

John 1:29-41

²⁹The next day, John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look! The Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! ³⁰This is the one I was talking about when I said, ‘The one coming after me outranks me because he existed before me.’ ³¹I myself did not know who he was, but I came baptizing with water so that he would be revealed to Israel.”

³²John also testified, “I saw the Spirit descend like a dove from heaven and remain on him. ³³I myself did not recognize him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘The one on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, he is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’ ³⁴I saw this myself and have testified that this is the Son of God.”

³⁵The next day, John was standing there again with two of his disciples. ³⁶When John saw Jesus passing by, he said, “Look! The Lamb of God!” ³⁷The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus.

³⁸When Jesus turned around and saw them following him, he asked, “What are you looking for?”

They said to him, “Rabbi” (which means “Teacher”), “where are you staying?”

³⁹He told them, “Come, and you will see.” So they came and saw where he was staying. They stayed with him that day. It was about the tenth hour.

⁴⁰Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of the two who heard John and followed Jesus. ⁴¹The first thing Andrew did was to find his own brother Simon and say to him, “We have found the Messiah!” (which is translated “the Christ”).

What Are You Looking For?

I.

For us it was last week. That’s when we heard about Jesus’ baptism by John in the Jordan River in the gospel.

For them what happened in our text happened the next day. John the Baptist was just going about his regular routine. He was proclaiming the same message he had been before. As usual, plenty of people were gathered around to watch him and listen to him; some even to be baptized by him.

Suddenly there was a break in the routine. What had happened to John the day before had been transformative. He would surely never forget it. I would imagine every detail of that day was etched on the Baptist’s mind: the birds that were chirping, the rippling sound of the water in the Jordan, the warmth of the sun on his skin and clothing. Some details were undoubtedly even more vivid. A voice had spoken from heaven—he knew it was the voice of the Heavenly Father. A dove had descended from the heavens—not just some haphazard fluttering of a bird, but a very deliberate descent, landing on the One he was baptizing in the river that day. Of course, he would remember forever what Jesus looked like, standing there before him as he dipped his hand in the water and poured it over Jesus’ head, anointing him in that way. That’s what he would remember forever.

That was only one day before, so no passage of time would have blurred any of the details of that day, so when John the Baptist saw Jesus walking along in his direction, he immediately pointed his finger and said: “Look! The Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29, EHV).

He described Jesus. “This is the one I was talking about when I said, ‘The one coming after me outranks me because he existed before me.’ ³¹I myself did not know who he was, but I came baptizing with water so that he would be revealed to Israel.”” (John 1:30-31, EHV).

All along, John’s preaching of repentance for the forgiveness of sins had been to point people to Jesus. He had known Jesus his whole life—they were, after all, related; their mothers were cousins. Yet John says: “I did not know who he was.” Though John leaped in Elizabeth’s womb before he was even born, he didn’t remember that. He didn’t know the significance of who this cousin was with whom he might have played in childhood.

Time passed. John began his ministry to prepare the way for the Messiah. He didn't know specifically who the Messiah was to be, but he diligently prepared the way. He *had* been given information about what to look for, however. What he was to look for had happened the previous day. John said: "I myself did not recognize him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'The one on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, he is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit'" (John 1:33, EHV).

John recognized and applied the signs he had been given. "I saw this myself and have testified that this is the Son of God" (John 1:34, EHV).

That day came and went without further incident, apparently. Today's Gospel goes on: "The next day, John was standing there again with two of his disciples. ³⁶When John saw Jesus passing by, he said, 'Look! The Lamb of God!'" (John 1:35-36, EHV).

This time there was a different result. "The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus" (John 1:37, EHV). Two of John's own disciples were paying special attention. They knew John was to point to the Messiah. They knew he was to prepare the way for the Messiah. Since John was pointing and declaring this Jesus to be the Lamb of God, not once, but twice, it was time to follow.

II.

Now comes the question. Jesus asks: "What are you looking for?" (John 1:38, EHV).

Do you find anything peculiar in Jesus' question? "*What* are you looking for?" not "who?".

Everybody's looking for something. What were they looking for? What are *you* looking for?

Popularity is a big one. Whether you want as many friends as you can get on social media, or as many followers as you can scrape together so that you can monetize your YouTube channel, or just to be liked well-enough by people at school or in your workplace, it's natural for people to want to be popular. Even for the introverts out there. Perhaps the introverts don't necessarily want all the attention that comes with popularity, but they don't want attention from being unpopular or despised, either.

