

## What are you seeking?

John 1: 29-42

What are you seeking? In our text, this is the question posed to the first disciples and in turn, is asked of us as people of faith. What are you seeking? As I have pondered this question all week, I have come to appreciate just how dangerous and unnerving this question really is.

At first glance, this question seems innocent enough. It seems friendly and helpful like it recognizes that we are lost. It appears to just want to offer assistance, to point us in the right direction. But don't be fooled.

This question is dangerous. It calls into question everything we thought we knew. It calls into question the false narrative we tell ourselves each and every day. It reveals to us all the times when we have fooled ourselves into believing something which wasn't true. It reveals all the times when we have settled for something less than what we hoped.

For example... we tell ourselves that we are fine. Then this question of "What are you seeking" comes along and we discover that we are not fine. Instead, we are actually craving connection, craving community, craving relationship. This question opens our eyes to the pain we often try to hide. In that moment, we realize that, instead of being fine, we simply need someone to come along beside us and

sit with us for a while. We need someone to offer compassion, to offer understanding to us. We need community and support as we walk through the many dark valleys we often face in life but try to deny because somewhere along the way, we accepted the myth that if we can't make it on our own, then we are failures.

Or here's another example....we tell ourselves that we are not complete unless we have blank....a new car, a new house, the next best technology, more clothes, more everything. Then this question of "What are you seeking" comes along. And instead sitting with it for a bit, we try to ignore it. We allow our consumeristic impulses to take over. We fill in the gaps in our lives, we cover the hurts with stuff. Because who are we if we are not our stuff. At least that's what the world tells us, right?

Or my favorite and I think the trickiest of all the false statements we believe is that we tell ourselves that we need the next big thing, ...the next job promotion, the next accolade, the next big honor and then, then we will finally be happy, then we will finally have achieved success, then we will finally stop and enjoy life and appreciate what all life has to offer. Then this question of "What are you seeking" comes along and we discover that all of it is never enough, that there will always be the next big thing defining what success looks like for us.

Over and over again, in all aspects of our lives, in our work, in our families, in our finances, this question of What exactly are you seeking keeps popping up.

It won't leave us alone. It won't let us remain in comfortable ignorance. It keeps showing up. It keeps calling into question the false narrative we tell ourselves, the false narrative this world tells us. This question of "What are you seeking" keeps pulling away the pretenses and protections, things which have taken us years to cultivate, leaving us vulnerable. This question of "What are you seeking" exposes us. This question of "What are you seeking" makes us very, very uncomfortable.

Yet it is the very question which Jesus poses to the first two disciples when he notices them following him. It is the very question which the author of John poses to us now that the Word has been made flesh and dwells among us. It is the very question which our faith challenges us to answer as we live out our call to become the very people God created us to be.

You see, how we answer this question matters. What Jesus knew, what John the Baptist knew, even what the author of the Gospel of John knew is that in our becoming disciples of Christ, we will offer very distinctive answers to this question, answers which will differ greatly to how the world would answer this

question, answers which are grounded in the values of the Kingdom of God, values such as justice, mercy, grace and love.

The path to becoming a disciple of Christ does not seek fortune or fame. It does not seek power and might. It only seeks understanding. It only seeks to know the Kingdom of God in our midst. It seeks to experience the life which is the light of all people, the light which shines in the darkness, and holds the promise that the darkness will not overcome it.

This path to becoming a follower of Jesus all starts with how we answer this one question....What are you seeking? But it doesn't end there. Be forewarned. More questions will follow. Just look at the disciples' conversation with Jesus in our text. They responded to Jesus' question with one of their own. They asked Jesus "Where are you staying". Unfortunately we miss the meaning of their question because it is not the best translation of the Greek. The disciples' question is better translated: Where do you abide?

Abide is a favorite for the writer of the Gospel of John. He uses 34 times. It means to sustain unbroken fellowship with someone. And in our text, this is what John means when he has the disciples ask Jesus where is he staying, where is he abiding.

Because we are told that John the Baptizer has seen the Spirit of God abide with Jesus during the baptism. And now the disciples realize that there is something different about this man. They too see how he abides in the Spirit. They see how Jesus is grounded, rooted in the presence of God. They realize that this is what shapes him into being the Son of God. They will understand this more as the journey continues but for now they realize this question of what are you seeking is not about finding the right answers. It is not about finding all the answers. It is about seeking the connection to the Spirit. It is about abiding in this connection with the Spirit of God so that everything we do as followers of Jesus comes from this place, comes from abiding in the Spirit of God.

The first two disciples realize that their journey which started out with a simple question has turned into something which this world cannot offer. It leads them to something that is not of this world but it a vision of God's shalom become reality. This simple question leads these first two disciples on a journey, a journey which peels away the false narrative, a journey which pulls back the curtain, a journey which leads to more question, just like it does for us as people of faith, just like it does for us as we continue to follow Jesus along the path of becoming his disciples.

This journey of becoming Jesus's disciple leads to questions, like Why do we live in a world of abundance yet we have people literally dying because they do

not have enough to eat or drink? Or what do you mean a person is not welcomed because of the color of his skin, or because of the person she loves or because he was born in a different country or because that they don't fit into the gender boxes found on the form? Questions like why are we ignoring the cries of pain and suffering emanating from Creation while we hold tight to our single use plastics? Or why can't we all just be kind to one another? Why must anger and hurt be what drives our relationship with each other?

Suddenly, we realize that this question about what are you seeking is no longer just about me or you. It is about all of us. Suddenly we realize that this journey to becoming Jesus' disciple really didn't start with that question. Rather it started long before that moment. It started when the Word Became Flesh and dwelt among us. It started when we disciples that there is another way of being, a way grounded in hope and love. Our journey to becoming Jesus' disciples started when water was turned into wine. It started when the blind was given sight, and the chains of oppression were broken. It started when God so loved the world that God gave God's only Son so that we might live.

This question of what are you seeking is dangerous but it is also transformative because it comes with an invitation, an invitation to come and see, an invitation to witness to the light so that all might believe, an invitation to

experience the Kingdom of God in our midst and to truly know that we are beloved Children of God.

So be forewarned...this question of What are you seeking has a tendency to change lives. Thanks be to God. Amen.