Today we hear Jesus first spoken words in John’s gospel. Two men, disciples of John the Baptist, decide to follow Jesus after they hear their teachers testimony to what he witnessed as the Spirit descended and remained upon Jesus. Jesus is aware they are behind him. He turns and asks, *“What are you looking for?”*

If you remember just a few weeks ago, we heard the pre-teen Jesus speak for the first time in Luke’s gospel. On that occasion in the temple, he asked his harried parents, *“Why were you searching for me?”*

*“What are you looking for?” “Why were you searching for me?”*

In later half of the first decade of the 2000’s, the Irish rock band U2’s songs inspired a liturgy in Episcopal and Anglican churches called the U2charist. You may have heard of it. The service, infused with the band’s music, highlighted a global focus of unity and service. These are a portion of the lyrics of one of their songs. Their composer, the band’s vocalist Bono, in an interview with Rolling Stone magazine, called it *“a gospel song with a restless spirit, an anthem of doubt more than faith."* Joshua Rothman, a writer for The New Yorker, called it *"A song that celebrates wanting."*

*I have climbed the highest mountains*

*I have run through the fields*

*Only to be with you*

*(Only to be with you)*

*I have run, I have crawled*

*I have scaled these city walls*

*(These city walls)*

*Only to be with you*

*But I still haven't found*

*What I'm looking for…[[1]](#footnote-1)*

So, I wonder, what are we looking for, who are we searching for, here in this place, on this cold Sunday morning, as the snow lies all around?

It is Companionship? Comfort? Music? Spiritual Nourishment? Relief from the news of the world? Perhaps a bit of the *Good News*?

*“What are you looking for?”*

I think the two who followed Jesus were caught completely off guard by his question. Jesus does not ask, “why are you following me?” That would have been more expected. *“What are you looking for?”*

Of course, they were curious about this *“Lamb of God”* after the buildup their teacher has given him. Perhaps startled by his directness, their answer seems as unsure as our own might be when addressed by a person they were probably just a little afraid of,…… this man called by their own teacher “The Son of God”. So, they ask another. *“Where are you staying?”*

That’s a curious question. “Where are you staying?” The root of the Greek that John uses several times and in different ways in the first chapter is present in that query. *Meno* - meaning to stay, to dwell, to abide, to remain.

*“And the Word became flesh and lived (dwelt) among us” (1:14)*

*“I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him.” (1:32)*

*“He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.” (1:33)*

*“Abide in me, as I abide in you.” (15:4)*

With this turn of phrase, John takes this seemingly awkward response from Andrew and his companion and opens for us the assurance that Jesus is truly abiding with us. This is no fly-by-night teacher. Perhaps their question really arises from a sense of homelessness, a need for purpose, a place for a “restless spirit” to find a dwelling, and a sense that this Jesus knows the way there. Deep in their hearts, what they desire to know is, “Who are you?”, “What power do you hold?” and “Do you know what it is we are really looking for?”

Jesus invites them to “*Come and see”*. There is promise and assurance in his words. They go with him to where he is staying, and they remain there with him. In this *meno,* in this *staying and remaining*, there is belonging and deep connection, and with that the promise of indwelling Spirit through Him.

This encounter with Jesus stirs in Andrew the desire to seek out his brother Simon and share with him what he has been shown. To tell him to “come and see”. *Come and see* that he has found what they have been looking for, *“the Messiah, the Anointed One”* Thus, begins their journey with Jesus, in John’s account of the calling these fisherfolk. We know the resolve of the bothers will not always be solid. They will face their doubts, there will be times they, and especially Simon, now called Cephas, are “still” looking for what they hope to find as they remain with Jesus.

Isaiah doubts today, not in God’s ability, but in his own. We find him in the midst of a crisis of confidence, trying to give himself a spiritual pep talk. He has used the gifts and talents bestowed on him to God’s glory and the benefit of God’s people. The circumstances where he does God’s works is difficult, to say the least, supporting the hopes and faith of an exiled people, amidst a temple destroyed by their conquerors. He doubts in his ability to bring the people of God home, in body and spirit. Yet, God tells him he is so valued that God will increase him in the eye of the powerful. They will bow down before him as the chosen prophet of the Holy One of Israel. He will be a light, not only to Israel, but now to the Gentiles as well.

God sees in Isaiah’s heart his faithfulness and trust in God, even as the prophet questions his faith in himself. God invites the him to “Come and see”, *come and see* what God knows about him – to see that which God has seen; what God called and named from before Isaiah was born. This is the person God has chosen in this moment of Israel’s history to proclaim the deep and abiding love of the Holy One of Israel for all people. Isaiah is the one to tell of the grace that is too immense to be limited to one place and one tribe. God “sees” Isaiah and calls him to proclaim the change he wishes to see in the world.

When Jesus asks the question, “What are you looking for”, he is really asking us to see ourselves as he see us, …to be introspective, …..to be self-reflective, ….to choose the course for our life. For *“even if we never directly ask the question, we are always answering it.”[[2]](#footnote-2)*

We answer with our words. We answer with our questions. We answer with our actions. We answer in the ways we seek, or fail to seek, relationship. We answer in the ways we include, or neglect to include, the other. We answer with how we spend our time, talent and treasure. We answer in the ways we talk about ourselves. We answer in the ways we talk about others. We answer with our prayers and in how we talk about our faith.

Michael Marsh reflects*, “What are you looking for” is the question that takes us into the human heart. “Come and see” is the invitation that takes us home, into the heart of God. There is only one thing to do with an invitation like “come and see.” Get up and go look.”(Marsh)*

In accepting the call to remain, to dwell, to stay, with Jesus, we are invited into divine intimacy and onto a spiritual journey of discovery of God and ourselves.

ELCA Bishop Kevin Strickland preaches,

*“The Lamb of God, the forgiver of sins, the one who baptizes not just with water, but with the Holy Spirit; invited those questionable disciples to "come and see." They went and stayed awhile with Jesus. And when they came and saw, what an epiphany they had! Andrew, the brother of Simon, proclaims, "We have found the Messiah”. …. And, from then on, nothing was ever the same.”[[3]](#footnote-3)*

Amen.

1. U2, I Still Haven’t Found What I’m Looking For. Lyric by Bono, Music by U2. 1987. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Michael Marsh, Blog [www.InterruptingtheSilence.com](http://www.InterruptingtheSilence.com) 1/17/2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <https://day1.org/weekly-broadcast/5e1c81fe6615fb14cc00003b/kevin-strickland-come-and-see-what-found-me> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)