

## What Are You Looking For?

It is the day after John had baptized Jesus in the Jordan River. I can't be sure of exactly what the setting was.....out in the wilderness or in a small settlement or encampment of some sort. Verse 35 says, John was standing with two of his disciples. So presumably it was John the Baptist standing there and the two disciples were Andrew and John, the author of the Book of John. John the Baptist says, "Look, here is the Lamb of God." These first disciples had several names for Jesus – Lamb of God, Rabbi, Messiah, Son of God, King of Israel.

Some Biblical commentators have reason to believe that the words from John's mouth, "Look (or Behold), here is the Lamb of God.", was not a mere casual recognition, but rather a statement of immense graciousness and generosity. It is an acknowledgement of respect, reverence, appreciation, and humility.

How does this compare to your attitude toward the uniqueness and giftedness of one others? When we meet other people, do we see

the best in them? Do we think of, and acknowledge one another with grace, and appreciation, and acceptance? If not, can you consider perhaps how to change that? We are all children of God. As disciples of Christ, we should strive to receive everyone with grace and kindness and a generous spirit. If you already do this 100% of the time, then ignore this portion of John's message – it is for the rest of us that have some work to do in this area.

So John and Andrew started to follow Jesus. Jesus turned and saw them following him, and he asked them what they were looking for.

I want to ask you that same thing. What are you looking for? What are you looking for? Why did you tune in this morning? Why do you go to church? Why are you at all interested in religion, church, faith, Jesus Christ? Why?

This is one of the great questions of the Bible and of faith, regardless of denomination or faith. It is one of the questions that God asks of all of us.

Consider for a moment your life goals. Consider the values you hold dear. What kind of person do you want to be? How does the life and teachings of Jesus Christ align with your response to any of these questions? What are you looking for?

The next curious question comes from the disciples to Jesus, "Where are you staying?" Jesus responds by saying, "Come and see".

The disciples are yearning to be in his presence. I have felt like I was in the presence of God before. I hope that you have too. Perhaps it was in the presence of someone, or beside the water, or in the forest, maybe you were listening to a piece of music that made your heart soar, or perhaps there was a beautiful silence .....it could be anywhere, with anyone, or no one....but it was unmistakable. You knew you were not alone....you knew you were in the presence of the Divine. There was a peace that indeed passed all understanding.

Sometimes we don't even know what we are seeking, or even if we are seeking, but we know it when it happens.....and we are blessed.

John and Andrew went with Jesus to where he was staying. While there, Andrew left to tell his brother, Simon Peter that he had found the Messiah. When they got to the place where Jesus was staying, before any introductions were held, Jesus said, "You are Simon, the son of John. You are to be called Cephas (which is translated as Peter)." Surely Simon would have been shocked that Jesus knew his name. Remember that this is Peter, the disciple who will figure so prominently in the remainder of Jesus' life. Jesus had such a profound affect on Andrew, that he did not want his brother to miss out. He wanted his brother to find who he had found. Evangelism in the best sense of the word.

And this reaching out, this series of personal invitations continues in these earliest of days in Jesus' ministry. He walks to Galilee where he meets Phillip. He simply says two words to Phillip, "Follow me.",

and he does. Phillip finds Nathanael and says to him, “We have found Jesus, the son of Joseph from Nazareth.” Nathanael responds with that much used quote, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” How often do we judge people by where they are from, what school they went to, or if they went to school, the colour of their skin, their sexual orientation, their income.....a bit of Nathanael’s less endearing qualities in all of us perhaps. As Jesus had said earlier to John and Andrew, Phillip says to Nathanael, “Come and see.”

Nathanael’s introduction to Jesus was not unlike Simon Peter’s. When Jesus saw Nathanael returning with Phillip he says, “Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!” Nathanael responds, “Where did you get to know me?” Jesus tells him that he saw him under the fig tree before Philip had approached him. Nathanael was blown away. He exclaimed, “You are the Son of God.” Jesus

assured Nathanael that he was on the brink of something wonderful.

The best was yet to come. The adventure was just beginning!

And so it was.....the very beginning of the early church. The calling of some of the first disciples.

While in seminary I was asked by a minister in a Toronto church to come and preach at his church. He was explicit in his direction to me - 'make sure your sermon has 3 points and a joke!' I had never been taught that in preaching class but I attempted to comply.

Unfortunately I don't have a joke for you today and having spent some time studying this passage, there are 4, not 3 points I would like to make.

#1. With grace, and kindness, and humility, strive to recognize and celebrate the value of one another. As soon as John saw Jesus walk by he exclaimed, "Look, here is the Lamb of God". Can we see the good in one another? Can we be affirming of one another rather than critical and dismissive? I have been listening to a lot of James

Taylor lately. One of the songs that really caught my attention is called Change that he wrote and plays with Charlie Puth. The song opens asking, “Why are we looking down on our sisters and brothers,....too many crying....the day will change when we know we’re all the same.....why can’t we just get along?”. Each one of us has unique gifts and attributes. Each one of us is a child of God, and that makes us holy! Are we willing to look for that in one another?

#2. What are you looking for? As was true for John and Andrew, Phillip, Nathanael, and Peter, there is in us.....something we are looking for.....a peace, a way, a home, a sense of purpose that is beyond our daily choices.....what is that hunger within that longs to be satisfied, that thirst that longs to be quenched....that deep and sustaining peace.

#3. Where are you staying? John asked this of Jesus. He longed to be in his presence. Whatever it was he felt from Jesus, he wanted that to last. Over the years, I have met so many people who at one

time or another experienced a spiritual high. They wanted it to last forever. I can relate to that. It doesn't. But there can be something that is sustainable, that is deeper, lasting. John knew, that there was something intangible, illusive even, about being close to Jesus. He did not want that to end. It doesn't have to. It comes with maturity and experience and growth, and it requires a measure of intentionality.

#4. Not unlike the disciples who went off and invited their friends and family to come and meet Jesus, I often encourage you to invite others to Sunday worship or special events in the church...evangelism. The purpose is not to get our numbers up or more money in the plate. The purpose is to provide an opportunity for others to experience something life giving....just as we are all physical beings, we are also all spiritual beings. Physically, intellectually, emotionally, psychologically, spiritually, we all have the capacity to grow and even to flourish. John invited Andrew.

Andrew invited Simon Peter, Jesus invited Phillip. Phillip invited Nathanael. None of the disciples knew what would come of any of this. But something prompted them to respond...they got a nudge. Together they experienced something that was life changing. They would never be the same. I am so thankful that many someones along the way, who invited me, at numerous stages of my life, to "Come and see." I want to pass it on.

God bless you on your journey and those to whom you bring blessing along the way.

Amen