

**Sermon for 1-19-2020**  
**Scriptures: John 1:29-42 and Isaiah 49:1-7**  
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What are you looking for?

What are you looking for? Think about it for a moment.

The Jesus of John's Gospel has this habit of asking big questions, deep questions that go right to the heart of what it means to be human, and what it means to be human in the presence and knowledge of God. In our reading this morning, Jesus asks these two men who've been following him – and maybe he asks us too – “What are you looking for?”

The two men following Jesus are disciples of John the Baptist. John, the wild prophet who's been telling everyone who'll listen to prepare, to get ready, to make straight the crooked paths because something is coming. Something big is coming, someone is coming, the One who will change everything and turn the world upside down and show us how we're meant to live and who we're meant to be. *And look, says John, here he is!* “Look, here is the Lamb of God!” Here is the one we've been waiting for. So these two disciples, Andrew and the one we sometimes call the Beloved Disciple, they start to follow Jesus. John the Baptist, the one who's been preparing them, tells them that Jesus is the Lamb of God. Jesus is *exactly* what they've been looking for.

So, what about us? What are you looking for? What am I looking for? What are we looking for?

I believe we're still looking for Jesus. Even though he came to earth and took on flesh and lived as one of us, even though he healed the sick and fed the hungry and cast out demons and forgave sins, even though he died on a cross and conquered death and rose again and ascended into Heaven and is seated at the right hand of God... we're still looking for Jesus. We're still looking for Jesus -- right here and right now -- and we're not finding Him, and that is scary. It's terrifying.

We are looking around, searching for the One who can save us, who can inspire us, who can guide us and teach us and give us answers and show us how we're meant to live and what we're meant to do... but we don't **see** him. What we do see, instead, are human beings who make claims about what they can do for us, what they can teach us, how they can fix our problems and control or destroy the things that trouble us. It's an election year, friends. And the truth is that if we insist on looking to our various earthly thrones, looking at the people we put in them (or want to put in them) and expecting to see the King of Glory, the Prince of Peace, the One who saves; we'll never find him.

Most of you have been alive longer than me. You've seen more than I've seen. And you know far better than I do that our earthly kings & queens & leaders are sinful human beings -- just like the rest of us -- and sometimes they behave in ways so far removed from Christ's example that we recoil in fear and disbelief. We want to trust them, to put our faith in them, but it gets harder and harder with each passing year. And at some point we may realize that our kings - in Washington, and in Los Angeles and New York, and in Moscow, and in every other throne room across the globe - they are NOT what we are looking for. They cannot fix us. They cannot heal us. They cannot save us.

So where do we look? Where can we find Christ? You know the answer! We find Christ right here among us. We are his body now. We are his hands and his feet, his eyes and his heart. We are his representatives, his missionaries in a bruised and broken world. As members of Christ's Body, we are called to live up to the promises of our Baptismal Covenant - to resist evil, to proclaim the Good News in our words and actions, to love our neighbors as ourselves, and to respect the dignity of every human being. This is an enormous responsibility, a holy responsibility. It may seem like too heavy a burden to bear when we're surrounded by greed and violence and degradation. But we're not in this alone.

God gives us servants and prophets and martyrs to inspire us and affirm us and remind us of our great and holy calling. In today's Old Testament reading, we hear the words of the prophet Isaiah, calling God's people to look beyond their familiar borders: "It is

too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth" (49:6). God's salvation will not be restricted to one group or nation.

Prophecy is indeed a gift from God. And lest we fear that all of God's prophets and holy messengers appeared in Biblical times, we must remember that, just as God's salvation cannot be restricted, neither can God's message. Listen to these words from the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., written in 1959:

"See how we treat each other. Races trample over races; nations trample over nations. We go to war and destroy the values and the lives that God has given us.... This is the tragic plight of man. As we look at all of that, we know that man isn't made for that. We know that man is made for the stars, created for the everlasting, born for eternity. We know that man is crowned with glory and honor, and so long as he lives on the low level he will be frustrated, disillusioned, and bewildered.... It seems that I can hear a voice saying to America: 'You started out right. You wrote in the Declaration of Independence that all men are created equal and endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights.... But, America, you strayed away from that sublime principle.... Because of this a famine has broken out in your land. In the midst of all your material wealth, you are spiritually and morally poverty-stricken, unable to speak to the conscience of this world. America, in this famine situation, if you will come to yourself and rise up and decide to come back home, I will take you in, for you are made for something high and something noble and something good.'" [1]

These are words of great prophecy from 60 years ago that ring fresh and true today.

Whatever may be happening in the gilded throne rooms of this world, we are called to better things, greater things. We are called to fulfill our promise to be the Body of Jesus Christ in our time, to be Christ's hands and feet and eyes and ears and mouth and heart right here, right now. And in order to be Christ's Body, to answer his call, we need each other. God has always raised up prophets among us, prophets like Isaiah and

John and Martin, to shepherd us, strengthen us, and challenge us. God is raising up new prophets even now, the ones who call us to our highest and noblest purposes – resisting evil, proclaiming Good News, loving one another, tending the wounds of those who've been hurt, and upholding the God-given dignity of every person. LISTEN! Let us heed the prophets' call, and consider the possibility that -- with Christ's help -- we are the ones we are looking for. *Amen.*

[1] King, Jr., Martin Luther. *The Measure of a Man*. Augsburg Fortress, 2001 (18-21).