

Have You Found What You Are Looking For?

January 19, 2020

Prayer: May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable to you O God, our strength and our redeemer. Amen

Have you found what you are looking for?

The question probably haunts young people the most, I know it haunts my two boys, the “twentysomethings” among us, because they are the ones who are most actively searching. They say, that young people are looking for three things: a person, a place, and a position. Sounds about right. It would seem to me that they’re not just looking for a job; they’re looking for a career. And they might wonder where that career will take them. Can they stay where they are or will they have to go somewhere else? And if they go somewhere else will that special someone go with them? Or do they even have a special someone yet? Maybe they still haven’t found what they’re looking for. //I would suggest that it isn’t just the twenty-somethings that are asking the question; “have you found what you are looking for”. Sometimes the thirty-somethings, the forty-somethings, and even the fifty-somethings are asking, too. In fact I’m not sure we can limit the question “have you found what you are looking for to a particular age group of people – my hunch is we all ask the question periodically. We pull up onto the couch at the end of a long day and wonder: “Is this it? Or should I keep looking?” Have I found what I’m looking for?

In today's Gospel reading Jesus asks the question directly: "What are you looking for?" And the answer is tricky. For most of us don't even know what we are looking for - We just know we're looking for something and we're fairly sure we haven't found it yet.

John the Baptist, on the other hand, knew exactly what he was looking for: he was looking for the Messiah, the Anointed One, the Son of David, the Lamb of God. He had been told that he would find what he was looking for by baptizing - that when the right one arrived - the Spirit would descend and remain on him. “I myself did not know him,” John says, “but the one who sent me to baptize with water said, ‘the one on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’”

If you heard last week’s sermon you heard me talk about Jesus baptism from the perspective of the gospel writer Matthew. This is a different telling here in John’s gospel. In Matthew’s gospel John the Baptist knew who Jesus was before he baptised him BUT In John’s Gospel /“John the Baptist” doesn't know Jesus yet. He has to wait for him to be revealed in baptism. And so he baptizes every person who comes to the Jordan, one at a time. Can you imagine it – John the Baptist standing there, waist-deep in the water, looking into each person’s eyes just before he baptizes them, searching for some glimmer of divinity, and then, when they come up out of the water, looking toward heaven to see if this will be the one on whom the Spirit descends and remains? //

I’ve never actually done it, but I imagine it must have been like “panning for gold.” You scoop up a pan full of sand and gravel from the bottom of a creek and swirl it around hoping that the sand and gravel will slosh out and the heavier gold will settle on the bottom. On a good day, you might actually see some flecks of gold in your pan, but what you really hope for is a nugget the size of a golf ball. When John finds Jesus it’s

like he's scooped up a nugget the size of a bowling ball. He struggles to get it out of the water, gasping and shouting, "This is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" //When he tells the story later he says, "I saw it with my own eyes! I saw the Spirit descend and remain on him! I'm telling you, this is the Son of God!"// He can't keep the good news to himself.// The next day two of his disciples are standing there with him, and when John sees Jesus walking by he says, "Look, the Lamb of God!" and immediately John's two disciples drop him and start following Jesus. Now I don't know how far they followed Jesus before he senses their presence but eventually Jesus turns around and asks, "What are you looking for?" And they don't know what to say. Eventually one of them blurts out, "Rabbi, where are you staying?"

I think the disciples ask about where Jesus is staying because they know that they had found what they were looking for and they didn't want to lose it so they ask where Jesus is staying so they can find Jesus again tomorrow and the day after that. So how does Jesus respond: Jesus says, "Come and see." And they do – they go to see.

They go and they see.

When you think about it the two disciples didn't know a whole lot more about how their lives will unfold then they did minutes earlier when they were followers of John. The only thing that was different was they had found a WAY worthy of following and that WAY was somehow more than what John had to offer.

I love Jesus invitation after the question. After "what are you looking and the disciples scramble for a response asking where he might be staying Jesus says "come and see".

Jesus shows them. Jesus shows them what they are looking for.

Jesus shows them how to live radical love. Jesus takes them to the edges and shows them how to bind the broken hearted, he shows them how to heal the sick and how to speak truth to power. Jesus teaches them how to share and how to listen to children, and to seek wisdom from foreigners and eat with tax collectors and to learn from people of different faiths like Samaritans and to honour women. He showed them how to transform the world with love. And how to give up their lives for the sake of love.

John's telling of this story speaks so strongly to me about the journey of life. For we are all searchers. Sometimes we feel blessed and we feel we have found our way / we are content and feeling blessed and then something happens and we are off searching again. Maybe we are facing a change at work, a new decade of life - a health crisis or a change in relationship – perhaps we have lost a loved one or a relationship has suddenly come to an end and we are now navigating the world as a single person again or maybe we are feeling alone because the special one we hoped would enter our lives never did. Life's journey is a road of twists and turns of ups and downs - Life's journey is filled with new seasons and constant change and we find ourselves along the road looking again for something, something worth living for.

As we travel we hear Jesus ask "what you are looking for"? And we often we do not know.

But then we come here and we hear the stories of how Jesus showed his disciples what they were looking for and we remember that we are part of their story – for many of us we have already found what we are looking for. We have found a way that is generous, and compassionate and peace focused and one that pushes us to love

our neighbour and that assures us that we are beloved. Sometimes we come here to be reminded that we have already found what we are looking for.

And sometimes it is another follower who shows us; another who invites us to come and see. Someone shows us kindness, or empathy, or forgiveness and the crust of the world's trappings – the need for security, the need for easy, the need for control – fall away and we see clearly once more that - we have already found what we have been looking for - The way of Jesus. //

When I was 17 my Aunt Eileen died and I was allowed to attend her funeral. The funeral was at Bethel United Church here in Saskatoon. Her funeral service was the first time I remember being in a church. I sat between my mother and my grandmother and I listened to the Minister, Rev. Don Lang talk fondly about my Aunt – he described her as a woman of great faith who served the church with enthusiasm and grace. After the worship service we gathered in the hall for the reception. I was sitting at a table with my cousins and I was in need of a refill of my juice so I headed into the kitchen. The women serving the lunch did not see me come in. They were gathered around baking pans and they were snacking on the crumbs and they were talking about my Aunt – they were laughing and a couple of them were crying. As I watched them from the shadows I knew that I had found what I was looking for. It was shortly after my Aunt's funeral that my family and I started going to church. It was my Aunt who lived her faith so brightly and those good women of Bethel United who showed me what I was looking for.

And to be honest it still happens. I get discouraged, or resentful, or confused and I come to church and I hear the stories of Jesus or one of you comes along and without even knowing it you show me what I'm looking for. You show me what I have already found – The Way

Thank God for this place. Thank God for you.

When you find yourself asking the question. What I'm I looking for I pray that this community might hold welcome for you and within this place you will be reminded that you have already found the Way – and that Way will become clear for you again. And I pray that one of the disciples here will offer you kindness and assurance and remind you again that you are God's beloved and the Way is clear. Amen.

Rev. Debra Berg

Intro.: *Last week the lectionary invited us to hear of Jesus baptism according to the gospel of Matthew this week we are invited to hear the same story but told by the gospel writer John.*

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! This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me.' I myself did not know him; but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel." And John testified, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. 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.' And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God." The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!"

The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. 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?" 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. One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated Anointed). 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).

May be fed by the word we have heard today and may these words help to understand our call to follow the Way of Jesus.