

## The Life Question: What Are You Looking For?

Series: The Questions of Easter

John 1:35-42

February 14, 2016

Good morning again. Thank you for sharing in worship today.

Have you ever been at a place in your life where you knew your life was heading in a certain direction, but you were not certain of the why or the details or the final destination?

VACATION TO NORTH CAROLINA

FISHING

I don't know the difference between a bobber and a bugger.

FISH FARM

The Palestinian sun beat down on the two friends as they listened to John call the crowds to repentance. For the past few weeks, they had followed John called the Baptist everywhere he had gone, listened to his message, and watched the crowd's reaction. At first, they were sure that he was the one that the prophets had promised, the one who would deliver Israel from the hands of the Romans. This guy even looked like a prophet, that long wild hair, a beard that reached down to the middle of his chest and the eyes, his eyes shone with a zealots rage.

But as he preached, he said things like, "I am not the Christ", and "After me will come one more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie."<sup>1</sup> Who would that be? Who could be more powerful than John the Baptist?

And then one day, John said, "Behold the lamb of God"<sup>2</sup> and he pointed to a man walking along the river. He was the one, the one they had waited so long for, the One who was going to change the world, the Messiah, the Christ, the son of God. The two friends were so stunned that they just turned and followed this new person, thinking that He didn't look so special. As a matter of fact, John looked more like a messiah should look then this man.

But they didn't say anything; they just followed, wondering what they should do next, what they should say, how they should approach him. And then it happened. He turned around and saw them following and asked them point blank, "What are you looking for?"

This question in John 1:38 was asked almost 2,000 years ago by Jesus of Nazareth. But it is a question that is timeless. It is a question that remains, the question of the day, the \$1 million question. The question which Jesus Christ still asks everyone who seeks to follows after him. "What are you looking for?" "What do you want?" "What are you after?"

Jesus Christ wanted to know what these two men wanted, why they were following him and what they were looking for. Notice that He didn't ask, "Who do you want" but instead he asked "What do you want?"

Were they the legalist who wanted to indulge in conversations about the law? You know, the Pharisees? They're still around today. You know; the ones if Christ

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<sup>1</sup> John 1:27

<sup>2</sup> John 1:29

returned tomorrow they would proudly tell him, “We went to church every week and made sure the wrong kind of people didn’t.”

Or maybe they were just ambitious time servers; they were after power and position and were just seeking to use God for their own means, and they’d follow whoever they had to follow.

Or maybe they were fierce zealots who were looking for a political demagogue or military commander to overthrow the pagan Romans and restore Israel to her proper greatness.

Or perhaps they were just humble men of prayer looking for a light to point them toward God and the higher calling.

Or then again maybe they were just puzzled bewildered sinners who were stumbling along through life and were looking for a light on the road.

Whatever and whoever they were, Christ recognized one thing in them, and that was the fact they that wanted something. However noble or base their motives were, they were after something.

And as we come to Christ 2,000 years later, we have to recognize the truth of the fact that everyone who comes to Jesus is looking for something. Good, bad or indifferent – it doesn’t matter; the fact is that you are looking for something. Every one of us is striving for something as we plod through this life, from day to day, week to week, month to month and year to year. You are looking for the one thing that makes you tick, the thing that shakes your tree, floats your boat or scratches you where you itch.

There are those who seek security – you know, a house, a job, a family, and, when their life approaches those twilight years, a pension. And there is nothing wrong with seeking security, but it is a low goal. A basic goal of survival.

Others are looking toward their career, the power, promise, position and prestige. They pour their heart and soul into their work. And if it is directed to good, it can be a high aim, but it has a price that must be paid. And that price is sacrificing family and enjoyment, and sometimes God, and then it becomes a distorted aim. And of course, it is limited by the horizon of time and health.

The thing that most everyone is seeking is peace with God, and when we find that then He directs our aims and points us in the right directions.

If Jesus Christ was to tap you on the shoulder this morning and ask you “What are you after from me, what do you want?” what would your answer be? Perhaps it’s time that you thought about it, “What are you looking for?”

**Some want material blessings from Jesus Christ.** They have commercialized the Gospel and are trying to make a buck from it. We tend to think that is a new problem as we see some TV evangelists, but one of the reasons that Martin Luther left the Roman Catholic Church was their practice of selling indulgences.

Paul wrote in Philippians 1:15, “It’s true that some are preaching out of jealousy and rivalry. But others preach about Christ with pure motives.”<sup>3</sup> Paul saw that there were those who preached for themselves. And really, if we think of those who preach for monetary gain, we don’t have to look very far to find the excesses. We tend to think of the prosperity preachers who look straight at you through the TV and say, “Give me this amount of money, and God will multiply it 10 fold.”

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<sup>3</sup> Philippians 1:15 (New Living Translation, Second Edition)

And this doesn't just apply to preachers, there are lay people out there that are just as guilty, they see Christianity as an investment. There are people that say, "Well, if I give God this amount of money, then He will double it." or "If I go to Sunday school, morning worship, then God will see to it that I prosper."

What are you looking for? Be honest. If it's material blessings you want, then at least be honest enough to admit it.

