to night reveals knowledge.
P: There is no speech, nor are there words,
C: whose voice is not heard.
P: Their voice goes out through all the earth,
C: and their words to the end of the world.
ALL: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.
P: Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight,
C: O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.

P: The Lord be with you.
C: And also with you.
P: Let us pray…. Almighty and everlasting God, who governs all things in heaven and on earth, mercifully hear the prayers of Your people and grant us Your peace through all our days; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
C: Amen.

Old Testament Reading: Isaiah 49:1-7

R: Listen to me, O coastlands, and give attention, you peoples from afar. The LORD called me from the womb, from the body of my mother He named my name. He made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of His hand He hid me; He made me a polished arrow; in His quiver He hid me away. And He said to me, "You are My servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified." But I said, "I have labored in vain; I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity; yet surely my right is with the LORD, and my recompense with my Go

And now the LORD says, He who formed me from the womb to be His servant, to bring Jacob back to Him; and that Israel might be gathered to Him—for I am honored in the eyes of

the LORD, and my God has become my strength—He says: "It is too light a thing that you should be My servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth." Thus says the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel and His Holy One, to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nation, the servant of rulers: "Kings shall see and arise; princes, and they shall prostrate themselves; because of the LORD, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you.

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God

Epistle Lesson: 1 Corinthians 1:1-9

R: Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and our brother Sosthenes, To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, that in every way you were enriched in Him in all speech and all knowledge— even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you— so that you are not lacking in any gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

R: This is the Word of the Lord'

C: Thanks be to God.

Alleluia and Verse p. 205

Holy Gospel: John 1:29-42

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the First chapter

C: Glory to You, O Lord.

The next day [John the Baptist] saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! This is He of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks before me, because He was before me.' I myself did not know Him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that He might be revealed to Israel." And John bore witness: "I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on Him. I myself did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God."

The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, and he looked at Jesus as He walked by and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, "What are you seeking?" And they said to Him, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are You staying?" He said to them, "Come and you will see." So they came and saw where He was staying, and they stayed with Him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. One of the two who heard John speak

and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means Christ). He brought Simon to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas" (which means Peter).

___ P: This is the Gospel of the Lord

C: Praise to You, O Christ.

Sermon Hymn: *"The Only Son from Heaven"* – **Hymn #402**

Sermon: *"Behold the Lamb of God"* – **John 1:29-42**

Over a week ago, one of my favorite authors made a confession. Philip Yancey, famous for books such as What's So Amazing About Grace? and The Jesus I Never Knew confessed that he had been unfaithful to his wife. He confessed that he had been having an affair for eight years. Because of that, he was ending his public writing career and focusing the rest of his life on rebuilding his relationship with his wife. Someone who was a positive example of a life of faith now is a negative example. What a mess.

We live in a messy world. On the news, you can see the continued fallout of the abduction of Venezuelan President Maduro. You can see unrest and accusations in Minneapolis. You can hear about protests in Iran. You can hear about the continued war in Ukraine, violence in Africa, the list goes on and on. We live in a messy world, and sometimes our biggest problem is realizing that we can't fix it.

The world in the New Testament time was messy, too, but in ways we aren't used to. Killing animals, people too, was more a part of community life than we can imagine. Now, offensive images can be blocked on social media, but back then, there was no blocking it away. Temples were places of sacrifices, and the animals kept coming in and the smoke kept rising. That's really the message of the whole Old Testament, and something those other temples and sacrifices to false gods and idols are trying and failing to get at. That something needs to be done to balance the scales.

Something needs to be done to right a wrong. And when it's impossible to do it yourself, you follow the rules set up for you. The gods needed to be bribed, placated, with sacrifices to turn their wrath away.

Into that brutal world where life was expendable, a message came, a message they could understood, a sacrifice to change forever how we live. "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

Throughout the Old Testament, that's how God handles sin. When Adam and Eve are forced out of the garden, they are clothed with animal skin, the first sacrifice, the first blood shed because of sin. The blood of the innocent was shed to cover the shame of the guilty. It wasn't the man or the woman who shed this blood to make these coverings. This was the work of the Lord. And by the blood of the calf or the lamb, the man and woman would come out of hiding and stand again before their God.

When Isaac is about to be sacrificed, God provides a substitute to be sacrificed in his place.

When God sends the final plague on the Egyptians, the people are saved by the sacrifice of a pure, unblemished lamb, whose blood makes the angel of death pass over them. The angel of death would see blood glistening on the doorpost and count it as a sign that blood had already been shed in that home—that the people in that house had already surrendered to God what the angel had come to collect.

For many centuries it was the rule that in art, in paintings, beside John the Baptist, there would be a lamb. Sometimes John is pointing to it; sometimes it's simply sitting there looking thoughtful. Sometimes the point is made more obvious by blood pouring from its side, perhaps being caught in a chalice. Perhaps the most famous one is the Isenheim Altarpiece, which shows John the Baptist with a lamb pointing to Jesus on the cross, even though John himself had been executed and was not at the crucifixion.
John the Baptist is famous for many things, but the central and most important role he has in the New Testament is to point away from himself and towards Jesus. In particular, here in John's gospel, he points him out as the Lamb of God. And with that he indicates, at the very start of the gospel story, how things are going to end, and why. Jesus is to die a sacrificial death for the sins of the world. By the end of the story, John (the gospel-writer, not the Baptist) has made the meaning clear. The death of Jesus takes place, in this gospel, on the afternoon when the Passover lambs were being killed in the Temple. Jesus is the true Passover lamb. John, like many New Testament writers but in his own particular way, wants us to understand the events concerning Jesus as a new, and better, Exodus story. Just as God brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, so God was now bringing the whole world out of slavery to sin.

