

## **The Sin of the World**

On this second Sunday after Epiphany, the prophet calls upon us to see the light shining in our darkness that we might “behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). Our darkness says that the sin of the world must be atoned for—and set right by—the very same sinners who caused the sin in the first place. And the paradoxical impossibility of that thought drives us to the deepest despair. Our darkness says that our sin is ours alone and we must fix it alone and when we are finally honest with ourselves we admit that we can never complete this impossible task.

Into this dark pit of despairing night the Epiphanal Light of the World shines with a brightness that stabs our sin-broken eyes and drives us to our knees in repentance. We cannot take away our sin, so the Son of the Father—baptized into our sinful nature and baptized into the Holy Spirit—has taken it away for us. And not only for us who believe, but for the whole world.

- Therefore, hell is not a punishment for sinners. Hell can only be the pain of the delusion of believing that sin has not been taken away by the Son.
- Therefore, everyone is a forgiven child of the Father in Christ, whether they believe it or not.
- Therefore, the fall of Adam is undone and humanity is liberated from captivity forever.

*~ Jonathan Stepp*