

Sermon 011517
What are you looking for?

In today's Gospel reading, Jesus is being followed by two of his future disciples, Andrew and probably John, this Gospel's author. Jesus turns and asks them a question: *What are you looking for?* This seems like a simple question. The disciples could have been simply looking for directions. This could have been the disciples' response to Jesus' question: "Can you direct us to the Temple or to the Pool of Siloam?" Jesus knows the heart of every man so he knew what they were looking for; Andrew and John were looking for the Messiah. *They said to him, "Rabbi" (which translated means Teacher), "where are you staying?"* These men were followers of John the Baptist who had told them that Jesus was the Son of God, but the question is, "did they fully realize what they were looking for?"

It always helps to know what you are looking for. You can be looking for the wrong thing. When I was a pilot in the Air Force, flying the big transport, the C-141 Starlifter out of Norton AFB in Southern California, there was a young pilot in our squadron named Dave who was from Dallas. Dave had just upgraded to aircraft commander when he got a call from the squadron scheduler who asked him if he would like a trip to Dallas, Dave jumped for joy and immediately got on the phone to his family, telling them to meet him at Love Field. He had visions of pulling into the gate at Love Field at the controls of that huge airplane with his family cheering him on.

Everything went as planned and the flight departed Southern California on time and arrived in Dallas after an uneventful flight. Dave landed at Love Field and said that he noticed that there was some hesitation when he asked the ground control for directions to a parking spot. As Dave turned into the parking spot, he said that he couldn't help but notice that the ground crew looked puzzled, but he could see his parents and other family members inside the terminal waving wildly to him. As he brought the big airplane to a stop and looked at the sky bridge to his left he had a sinking feeling and knew that something was drastically wrong. The sky bridge didn't fit his airplane; in fact it wasn't even close. The sky bridge was about ten feet above the entry door on the C-141. After an emergency call back to the squadron in California, Dave discovered that his destination should have been Dallas Naval Air Station. Dave had landed at the wrong airport because he was looking for the wrong thing.

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?" The disciples' answers to Jesus' question indicates that they had some idea what they were looking for. They addressed Jesus as *Rabbi*, a title of honor and respect. They were looking for the Messiah, but was Jesus the One? These students of John the Baptist would have recalled the prophecy of Isaiah: *And now the LORD says, who formed me in the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him, and that Israel might be gathered to him, for I am honored in the sight of the LORD, and my God has become my strength-- he says, "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." Thus says the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One, to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nations, the slave of rulers, "Kings shall see and stand up, princes, and they shall prostrate themselves, because of the LORD, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you."

Was this man Jesus a light to the nations? But then John had told them: *Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!* Old Testament references to a lamb: *Genesis 22:8 Abraham said, "God himself will provide the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." Exodus 12:5 Your lamb shall be without blemish, a year-old male; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month; then the whole assembled congregation of Israel shall slaughter it at twilight. Isaiah 53:7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.* Although these prophecies seem to contradict each other. One depicts a Messiah before whom kings and princes will prostrate themselves, and the other portrays a Messiah who will be sacrificed. The prophecies from Isaiah are both true.

As the disciples spoke with Jesus they remembered what John the Baptist had told them: *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."

So Jesus has asked the disciples *What are you looking for* and they respond with the question *where are you staying?* They are saying, "We want to talk with you, we are confused." *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).*

This encounter with Jesus brought Andrew and John to the realization that they had found what they were looking for – the Messiah. Andrew, who became known as the disciple who brought people to Jesus, immediately went out to bring the Good News to his brother, Peter who later wrote: I Peter 2:24: *He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.* Andrew, Peter and John didn't come to this understanding immediately, but this encounter with Jesus was the beginning. This encounter with Jesus resulted in their being called as apostles or "sent ones" This

day with Jesus changed their lives forever.

Back to the question, "What are you looking for?" The question can be superficial, but it can have a much deeper meaning. Everyone is looking for something.

Abraham Maslow was a psychologist who developed a theory of human motivation in 1942 called the Hierarchy of Needs. The model is in the shape of a pyramid with the most basic needs at the bottom. The order is like this: 1. Biological and Physiological needs - air, food, drink, shelter, warmth, sex, sleep. 2. Safety needs - protection from elements, security, order, law, limits, stability, freedom from fear. 3. Social Needs - belongingness, affection and love, - from work group, family, friends, romantic relationships. 4. Esteem needs - achievement, mastery, independence, status, dominance, prestige, self-respect, respect from others. 5. Self-Actualization needs - realizing personal potential, self-fulfillment, seeking personal growth and peak experiences. In fulfilling the first two levels of needs, I think that what we are looking for is pretty clear: - air, food, drink, shelter, warmth, sex, sleep, protection from the elements, security, order, law, limits, stability, freedom from fear. It gets complicated when we get into the next three levels: belongingness, affection and love, - from work group, family, friends, romantic relationships, achievement, mastery, independence, status, dominance, prestige, self-respect, respect from others, realizing personal potential, self-fulfillment, seeking personal growth and peak experiences. I think that Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs gives useful insight into the question "What are you looking for" but is not a complete answer. Human beings are more complicated than that. Let me give you an example.