In the original Exodus story, Israel is rescued from the dark powers of the world, which in that case meant the Egyptians under Pharaoh. But now, according to John, God's lamb is going to take away the sin of the world itself. This can only mean that God's rescue operation is moving out, wider than just Israel, to embrace the whole of creation.

More than that, the other lambs in the Bible weren't sufficient in and of themselves. There needed to be a new Passover lamb every year. There needed to be a new sacrifice in the Holy of Holies on the day of atonement every year. The daily, weekly, yearly sacrifices were never enough to actually take away the sins of the image bearers of God. Would there ever come a perfect, lasting, atoning sacrifice—one who could take away the sins of the world? If so, that lamb would have to be divine.

Pastor Robert Newton's first call out of seminary was to be a missionary in a tribal area in the Philippines. Despite coming out of the seminary full of energy and enthusiasm, the results of his work were minimal at best. He faced cultural challenges, such as the fact that the people group he worked with didn't have a word for guilt in their language. After two years, he had nothing to show for his work. But then one day there was a funeral. After the funeral, a series of bad events happened, and so there were a series of sacrifices to try to appease the spirit of the dead man. After each sacrifice, the pig's liver was taken to the pagan priest to see if the sacrificed was accepted. Each time the priest said it wasn't accepted, they'd sacrifice another pig. The village sacrificed 25 pigs that night. The next morning, the head elder of the village invited

Pastor Newton to breakfast, and told him that they had to wait for three years before they'd know if the sacrifices had been enough. Pastor Newton, though, told them that the moment they sacrificed the second pig he knew the first wasn't enough, and the second pig and all the others wouldn't be enough either. He used that opportunity to point them to the one sacrifice of the lamb of God, for the sins of the whole world.

We, too, are rescued from the dark powers of the world, safe behind the blood of the lamb, "for Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed," as Paul wrote to the Corinthians. The book of Hebrews is all about those connections to the temple and the sacrifices there and how they are fulfilled in a better way in Jesus. His blood is sprinkled on our hearts (Hebrews 10:22) in a new and better covenant. The life of the flesh is in the blood and that life-giving blood of Jesus is on and in us. We are safe behind the blood of "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

Sacrifices aren't usually a part of our world anymore. But as Hans-Joseph Klauck writes in his book *The Religious Context of Early Christianity*, Jesus' "death on the cross explodes the already existing concepts of sacrifice…and did in fact entail something that amounts to the end of all sacrifices. This should lead us to reflect further on what the spiritualization of sacrificial terms…really means. What does it mean to 'sacrifice' money, or what does 'the sacrifice of one's life' mean? How far is this metaphor, how far reality?"

Our sacrifices can't come near to doing what Jesus' sacrifice has done for us. Through Jesus, though, our sacrifices are transformed. The sacrificial worship of God's people, that glory of the temple in Jerusalem, is suddenly transformed. God's people become sacrifices, outside the temple, outside Jerusalem, hidden inside the small house churches gathering in the heart of the large empire of Rome. These people are God's people, transformed into sacrifices, living, holy, acceptable to God. Paul knew that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ put an end to temple sacrifices. His death was the perfect sacrifice. He was the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. By his sacrifice, God's people were freed from offering sacrifices for sins. Now, they became sacrifices of praise, their lives poured out in self-sacrificial service in the world.

The world is still a messy place. We can't fix a broken world. We can't even fix our own brokenness. But thanks be to God that Jesus, the Lamb of God, takes away the sin of the world. We live in a broken world, but have a God greater than that.

Creed: Apostle's Creed.

Prayer of the Church:
P: Lord in Your mercy,
C: hear our prayer.

Sharing Our Ministry

Offering and Voluntary

Service of the Sacrament

Preface: p. 208

P: It is truly, good, right, and proper that we should in all times and in all places give thanks to You, almighty God, heavenly Father, for You used John the Baptist to point people to Jesus who is the Lamb of God. You have given us Your holy Word to remind us again and again that Jesus is Your Son and that He has saved us from sin. Therefore with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven, we praise and magnify Your holy name, evermore praising You and singing . . .

Sanctus *(Holy, Holy, Holy)* p. 208

Prayer of Thanksgiving:

P: We give thanks to You almighty God for sending into this world, Your Lamb, Christ Jesus, who became the sacrifice for all the sins of the world. Bless us as we partake of His true body and blood in His holy supper, which He offers to us for the forgiveness of sins. Hear us as we pray in His name and as He taught us . . .

Lord's Prayer, Words of our Lord, Pax Domini: *(Peace of the Lord)* p. 209

Agnus Dei: *(Lamb of God)* p. 210

Distribution:

Hymns: *"Soul, Adorn Yourself with Gladness"* - **Hymn #636**,
"Sent Forth by God's Blessing" - **Hymn #643**

Dismissal:

Nunc Dimittis: (Song of Simeon) p. 211

Prayer After Communion:

P: Gracious God, our heavenly Father, You have given us a foretaste of the feast to come in the Holy Supper of your Son's body and blood. Keep us firm in the true faith throughout our days of pilgrimage, that, on the day of His coming, we may, together with all Your saints, celebrate the marriage feast of the Lamb in His Kingdom which has no end; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

Benedicamus and Benediction: (Pastor)

C: Amen.

Closing Hymn: *"Lamb of God"* – **Hymn #550**

Postlude