

“Never look a gift horse in the mouth.” “Be kind rewind.” “He is a broken record” are all sayings that originated from everyday knowledge. A horse’s teeth grow over time so checking the teeth of a gift horse is judging the gift. “Never look a gift horse in the mouth,” is a way of saying, “just be grateful for the gift.”

“Be kind rewind,” stems from the VHS tape, videos were recorded on them and the tape, actually moved from one reel to the other, so at the end of the movie you needed to rewind if you wanted to watch it again. If you rented a movie—which was the act of physically going to a store, where you would walk around and pick out a movie—on the VHS tape would be a sticker that said, “be kind rewind.” The idea was, you watched so be kind to the next person and rewind it, so they don’t have to.

To “sound like a broken record” is to repeat yourself because a broken record is one with a scratch on it. The needle of the record player would get stuck and repeat that little section over and over and over and over again.

The phrase “Lamb of God” is like these. We might have a vague sense that it refers to Jesus but we have lost the original context of the saying. To get at the meaning we need go back further than horse hygiene to the books of Exodus and Leviticus in the Old/Hebrew Testament of the Bible.

In Leviticus chapter 16 God gives the Israelites instructions for the holy festivals, one being Yom Kippur or the Day of Atonement. On this day the High Priest would confess all the sins of Israel onto this one lamb or

goat and the animal would be led into the wilderness and off a cliff. One innocent lamb would die for the sins of all.

Lamb of God is most commonly connected with the book of Exodus, when the Israelites were still in Egypt and the plagues are happening. In order to not be killed by the tenth plague the Israelites were to kill an flawless lamb. The blood of the lamb was placed on their doors so the angle of death would “passover” the house. The lamb’s death gave them life. The annual celebration of this giving of life is called Passover. The night that Jesus first celebrated Holy Communion was in the midst of the Passover celebration. At that meal Jesus says, “In this cup is a new covenant/promise in my blood for the forgiveness of sins.” Jesus is the innocent, unblemished, perfect lamb that dies—is sacrificed—for the sins of all. Jesus is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. Martin Luther calls this the happy exchange; Jesus takes our sin, death and damnation and we are given Jesus’ life, joy and salvation. Jesus is the Lamb of God means Jesus’ life is given for us to live. It tells us that God is giving and loving and faithful and it tells us something else too... listen again to Revelation, to the elder saying to John:

“See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.’ Then I saw between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders a Lamb standing as if it had been slaughtered... He went and took the scroll from the right hand of the one who was seated on the throne.”

This is a vision of God holding a scroll. The scroll expresses the will of God, and the question of who is worthy to make God's will known. John hears that the Lion is worthy, but when he turns he sees a slaughtered and yet living Lamb. The idea is that the promise of the lion-like ruler from Judah is fulfilled in the promise of the slaughtered Lamb. The death of Christ is the way that the power of God is let loose in the world. It is the power of Jesus' self-sacrifice that builds God's kingdom by redeeming people of every tribe and nation. The Lamb is the primary way that Christ is identified in Revelation. We are so quick to think of power as a lion, as dominance and making things happen by might. So much so that even the elder looks for the lion but God is best known and understood by the lamb. In 2 Corinthians it says, "Christ's power is made perfect in weakness." The lamb is how God's might is known.

"Lamb of God" is the perfect forgiveness machine. It talks about how Christ forgives: taking our sin, giving God's love. It is an image that communicates just how far God will go to love and forgive us—death. It is also the perfect form to work as forgiveness. Forgiveness doesn't heal us by force. The broken and guilt ridden or self-righteous and hard heart isn't healed by force. The healing of forgiveness comes in the form of a little gentle lamb. The power of Jesus, the power of forgiveness is made perfect in perfect in weakness.

At the first church I served a man came into my office. He confessed that twenty years earlier he had lied at work and that his lie had gotten him promoted and another man fired. He talked about how that lie actually

felt heavy that he couldn't handle the weight of that sin anymore. I told him Jesus can handle it, we read Psalm 51 and talked about the power of the Lamb of God to heal and forgive. It was the gentle little lamb that opened his heart and loosened his grip on his sin. It was the lamb of God that allowed Christ to work his forgiveness.

A month and a half ago I was in a Caribou, I was 15 min early for a meeting and the place was mostly empty. As I ordered by coffee I asked the barista, "How's your day going?" He replied, "Oh, okay," and he gave me half a smile. I was really looking forward to ten min of quiet to relax and I had an email to send, so I took my coffee and sat down. The table I sat at was a little sticky and the barista I had talked to was wiping off tables so I asked him if he would get mine. As he leaned over to clean the table his cross necklace hung out of his shirt. The cross hanging in front of me seemed like a sign from God saying, "Ask him what wrong with his day." So I asked, "Why is your day only okay?" He sat down and told me this was his second week on the job and he was still messing up a lot of thing and that just before I had gotten there a guy yelled at him for screwing up his drink. Then I asked him about his cross necklace and after a minute he said he thought Jesus was probably OK with him messing up the coffee.

Forgiveness heals us from the wrong we do, and forgiveness heals us from the wrong done to us. Jesus can handle it all. The lamb of God takes away the sin of the world. Again songs break out, "worthy is Christ the Lamb who was slain" heavenly chorus in worship.