

Sermon 2008 Epiphany 2

Text: John 1: 38-42a

Theme: "What Are You Seeking?"

"What are you seeking?" That's the way Jesus starts the conversation. There are no pleasantries exchanged. There are no crowd breaker games or mixers. There is not so much as an introduction. He saw the two disciples of John following him and he turned around and asked, "What are you seeking?"

I believe that most of the problems people have in their lives are caused by asking the wrong questions, so maybe we can learn something from Jesus here. If we ask God the wrong questions, then we get the right answers because he is God. He is never wrong. But we get the right answers to the wrong problems. Like a good parent, God does not spoon feed us but lets us work it out on our own until we get the right questions.

If you are feeling unsettled and discontent, you haven't figured out the right questions yet. The closer you get to the right questions, the more content you become. We all know truly content people, or at least people who are more content than we

are. I think you would find that they are not content because they are rich and thin and successful. In fact, one of the most content people I know has been fighting ovarian cancer for six years, barely makes the mortgage each month and feels like she's been run over by a garbage truck most of the time. Yet she is truly content. It is amazing how serious illness and facing one's own mortality strip away all the veneer in our lives and we quickly get down to the right questions, the questions that truly matter.

The secret to being content is to know how to ask the right questions and then getting the right answers to the right concerns. There are many examples of wrong questions. "Why am I so sick?" "Why don't I have more money?" "Why don't my parents understand me?" "Why won't that certain person love me?" "How could that person do that to me?"

Jesus helps us frame the right question. "What are you seeking?" "Rabbi, where are you staying?" Was that really what they were seeking? Was that the deep issue with which they

were wrestling in their lives? It seems so stupid! The Lord of creation looks at you and says, "What are you seeking?" and the best you can do is "where are you staying?" But like most of us, they were probably all caught up in the moment and rather than asking something important, they just blurted out something mundane.

We all come to worship today with our own issues with which we are struggling. Whatever your issue is today, is that really the dominant issue in your life? Whatever it is, will it matter in 20 years? Whatever it is, will it matter once you cross into eternity? Get outside the moment for a moment. Each week when we are about to celebrate the Lord's Supper; I chant to you "Lift up your hearts." And you sing back "We lift them up unto the Lord."

This is not just a pleasant liturgical exchange. It is far more than that. What I am saying is "WAKE UP AND PAY ATTENTION!" Quit doodling on your bulletin, whispering to your neighbor and wondering if you might be able to slip out to the bathroom

unnoticed. "LIFT UP YOUR HEARTS!" Quit wallowing in your own self pity, regrets and self loathing. LIFT UP YOUR HEARTS AND PAY ATTENTION BECAUSE THE LORD HAS JUST TURNED HIS GAZE UPON YOU AND HAS JUST ASKED YOU SOMETHING.....! SOMETHING INCREDIBLY IMPORTANT..... "What are you seeking?"

Did the disciples lift up their hearts? "Rabbi, where are you staying?" But maybe their question was more profound than it looks at first. Maybe they knew that in order to know the right question, they needed to know him better. "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world!" Maybe they understood that it would take some time to absorb that one and that only by staying close to him would they ever begin asking the right questions.

If you are struggling today with what question to ask, lift up your heart. If you find yourself wallowing in all the old worn out questions and feeling like the answers never really help, lift up your hearts. Don't feel dumb or weak or silly, behold, this is the

Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. This is not an easy thing to get your brain around. This is huge. And our brains can only process something this big a little at a time. Lift up your heart.

Put down all the old tired questions and instead, just listen. Maybe the right question is not "why don't I have something" but rather "what am I forgetting that I already have?" Maybe the right question is not "why me?" but "what would God have me do with this?" Maybe the right question is not "how could that person act that way towards me?" but "what is that person crying out for in his actions and how can I help him?" Like John's disciples, we follow after Jesus believing with all our hearts that slowly we will understand as we grow to truly know him. As our faith grows by constantly hearing his Word and receiving his body and blood, the right questions will come to us and along with the right questions will come the answers that make sense and help us and we will find the contentment that we seek. We will find it at the foot of the cross. AMEN.