Everybody's looking for something. Maybe its knowledge. Knowing your subject inside and out makes you the go-to person others seek. Your opinion matters. You know the tiny details others can't seem to grasp. Those you instruct with your vast knowledge-base may never fully understand your favorite subject, but that just means they'll keep coming back to you for answers again and again.

Everybody's looking for something. Maybe its wealth. After all, while money may not buy happiness, it buys everything else. With the things and the influence money buys, perhaps you can be happy.

Everybody's looking for something. Perhaps its power. Lots of people seek power. Politicians seek power so they can control the budget or demand certain things within government. Business executives seek power to gain more independence and autonomy as they claw their way up the corporate ladder; and, of course, power in business also indicates you might have some of the other things everybody's looking for: knowledge and wealth. Seeking power can be as simple as looking to be the one who controls or influences whatever little sphere is around you. Power over your own health decisions. Power over your spouse.

"What are you looking for?" When it comes to Jesus, what are you looking for?

I don't think it's quite as straightforward as a person might think. Prosperity preachers have influenced regular Christians into looking for something other than what Jesus promises, perhaps.

When it comes to Christianity, "Everybody's looking for something" has come to mean that everybody's looking at Christianity—and Jesus himself—as a fast-food menu. Let me look down the list and choose what I want from Jesus. Health is a big one. Wealth is another. Sometimes Christians get fooled into believing that if Jesus hasn't made them as healthy or wealthy as they would *like* to be, then they aren't believing strongly enough, or perhaps God is punishing them for something.

It's true, Jesus healed many people of their diseases, but he didn't heal everyone; Jesus didn't come to give you health. It's true, you can find many believers in the Bible who were wealthy: Abraham, Jacob, David and Solomon, for example; Jesus didn't come to promise you wealth. We sometimes sing the hymn: "What a friend we have in Jesus." Does that make you think Jesus ought to solve your problems and answer your prayers in exactly the way you *want* them answered? Jesus didn't come to do that; he didn't promise that.

III.

"What are you looking for?" Jesus didn't come to be a problem-solver—not in the way some people think or want or expect. Jesus didn't come for health or wealth. He came to be what John the Baptist called him: "Look! The Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29, EHV).

Perhaps you and I, living in the 21st Century, need to think a bit to understand the term "Lamb of God." Those who heard John speak didn't. They were completely familiar with the Lamb of God.

Passover came to mind. Every year they commemorated the flight from Egypt when the lamb was killed and its blood was painted on the doorpost of every Israelite so the angel of death would pass over the house of God's people and move on to take only the lives of the firstborn sons of the Egyptians.

Temple sacrifices came to mind. God's command for the daily sacrifices had been given to Moses: "Now this is what you shall offer on the altar regularly, every day: two lambs a year old. ³⁹The first lamb you shall offer in the morning, and the other lamb you shall offer at twilight" (Exodus 29:38-39, EHV). Lambs were sacrificed to God for the people every single day. This kind of worship was expensive. This kind of worship taught the people that sin demands a life as payment.

The daily sacrifices were never enough. Another sacrifice was needed. John pointed that sacrifice out: "Look! The Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29, EHV).

That's what Jesus came for. Not your health, not your wealth, not even to be your friend in the way we sometimes mistakenly think of his friendship.

He came to be your friend in a far more significant way. He came to deal with the greatest problem you have. Some people don't even realize how big the problem is, or that they have the problem at all. Still, he came to deal with that problem for them, too.

Jesus came to be the sacrifice that would deal with sin once and for all—once and for all people, and once and for all time. Jesus paid for your sins. And mine. And everyone else's out there.

IV.

Once you have gotten straight *what* you are truly looking for, what do you do?

The two disciples who saw John's finger pointing out Jesus "...heard him say this, and they followed Jesus" (John 1:37, EHV). They *had* been followers of John. But even John himself said that *he* wasn't the answer—he was just sent to point to the answer. Once these two learned who the answer was, they followed Jesus.

"Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard John and followed Jesus. ⁴¹The first thing Andrew did was to find his own brother Simon and say to him, 'We have found the Messiah!' (which is translated 'the Christ')" (John 1:40-41, EHV).

You know those social media people out there who are just lurkers? Probably *most* social media users most of the time are just lurkers. Lurkers are those who just read or watch what others post.

Following Jesus means more than being just a lurker. Do what Andrew did. Find your brother. Find your sister. Find your children who have been neglecting their relationship with Jesus. Find your straying parents. Find your friends and neighbors. Find them and tell them you have found the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. Amen.