In the late 1920s and early 1930s the Western Electric Company located in Hawthorne, IL, a suburb of Chicago wanted to increase production in one of their factories. The company hired a team of sociologists to conduct a series of experiments to study the effects of the workers' physical conditions on their productivity. This study could be classified as an experiment to find out what the employees were looking for. Two groups of workers were used as guinea pigs for the study. One group was a control group, and their work conditions were not changed. The other group had the lighting increased in their workplace, and sure enough, their productivity increased. The lighting was increased again, and again productivity went up. This happened several more times, and the researchers were satisfied that worker productivity was influenced by the level of lighting in the workplace. Then came the surprise. The lighting was decreased this time, almost back to the original level. The productivity went up again. This was not what the researchers had expected. It turns out that it was not the physical conditions at the plant that were affecting the workers productivity. Productivity increased because of the attention being paid to the group. It was the fact that management showed that they were concerned about the workers that they worked harder.

Doctors are one of the most highly respected professions in the United States. It would be interesting to ask a pre-med student, "What are you looking for?" I can only imagine, but I think you would hear some of the characteristics found in the upper tiers of the Hierarchy of Needs. Achievement, status, prestige, respect from others, financial security. Listen to the results of a study Medscape, a trade medical

publication, released their annual physician lifestyle report this week. They analyzed survey results from more than 14,000 US doctors practicing in 30 different specialties about how their work affected the rest of their lives in 2016.

Dermatologists were the happiest, but only 42% said they were happy at their work. Only 28% of Emergency Room doctors said they were happy at work. Also reported was burnout defined as a loss of enthusiasm for work, feelings of cynicism, and a low sense of personal accomplishment. 59% of emergency medicine doctors report feeling burned out, and the lowest burnout rates were still in the 40% range. If you are curious, psychiatrists were the lowest at 42%. I am certainly not trying to trash the medical profession; I highly respect our doctors. The point is this. In spite of their accomplishments, many doctors have not found what they are looking for. This is where we remember what Blaise Pascal said in the 16th century, "There is a God shaped vacuum in the heart of every man which cannot be filled by any created thing, but only by God, the Creator, made known through Jesus."

What are *you* looking for? How are you filling that God-shaped vacuum in your heart? I think that all of us probably know by now that material things money, sex, drugs, and rock and roll won't do it. When we get what we have longed for, somehow it just doesn't fill the vacuum. King David had everything a man could ever want – money, respect, power, a beautiful wife yet he wrote: Psalm 42: *As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.* Psalm 63: *O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no*

water.

If you had to answer the question “What are you looking for?” right now, right this instant how would you answer it? Please don’t tell me that you are looking for this sermon to be finished. We are getting close. I think that what we are looking for changes as we age, and I think that what we talk about reveals what we are looking for. I can only speak for men, but I think as a teenager our conversation centered on cars and sex and I suspect nowadays you could add video games to that equation. Then moving on to middle age our conversation turned more toward family, work, sports, and yes, sex. Now, I think I can finally admit that I am no longer middle aged unless I think that I am going to live to be 150. Most of you know what we talk about now. Health is at the forefront with conversation about the latest surgeries, aches and pains, and medicine. I guess that the term “senior citizen’ is the best euphemism that I can come up with to describe getting old. As we become senior citizens many of us are looking for time, more time. I read an article this week by author Joseph Epstein where he said that he knows a woman who wakes up every morning and says, “O sh--, I am still alive.” On the other hand, a now deceased member of St. Philip’s once told me that the first thing he did every morning was to get the morning paper and read the obituaries to make sure his name was not in there. If by now you haven’t figured out what you are looking for, now is the time.

We are in church and according to our Catechism the mission of the Church is: “to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ.” Hopefully, this

morning you are looking for an encounter with the Living God through his Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus is saying, "Come and see." Let us open our hearts to Word and Sacrament this morning. As we come forward to the altar rail during the Holy Eucharist, let us pray for the presence of the Holy Spirit in our hearts so that this experience is more than just an exchange of a wafer and a sip of wine. Jesus is present here in this very place with us this morning, and he wants to dwell in our hearts, not only for the moment, but as we walk out of this service in communion with him and encountering our neighbors and coming to unity with them.

Everything that you are looking for is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. He dwells in our hearts whispering his question: "What are you looking for?" And when we ask him in return where he is staying, where he is abiding in our lives, he walks one step before us, saying, "Come and see." Jesus wants us to be with him forever. *I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind-- just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you-- so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*