**Some Want Power.** One day, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came over and spoke to Jesus. "Teacher," they said, "we want you to do us a favor." "What is your request?" he asked. They replied, "When you sit on your glorious throne, we want to sit in places of honor next to you, one on your right and the other on your left."<sup>4</sup>

Jesus had just gotten through talking about His crucifixion and what happens? The Sons of Thunder want to get dibs in on the power and the influence. Kind of like the person who said, "All I want is a warm bed and a kind word and unlimited power."

Where had they been? Had their minds been on vacation? Christ has just finished saying that He would be mocked and scourged and spit on and killed, and they say "Yeah, yeah, oh, by the way, when you get your power, can we be your vice-presidents?"

Today there are men and women who come to Christ because it is the political thing to do. And that has nothing to do with politics and everything to do with what people think.

If the reason you come to church each Sunday is because of what people would say if you didn't, then you are looking for the very same thing James and John were looking for. If you are hoping that people will say, "Oh, what a good person, they go to church," then you are looking for power and position.

In the communities I have served, there was usually a politically correct church, if you wanted to be seen by those who counted then you went to \_\_\_\_\_ Church. And the only thing a lot of those people wanted was the political and social benefits that could be reaped from the name of Christ.

**Some Come To Christ Seeking Eternal Life.** Luke 10:25 tells of an expert in religious law stood up to test Jesus by asking him this question: "Teacher, what must I do to get life forever?"<sup>5</sup>

There are a lot of people out there who are taking Jesus Christ as nothing more or less than a fire escape from hell, a "get out of jail free" card. They don't want to suffer the torment of hell, so they say the magic words and "Allah Kazzam," they are on their way to heaven. And all they have to do is come and sit in church every Sunday to keep the promise current.

Hold onto your seats, Jesus didn't come **just** to save you from hell. And Jesus doesn't want you to accept Him **just** to escape hell. The sincerity of the person who comes to Christ simply to get into heaven can only be compared to the child who performs for his parents so he or she can receive a candy or some other treat.

There are many people who come to Christ as hostages under the threat of hell. There is no joy in their Christian life, because even though they have been given the promise of eternal life through repentance and forgiveness, they live under the constant

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<sup>4</sup> Mark 10:35-37 (New Living Translation, Second Edition)

<sup>5</sup> Luke 10:25 (New Century Version)

fear of losing that which God has given them. And no wonder some Christians are so miserable; they think they are paying a ransom of their fun so they can get into heaven.

If your primary reason for coming to Jesus Christ is to achieve eternal life, then your aim is like the person who only wishes to be secure in this life; not wrong but low. There is more to Christianity than a hell to be shunned and a heaven to be gained. There is a life to be lived, a God to be worshiped, a Christ to be served, a joy to be expressed.

What are you looking for? Eternal life? Ok, but there is so much more than that.

**Some Want To Love Jesus.** After Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, He appears to Peter. "After breakfast Jesus asked Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?' 'Yes, Lord,' Peter replied, 'you know I love you.' 'Then feed my lambs,' Jesus told him."<sup>6</sup>

I don't know why Peter followed Jesus the first time, I really don't. Perhaps he saw an opportunity to pick up a few extra bucks because Jesus always seemed to know where the fish were, or perhaps he saw the opportunity to become more than a fisherman. Or maybe he was looking for eternal life. I don't know why Peter followed Jesus the first time, but the second time around Jesus made sure that his motives were pure.

If you are in this for the money, then there is a good chance that you will die broke, and if you're here for the power and position, don't be surprised if you are humbled. And if eternal life is your only goal, well, fear can only keep you faithful for so long.

When it comes right down to brass tacks, right down to where the rubber meets the road, the only answer to the question "What are you looking for?" can only be "Jesus, I want to love you and serve you." No more, no less.

When Jesus saw the two friends following Him, Jesus asked them: "What are you looking for?" That's a big question. Really, in a very literal sense, that is the question that we are all asked to answer. What are you looking for? What do you want to do with this gift you have been given, this gift we call life? What do you want to produce or achieve? What are you looking for? What is important? What is it that will fill your life with purpose and joy and meaning?

On his night job at Taco Bell, 17-year-old Nicholas Zenns was taking orders at the drive-up window. He heard a woman scream, turned, and saw a very pregnant Deborah Anderson standing in front of him. The high-school student pulled off his headset, called the paramedics, and tried to make the woman comfortable. But the baby wouldn't wait. "The baby's head just popped out into my hands," Nicholas said. Paramedics finally arrived and took baby and mother to the hospital. Nicholas cleaned up, "sterilized my hands about a thousand times," and finished his shift.<sup>7</sup>

Nicholas says this event changed his perspective. "Things have been pretty bad in my life lately, and then I got to do this. I'm really glad." In the same way, nothing makes life more meaningful than finding new birth in Christ.

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<sup>6</sup> John 21:15 (New Living Translation, Second Edition)

<sup>7</sup> San Diego Union-Tribune (5/23/96). Fresh Illustrations for Preaching & Teaching (Baker), from the editors of Leadership.