

The Life Question: What Are You Looking For?

John 1:35-42

Listen to these two questions.

1. if you get to where you're going, will you be where you want to be?
2. if you find what you're looking for, what else will you need to make you happy?

Let those questions tumble around in your mind for a moment.

These are life questions. They force us to examine the direction of our life, our priorities, what we think will make us happy.

This is the life question Jesus asked the disciples of John: "What are you looking for?" This is the first of some twenty questions Jesus asks in the Gospel of John. Many of them deal with the same issue. But each Sunday during this Lenten Season, we will focus on one of Jesus' probing questions. I have selected seven which I believe force us to consider the most significant issues of life, especially the Christian life. I can't think of a more appropriate way to move through Lent.

We begin today with the overall life question: What are you looking for? This is the first question Jesus asked in the Gospel of John. You heard the story in our Scripture Lesson. John the Baptist knew who Jesus was. The Spirit witnessed to Him. So, He says to two of His disciples, "Behold the Lamb of God".

That would get your attention, wouldn't it? It got the attention of those two disciples, and they followed Jesus. Jesus probed their curiosity, forcing them to focus their thinking and intention. "What are you looking for?"

This is a question for us...an overall life question.

What you are looking for tells the story of who you are.

Think about it. Each of you can immediately think of a person whose life has been significantly shaped by what they were looking for. Every now and then we read dramatic stories of persons who, on the surface, were poor and needy. But when they died, huge amounts of money were found hidden away in their house or apartment. These persons hoarded money because they were looking for security. They never wanted to be without. There's something obviously "sick" about such situations. Yet we see it in less dramatic ways all the time -- people whose drive is for security -- and that drive turns them into miserly people, people who rob themselves of joy today because of their fear of tomorrow.

Think about it. If success is the primary goal of your life, you're likely to cheat your family of quality relationships and precious time. If happiness is all you're looking for, you're in danger of missing the meaning that comes from self-giving and self-sacrifice. What you are looking for tells the story of who you are.

Doris Smith worked as Bible Teacher in a day school. Doris was always looking for the best in Children and others, always looking for a way to affirm them and call out the best in them. The week before she died, a friend of Doris', went to see her. This woman wrote this following that visit:

"Tomorrow I'll be forty-four years old! And I have a new prayer for me this year. I went to the hospital yesterday to see Doris Smith. I spent about an hour with her. I shared with her that she has been the most influential spiritual model for me in my life. I bent down to her, and I asked her, 'What can you teach me about loving Jesus?' She thought for a moment, opened her eyes so wide, smiled so big and said, 'Love Jesus with all your heart.' I desire to do just that. I told her that if she sees Jesus before I do, tell Him I love Him. There was excitement and joy in her voice she said, 'Oh, I will.'"

The point is that what Doris was looking for -- the love of Christ in ministry to children told the story of her life. It is so with all of us. What we are looking for tells the story of who we are.

"If you find what you are looking for and don't know Jesus, you will still need more to make you happy."

Now that's a dogmatic assertion built on the two questions with which I began the sermon. If you get to where you're going will you be where you want to be? If you find what you're looking for, what else will you need to make you happy?

Let it grab your mind and heart: If you find what you're looking for and don't know Jesus, you'll still need more to make you happy.

You know what my contention is -- there is no life, no abundant life, no life with meaning for now and eternity apart from Jesus Christ. All reality is summed up in Jesus. Paul put it this way, "it pleased the God that in Him should all fullness dwell...in Him all things consist."

Do we cry for peace? Listen to Jesus, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you -- not as the world gives give I unto you, let not your hearts be troubled neither let them be afraid."

Are our hearts broken? Do we long for a comfort that we've not been able to find? Listen to Jesus, "Come unto me all you that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest."

Are we mired down in the sticky mud of guilt and shame? To us, as to the woman taken in adultery, Jesus says, "Neither do I condemn you."

Are we stymied in growth, stuck in our complacency, finding life dull and boring? Hear what Jesus would say to us: "But I am come that you might have life and that you might have it more abundantly...take up your cross and follow me."

If you find what you're looking for and don't know Jesus, you'll still need more to make you happy. "Christ has taught us, but Christ has done more. Christ has not only spoken, but Christ has also died. Christ has not only shown us the path on which to walk, Christ has made it possible for us to walk in it. Christ is not merely one amongst the noble band that have guided and inspired and instructed humanity, Christ stands alone -- not a Teacher, but The Redeemer, "the Lamb of God which takes away the sins of the world."

That's what John announced to his disciples: "Behold the Lamb of God!" That got their attention and they followed. "What are you looking for?" Jesus asked. And so, the question comes to us.

Will you during this Lenten Season try to answer this question, "What are you looking for?" As you think about it, remember, what you are looking for tells the story of who you are. If you get what you are looking for and don't have Jesus, you will still need more to make you happy. Amen.