

John 1:29-42a

When children show up for a birthday party, the birthday boy or girl would like to believe that they all came because of him or her. And perhaps a few did. But truth be told, most of them are there for the cake and ice cream, or for the party favors, or for the fun and games, or because their mother made them go. No questionnaire is handed out at these parties..."State the real reason why you are here; just what are you seeking?" And it's probably just as well. The answers may be too painfully honest.

I think ministers would be shocked also if the people, both members and visitors, were asked to fill out such a questionnaire on Sunday mornings..."What is the real reason why you came to church today; what are you seeking?" Preachers like to think that their parishioners are there for good and noble reasons. And perhaps a few are. But if we're honest with ourselves, we're not much different from children who show up to a birthday party.

Jesus did not beat around the bush. He turned and faced the two men following Him, one of whom was Andrew, and asked them point blank, "What are you seeking?" That sounds better than saying, "What do you want?" but both mean about the same thing. It's pretty obvious that Jesus had not taken any Dale Carnegie courses, or sat in any lectures about "How to Grow Your Church." If He had, He would have first extended His right hand to them with the words, "Hi, My name is Jesus; what are your names?" Or even better, He would have been wearing a name tag and offered them coffee and cookies to break the ice. But Jesus skips all the niceties and goes right to the questionnaire..."What is the reason you are following Me; what are you seeking?"

However, these two men were not perfectly honest with their answer. They said, "Where are you staying?" Perhaps they were too nervous to just come right out with the truth. "We are seeking to know more about you. John the Baptist says you are the Lamb of God. We want to know what this means for us. That's what we are seeking." They did not say this, but Jesus knew it anyway, and so in answer to their response ("Where are you staying?"), He said to them, "Come and you will see."

Those very words stand here always as an open invitation to all. Anyone in Augusta, or driving through on Highway 94 from Defiance, Dutzow, Washington, or St. Louis who is seeking to know more about Jesus, when our church bells ring, the words of the Lord cry out in response, "Come and you will see!" Here the answer given is always the same answer. Here is the God of Heaven come down to earth for us and for our salvation. Here we sinners are confronted with our sin, but here also we are given Jesus Christ the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

And yet most people pass by without ever stopping, not just here, but churches everywhere which faithfully proclaim the truth. Why? It's because of what people are seeking. Many people are seeking what they should not be seeking, and many people are not seeking what they should be seeking. The Scriptures tell us this very thing. "None is righteous, no not one," writes St. Paul in Romans, "No one understands, no one seeks for God." What people should be seeking is God's answer to their sin. But instead people seek what makes them happy and fulfilled. They live for the moment. They live only for this life. People do not seek to know their God. They seek to know their friends on Facebook, to know the best places to fish, to know the latest Hollywood gossip. People seek the cheapest airline tickets. They spend hours seeking a good destination to take a relaxing vacation. But no time at all is spent seeking the truth about themselves, their sinful condition, and their eternal destination.

But it's not just people outside the church who seek what they should not, and do not seek what they should. Members of congregations dress for church and slide into pews for all the wrong reasons. To

socialize with other people, to show off their new outfit, to be seen by others as a good person, to get the church Elders off their back. Is it always the gifts of God in Jesus' Word and Sacraments that we seek here in church? More often than not we seek not what we should, but what we should not. We seek to be praised both by others and by God. We seek glory. We seek honor.

But friends, listen to this...we may not be here for the right reason, but that does not stop Jesus from being here for you. Andrew and his companion may have thought they were seeking Jesus that day by the Jordan River. They were wrong. Jesus was seeking them. That's why John pointed to Him. That's why he called Him the Lamb of God. That's why they followed and why He turned to them. The whole time it was Jesus who was seeking them. That's why Zaccheus climbed up his tree. That's why the repentant thief was placed on a cross next to Jesus. That's why Saul, who became Paul, traveled to Damascus to arrest Christians. Jesus was seeking all of them. And He does not find sinners in the right places, in the best condition, and having good intentions. But as He Himself said, "(I) came to seek and to save, (not those who are found, but) those who are lost."

Friend, you are here today, and you may not be here for a good and noble reason. You may even be here for all the wrong reasons. You, if you search your heart, may have to confess that you are not here seeking what you should. But that does not change Jesus' attitude toward you because He is here seeking you. Not for your voice to sing His praises, not for your money, not for your service to Him. He seeks your eternal soul. He seeks to save you from destruction. Jesus seeks and finds every sin in your heart, every disobedience in your life, every hurtful word spoken from your mouth, every evil thing done by your hands, and He takes all of these. He takes them away from you to Himself. That's what the Lamb of God does--He takes away the sin of the world.

Did you hear His Word of Absolution spoken earlier? As Jesus' pastor, the servant of the Word, I said, "I forgive you all your sins." God commands me to speak this word to you because His Lamb took your sins to the cross. God's Lamb shed His blood there for you. On a dirty wooden cross the Lamb of God died, and He did this for you. You who may be here in His House for all the wrong reasons, you who have been seeking all the wrong things this past week, you are forgiven. And here is proof...at this altar God's Lamb gives you His body and His blood shed for the forgiveness of your sins. Here in the Lord's Supper Jesus seeks you with His grace, just as in your baptism it is Jesus seeking you for His own, just as when His words of mercy are preached and given, Jesus seeks you always to draw you back to Himself.

Now there is something you should know. Jesus does not just seek you, He seeks, now that you are His, others through you. Andrew went right out after listening to Jesus and found his brother Simon and brought him to Jesus. Jesus was not just seeking Andrew; through Andrew He also was seeking Simon Peter. Are there people in your life Jesus is seeking? Yes there are. They, like you, are sinners for whom Christ died. You do not have to go preach to them. Just be Christ to them. Let them see Christ in you. And by God's grace, when He opens the door and they desire to know more about this Jesus whom you love, whom you serve, you can invite them to "Come..." "Come with me to church..." "Come and you will see." Amen.