

What are You Looking For?

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Year A: Second Sunday after Epiphany

John 1:29-42 The next day he (John the Baptist) saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, “Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”³⁰ This is he of whom I said, ‘After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me.’³¹ I myself did not know him; but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel.”³² And John testified, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him.”³³ I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’³⁴ And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God.”³⁵ The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples,³⁶ and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, “Look, here is the Lamb of God!”

³⁷ The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. ³⁸ When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, “What are you looking for?” They said to him, “Rabbi” (which translated means Teacher), “where are you staying?” ³⁹ He said to them, “Come and see.” They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o’clock in the afternoon. ⁴⁰ One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. ⁴¹ He first found his brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which is translated Anointed). ⁴² He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, “You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas” (which is translated Peter).

Jesus asks the two disciples, “What are you looking for?” What are we looking for in our relationship with God? God can and does change everything about our lives as we open our eyes to see God. Things were revealed to the disciples about Jesus’ identity.

Beloved of God, a blessed Epiphany to you!

I’m 99% certain that all of us at one time or another had someone say to us, ‘What are you looking for?’ I was in a store just last week and the clerk said it to me. Perhaps you’ve heard your spouse, or your co-worker or your friend say that phrase as you stand muddled in the middle of the room. The lost includes the cell phone or the keys, or the Dr’s new script to take to the pharmacy. So then they

say, ‘what did you lose?’ And you say, ‘Oh you know, that thingy I had.’ We know we’re getting old when we use the word ‘thingy’ all the time because we can’t remember the name of the thingy we are looking for.

On a more serious note, what are you looking for? Peace? Joy? Companionship? Grace? Contentment? Healing? A new relationship with God? It is the season of Epiphany where revelations about Jesus come to light.

One day Andrew and another of John the Baptist’s disciples saw Jesus and began following Him. Noticing, Jesus turned around and asked, ‘What are you looking for?’

There is a whole lot of ‘looking’ in these short verses. John sees the Spirit descend and remain upon Jesus. He testifies that he has seen. They watch Jesus walk by. Jesus asks, ‘what are you looking for?’ He says, ‘Come and see – where I am staying.’ And the disciples go and see. All of this literal ‘seeing’ language is part and parcel for John’s Gospel, because John connects seeing with believing in God.

So...what are we looking for in our relationship with God? A very pragmatic five-year-old was sitting in church with his mother. Directly in front of him sat a tall individual, completely obstructing his view. At one point, the boy leaned over and said to his mom while pointing at the person ahead of him, ‘This is a total waste of my time, I could be at home playing.’ Because he couldn’t see anything, he thought that was all to church. Understandable for a five-year-old.

Not so much for us. What are we looking for in our relationship with God? A superhero to come down in a red, blue and yellow cape to save us in our time of need? Do you want God to comfort you? Perhaps we’re looking for God to teach us, or guide us, instruct us, or discipline us.

Andrew and the other responded with a different question for the Lord, ‘Where are you staying?’ Jesus invites them to ‘come and see.’ Have you ever wondered what they spent the next hours talking about? Did Jesus tell them things about themselves they had told no one? Did they have spiritual awakenings, or revelations about what they needed that Jesus could provide?

Andrew must have had an epiphany, for he went to get his brother Simon, telling him they had found the Messiah. When Jesus meets Simon Jesus calls him by name, ‘You are Simon, son of John. And you are to be called Cephas.’

Although Jesus had asked the men what they were looking for, what is revealed in this moment, is that Jesus was looking for them. Jesus was looking for followers, and that's what He found.

Simon is now Cephas – or Peter meaning the Rock. Jesus sees Simon, truly sees him, and knows that Simon is called to something higher, something bigger, something that will be revealed in time...even betraying the Lord. But that's down the road. Right now, Jesus sees in Simon something more than Simon can see in himself. That's a follower. As NT Wright says, 'When you go looking for Jesus and discover He's been looking for you, that's a day you'll remember forever.' (John for Everyone; Part 1. N.T. Wright. Westminster John Knox Press. Louisville, Kentucky. 2004. Pg 16.)

When you go looking for Jesus and discover He's been looking for you, that's a day you'll remember forever. Do you remember that day? Do you remember how it felt? How did it feel to be found?

Many people in southeast Asia, Myanmar, are discovering Jesus is looking for them. Here's the true story. I've recently been introduced to Erik Judson (no relation to Pastor Paul Judson). 200 hundred years ago, Erik's ancestor, Adoniram Judson felt a call to share the Good News of Jesus to the people of Burma. It took him years of learning the Burmese language and then twenty years more to translate the entire Bible into Burmese. When he died, there were thousands of Christians.

Today Judson's name is still on buildings. His translation of the Bible is yet in use. And Jesus is seeking followers. Erik feels called to return coming alongside local non-governmental organizations to preach and teach Jesus' Good News.

With the present governmental upheaval, people are living in abject poverty. They fear for their lives. They cannot work because there are no jobs. One man said, 'I used to go and mug people at night. I needed money for food for my family. So I would take one knife. People would fight me back, so sometimes I fought with two or three knives. When I heard about Jesus, I repented. Now I don't need to worry about anything. Jesus gives me everything. (<https://judsonministries.org>)

More and more people are discovering the truth that Jesus is looking for them. The Holy Spirit is pouring peace, joy, companionship, grace, healing and contentment into their souls. Hundreds of people are coming to know God, the God who goes looking for us, until we see. They have seen and now believe. This is their season

of Epiphany, of new understanding and revelation. You can read about this season of the Holy Spirit's work at judsonministries.org.

Everything we're looking for in God, God can provide. God does provide the peace that passes understanding. God does provide joy when life seems limp. He is the companion who is with us 24/7 offering grace and contentment and healing too.

What are we looking for? We might be looking for God, but as Martin Luther says, God is like a hound of heaven seeking us first. Let us open our hearts and be found anew by Jesus. He is looking for us!

Amen.