

## What Are You Looking For?

[John 1:35-39](#)

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Today for the second time Jesus says, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Behold the Lamb of God." And the choir has just invited us, in the words of Jesus, to come and see.

John the Baptist had a group of followers that he had gathered in his ministry. He has invited them to follow him, knowing someday he's going to run into Jesus, and he will want them to begin to follow Jesus instead of himself. John the Baptist is making sure his disciples see Jesus clearly. Behold, take a good look, this one is the Lamb of God, he's not like the others.

You have people in your life that follow you, trust you, lean into your words and your life. If you are a follower of Jesus, you are a believer in the living God. Like John the Baptist, you and I have a responsibility to get them to turn and see Jesus clearly. If we do nothing else in life in terms of mentoring, coaching, or teaching, we must take someone's hand, bringing them to the place where they can take a good look at the living God and say, I have followed him, I would like you to follow him, too. So, John does this.

People listen to you, respect what you have to say, and develop a trust in who you are and what you represent. Use your influence, position, power, and presence to call their attention to Jesus. I know that's a difficult thing to do today in this society. We are a society that doesn't want to split people according to sectarian principles and practices. But the gospel is clear: if we have people who trust us, let us show them Jesus.

My job today is not to get you to pay more attention to me. My job today is to get you to pay more attention to Jesus when you have a chance tell your faith story. I know people who believe they have nothing to say about their spiritual lives, but when I hear their faith stories, I am amazed at what God has done in their lives and if they just told their stories, people would see Jesus. Invite them to your home and have them be with you, so they can see in your house, in your family, how you treat your spouse, your friends. In your hospitality, they can see Jesus. Host a neighborhood Bible study, invite a few people over and open the gospel. Let them read it together and discover who Jesus is. I do not believe that people are not interested today. I believe they are deeply interested. They are just waiting for someone to invite them to come and see. Invite someone to church with you. Come and worship with me, be in the presence of the living God. Come and see. Use every ounce of energy to invite them to see Jesus. This does not mean you are perfect.

People are not looking for perfection today. They are looking for authenticity, a real person who is flawed, a person who says, Come and see -- real flesh and blood. When you invite a person to follow Jesus, and they begin to do so, Jesus will see you coming. He will not ignore you. The one thing that God is very attentive to beyond all other things is looking for you. Jesus comes to seek and to save those who are hunting for God. Jesus is the one who is turning and looking for you.

We each seek somebody or some thing. You may be looking for a mentor or a teacher, someone who can give you guidance: a coach, a friend, a parent you never had. You may be seeking power or position, money or sex, counsel or advice, relief from pain or sanctuary because life is just hectic and tough. Each one of us today is seeking something or someone.

Behind that seeking, beside that search, underneath that questioning, is the presence of the one who wants to meet us face to face in Jesus. It is the word that is spoken beyond the word we hear. It is God who speaks quietly in a still, small voice in the midst of the busyness of all the things we seek. In America today, we can choose to seek a spiritual experience even in a car. Lexus worked hard coming up with "the passionate pursuit of perfection." Do you think that is just about being in a wonderful car with leather seats? No, they are appealing to your deepest spiritual instincts. If you get in our car, you will know God.

And there is something within us that says, "If I can just get the best car, I can somehow get to the one who engineers all things well." A spiritual quest, a car cannot meet. The passionate pursuit of perfection is only found in the one who is perfect: Jesus Christ.

There's always a question around the real question. Jesus asks the disciples: "What are you seeking? What are you looking for?" Of course, the disciples think they are looking for the Messiah. But they can't come out and say that. It's a moment of common interchange. What are you seeking? Where are you staying, Jesus? Underneath that, Jesus sees between the lines. He knows they are hungry to experience God, so he invites them to come and see. It's a goal beyond a goal. It's the prize that is behind the prize. It's the reality beneath the surface, the hope behind the happiness. It's the substance below the surface; the eternal beyond the temporal. It's the God who is the higher power above the addiction. We think we can find meaning in the substances and relationships with which we are obsessed. But what we are hungry to know is the God who creates all things.

Let me take a moment to reflect on an excerpt of Mendelssohn's "Elijah." Great pieces of music and history flow with theology, purpose, and meaning. As the story of Elijah unfolds, he declares there is not going to be any food or rain for three years. And there is a drought; people are starving. Mendelssohn has the music pour out with the people's hunger for bread and water. Even the children are starving for a morsel of bread. You would think that God would hear their cries, but the voice of God cries out, "'People rend your hearts and not garments. Forsake your idols, turn from them and pay attention to God.' God does not respond with water and with bread. He responds with presence, 'I'm here.'" Then the tenor sings, "'If with awe in your heart you truly seek me, you will find me.' Oh that I knew where I might find him, that I might even come into God's presence. God says, 'If with all your heart you truly seek me, you will find me.'" The response is not I'm going to give you bread and water. You were hungering for those things, but underneath the hunger you were missing the point. You hunger for me. Will you face that?

