

## **Sermon Draft**

**Text: John 1:29–42a**

**Sermon: “What Are You Seeking?”**

At his Baptism in the Jordan River, last Sunday’s focus, Jesus was revealed by the presence of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove and the voice of his Father from heaven declaring him to be his beloved Son, with whom he is well pleased. This was the Spirit’s sign to John the Baptist that identified Jesus as the Messiah.

Now John speaks: *“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”* (John 1:29). Not just the sins of Israel. *“It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”*

It’s difficult to determine which of these two questions of Christ is the more important: “What are you seeking?” or “Who do you say I am?” Or are they the same. The first comes early in Jesus’ earthly ministry and the second in the midst of his ministry. One is spoken to two who would then begin to follow him, and the other is spoken to his disciples following years of discipleship.

One seems to be applicable to life in general and the other to saving faith in particular. Both are significant questions to be answered by every follower of Christ.

Today's text draws our attention to the importance of Christ's first question, the one addressed to his would-be disciples: "What Are You Seeking?"

The would-be disciples to whom Jesus directs this question are actually already disciples of John the Baptist. John's original crowds of hearers were certainly seeking something. By this point, John's call for repentance and Baptism had gathered a large following. John was all the buzz. He had devoted disciples hanging on his every word. His message had struck a nerve. Hundreds, perhaps thousands, were hearing his preaching and confessing their sins. He was accomplishing his mission: people were eager for the Savior! Many were even asking whether John himself might be that Messiah.

Then one day, John turned every head away from himself and declared, ***"Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"*** (v 29). There's the one whom you should follow: Jesus. At Jesus' Baptism, the Holy Spirit as a dove had descended on Jesus as the signal to John.

Jesus would be much greater than John, for he was “before” John even though he was the younger cousin. Announcing Jesus to be the Messiah was the whole purpose of John’s ministry. It was time now for Jesus to increase and John to decrease.

Two of John’s disciples therefore leave John to follow Jesus. One of them was Andrew; the other may well have been the Gospel writer John himself. This was entirely appropriate, just as the Baptist intended.

Faithful Jews had long been seeking the Messiah. They were seeking a messiah who: Would bring freedom from the oppressive Romans. Would restore Jerusalem and Jewish power. Would heal sicknesses, which were signs of God’s judgment. They were seeking the Messiah all right, but did they know what kind of messiah they should really be seeking? Good question, “What are you seeking?”

In fact, all of humanity are seeking something—just don’t know what. Since most people don’t know what they’re really seeking, their best worst guess is to seek: Power—with power we can have anything we want.

Wealth—money, too, can buy almost anything, certainly plenty of nice things. Knowledge—it isn't just for knowledge's sake, but to impress others, control others, solve the world's problems and our own.

Popularity—we like people to like us. . . and we like what certain people can give us if they like us. But all of these lead to a living death.

Without knowing it, what most people are really seeking is deliverance from sin and all its effects: Seeking a sense of identity—sin confuses us as to our relationships with others and where we fit into the big picture. Seeking a sense of security—sin means we are going to get sick, lose vitality, perhaps lose our nest egg. Finally, we're going to die. Seeking meaning and purpose—since we are going to die, what can really come of anything we do?

What we are really seeking, God provides in the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. God calls us to repent of all those “best worst guesses” which are really false gods. Power, wealth, knowledge, popularity all about what we want. Can any of these really make us healthy and happy?

In the long run they are just empty desires that focus on us. Confessing these to be false gods, sins, we realize that what we really seek is the One who can take away sins.

If we are clear on what we're seeking, we'll see that those two disciples are headed in the right direction. Jesus the Christ is the Anointed One of God bringing reconciliation with the Father. Through his obedience, passion, death, and resurrection, he: Restores our identity as redeemed children of God—with sin that alienated me from God and others forgiven, we belong to him, which also means we belong with others who are his. Restores our security—having reconciled us to himself by removing our sin, God holds us securely, while we live and when we die, whatever else may be uncertain. Restores our meaning and purpose—since now death isn't the end, my labors for God's kingdom have lasting, eternal value.

Like Andrew, we go to tell others of the Lamb of God. Bringing others also to know forgiveness and everlasting life—that's purpose! That has eternal value!

Is deliverance from all the effects of sin what we're seeking? If it is, then that second important question has become the one we need to answer next. We need the One who takes away our sin, the sin that causes the world and everyone in it so much suffering. But John has already answered that question in our text, too, hasn't he! ***"Who do you say that I am?"*** Jesus will later ask his disciples. And John has answered: Jesus is the Lamb of God, who does exactly what we need—takes away the sin of the world.

Have you ever heard the phrase "seeker services?" It was not that long ago that many congregations were offering "seeker services" in addition to their regular or traditional services. The thinking was that those who do not know Christ can be attracted to a god that offers answers to their temporal needs—financial security, lasting relationships, and so on.

In reality, all Christian worship is a seeker service. Our seeking in worship is characterized by an attitude stated by the prophet Jeremiah: ***"You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart"*** (Jeremiah 29:13).

This attitude finds its source in our thirst for God as expressed in 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”*** (Psalm 63:1). This seeking is commanded by Christ in his words recorded in Luke 12: ***“Seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you”*** (Luke 12:31). And seeking is motivated by Jesus’ promise in Luke 11: ***“And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened”*** (Luke 11:9–10).

So, Jesus’ question today to Andrew and his companion is a good question for us all. ***“What are you seeking?”*** Jesus asked the two disciples of John who were following him. And, of course, the “what” is really a “who.” May all of our worship be seeker services!

Amen