I had a couple walk into my office about twenty years ago. They'd been looking through the yellow pages to find a church to be married because somehow they thought a church was a good place to get married. Tom and Nancy sat down. I said, "What are you looking for?" "We want a church where we can get married and this seems like a neat one." "Do you have a church background?" "No, we've never been in a church before. We just heard it was a good place to get married." I said, "Would you mind if I did the service in the name of Jesus the Christ." They said, "Who's Jesus? We've never heard of him before." Wow, these people are really out of touch. Well, the person out of touch was me, not knowing that there are millions of people in our culture who still don't know who Jesus is. We had a conversation about who Jesus is and, lo and behold, they said, we want to get married but we didn't realize we really are wanting to know who God is. They both committed their lives to follow Jesus Christ, to come and see. They didn't have their wedding in the church. They had it out on the slope of Pepperdine University, overlooking Malibu and the Pacific Ocean. There they invited all their friends who didn't know Jesus. They said, "Will you just tell them the story of Jesus at the wedding?" Several of their friends now follow Jesus.

We have whole groups of people in our culture who don't know Jesus. They are just waiting for someone to tell them. God meets us in the common things, the commonplaces, the common moments. When the text says it's about 4 o'clock in the afternoon, how much more common can you get. It's a common day and people are on their way home, and they need a place to stay and eat. And Jesus says, Come and be with me." In those common interchanges and conversations and questions, Jesus shows up and meets people face to face because they were willing to spend some time and be in God's presence. There's always a question behind the question: What are you doing tonight? Well, I'm not very busy; why don't you come over? Underneath that is the spiritual hunger that permeates the conversation, and if he would go there people would go there with us if we were willing to do it. This moment is the fulfillment of what John said earlier, "The word was made flesh and lived among us." The disciples see Jesus is flesh and blood, a real person, and he is living in their midst and they can go and be with him, talk and experience him personally. The Word is there for them to engage and encounter. People are hungry to have a sense of God's presence: person to person and flesh to flesh.

A few weeks ago I had the honor of being with a pastor apostle from Burma in Southeast Asia. He's often imprisoned for spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ in a Buddhist culture. He says, "That's okay. I don't expect people to embrace me with open arms. But when I have an opportunity I am going to tell them

about Jesus." When they throw him in prison, they often put him in an eight by ten cell. There's very little light, and they keep him there with fifteen to twenty other men in a highly cloistered environment where all they can do is stand together for sometimes 60 to 120 days. I said, "How can you stand that?" He said, "It's an honor, because there in that cell in the darkness, I can tell them about Jesus, and they can't go any place. It's one of the most dramatic things to be standing for a significant amount of time. You just desire to lie down and get some rest and in a cell with 15 to 20 men you can't. What we do is stand around the walls and take turns lying on the floor and getting some of hours of sleep. That's one of the things I work out with them, I've been here before, I have a plan. Then I tell them how Jesus has come into this life to give them rest and peace." Come and see.

A friend of mine plays tennis. Early in his life he encountered a man who would be his tennis coach, and he would take time after they played to sit by the courtside and open the Bible and read it. Today this young man grew to be a very strong influence of inviting other people to follow Jesus because someone was willing to take time to read the Bible with him.

Jesus gives us a simple invitation today: Come and see. What are you looking for? The thing you are looking for is not the real substance of the thing that you will find if you will come and see. Underneath the objects and the relationships is Jesus the Christ. Behold the Lamb of God. Jesus says later on in John, "Come and abide with me, and I will abide in you. Come and dwell with me and I will dwell with you. Come and see. Come and live life with me and when you live life with me you will see who God really is."

When I was in college, I one day saw this gorgeous brunette walking across campus, and I followed. I said where she is, I want to be. It took me at least three more weeks before I had the guts to meet her. When I did she didn't waste any time, she said, "Come to my home and meet with my mother." I did and I spent a lot of time with her mother because her mother became the one who showed me Jesus. You see, I thought I was looking for a future spouse but God knew I was looking for Jesus. God uses all things to catch our attention because we have a passionate pursuit and hunger for perfection. Today when you come with a deep sense of need, you hunger for something that is unresolved in your life, hear the words of Jesus. Come and see Jesus.

Amen.