

# Asking the Right Question

John 1:29–42a

Dear friends in Christ, grace and peace from our Lord Jesus Christ who always gives us the right answer.

But for us to hear the right answer, the right questions need to be asked. Or dare say, the right question needs to be asked: What am I looking for?

When my kids were young children, I used to play with them an annoying game, I called “why.” Whenever I asked a question, and they would give the answer, I asked back “why?” answer after answer I would ask “why?” It was in part, to promote deep thinking, by asking more questions, formulation of answers, and more questions, but it was also in part, to annoy them. “Why? Why? Why?” And I could ask that for a long while. “Why” then I would hear the answer, then ask again...“why?” “Why.”

Sometimes my kids will keep playing the game, at other times, they just would be annoyed, and the game will end there.

But asking the right questions is very important. And for as to ask the right questions we need to be good listeners, and by being good listeners formulate the right question. A good listener will always come back with a good question.

In pre-marriage counselling I ask couples to know each other and how each person communicates. There are two types of people when it comes to communication, the pointer and the painter. Knowing who is who in our relationship does wonders to sustain marriage and makes things a bit easier in the process.

The pointer, you guess it, will give a short answer. To the point! The painter will give a longer answer. Biting around the bush sort of, will give a longer answer to the question. For example: If somebody asks, how handsome are the preachers at Faith Lutheran. The pointer will say, “very!” That’s it! Short answer, according to the question, it is to the point. A painter on the other hand will probably answer something like, “well we have to preachers, one young man, he of course speaks English, the other, is a short, chubby guy who sort of speaks English... but both are handsome...”

As you see, it was a bit longer answer, biting around the bush, then giving the needed answer. In a relationship, knowing how the other person communicates helps us to either formulate the right question or give the right answer. In the words of E.e. Cummings: “Always the beautiful answer who asks a more beautiful question.”

Not all are able to ask the right questions or give the right answers, therefore it is important that we put some effort to this art. Once you master it, it’s going to be a power tool in your communication. Asking the right questions is crucial for good conversation flow and efficiency. Asking the right question, avoids confusion. And when it comes to spiritual matters, asking the right question affects our eternity even.

And in our Gospel reading for today Jesus helps us to ask the right spiritual question, and not only the spiritual question, but even life as a whole-question: “What are you seeking?” “What are you looking for?” “What do you want?”

John tells us that it was two of John the Baptist’s disciples, Andrew and John who follow Jesus after the Baptist points to Jesus as the Lamb of God. The text says that they just followed him. Why? Was it because he

was the Lamb of God? Maybe it was just curiosity. Or maybe they want a deeper connection with God. The text doesn't say, other than Jesus knowing that they were following him, he aids them in asking the right question, by Jesus asking for them the right question: "What are you seeking?" "What are you looking for?"

Jesus' question to the two young men is an indispensably important one. Many people go through life not really knowing what they most fundamentally want, and accordingly, they drift away. That could have been the case with John's disciples too. John of course was a powerful preacher, after all he was preparing the way for Christ. And hearing about the Lamb of God, probably sparked their curiosity, or maybe they knew something else, they wanted to know about God.

Today, so many receive the Gospel, through Sunday School, through worship, direct preaching or even at home. Yet along the way, because they didn't ask the right question, something else in the world gets the best of them.

Andrew and John, appears they were hungering spiritually. They stick with John as he preaches around. But when they hear John pointing to the Lamb of God, their intrigue grew, and they wanted to satisfy their need.

And so, they followed Jesus. As they did, Jesus turns around and ask: "What are you seeking?" "What are you looking for?"

Now, their answer surprises me a bit. Instead of saying we know you are the Lamb of God, we want to follow you, or you are Jesus, the Messiah we were waiting for, or, maybe even say, we don't know, you tell us!

Still their response is a sound one: "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?" Jesus says: "Come and you will see." So, they

follow Jesus and not only saw where he was staying, but they stayed with him.

It seems to me that they pursued an excellent way of gathering information from Jesus. Not just following him but following him inquisitively. In other words, asking “why” “why?” “Why?” From his own lips they wanted to hear more about the testimony which John had given of him. they wanted to deepen their knowledge, they wanted to understand, and keep asking the right questions. They were concerned about not only about their spiritual lives but even eternity. And what’s the best way to do it? Spend time with Jesus. See him, hear him, talk with him. Associate with Him.

Now, John doesn’t tell us what word they used to ask and what words Jesus used to reveal himself and enlighten those two. But we know they whatever they were seeking, whatever they were looking for they found.

And that Jesus treated them in a way that no body had treated them before. In grace and love as he would have taught them, drawing them to himself until finally they become his disciples. Jesus did not draw them to him with violence, or intimidation, or threatening, as powerful leaders often do, and as the Jews had had probably imagined the Messiah would do. For they were waiting for a powerful leader, even perhaps a proud narcissistic novelty of their time. Instead, they found in Jesus to be a friendly and gentle Messiah, receiving, and welcoming all of those who came to Him, excluding no one. Just as the prophet of old announced: “He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; <sup>3</sup> a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice.” (Is. 42:2–3)

And in him they found what they were looking for. Once again, John doesn't tell us what words or questions and answer given that time, but we know those two found what they were looking for. We know this because of what happens next. Andrew leads Peter to Christ saying: "We have found the Messiah" (which means Christ).<sup>42</sup> He brought him to Jesus." In turn Jesus confirms Andrew's words in what happened next. Christ had never seen Peter before, nor had He known his parents or friends. Still, he addresses him with the words: "So you are Simon the son of John? You shall be called Cephas" (which means Peter)." Today we know what that means. Peter later would confess Jesus to be Christ, the Son of God, and on that confession, Jesus would establish his church.

Now, there was nothing in those first two disciples and or in Peter worth to become disciples, it was only out of Christ's amazing grace that Jesus would first satisfy their spiritual hunger, answer their seeking, and reveal himself to them, as the ultimate reason of our being, of our faith, of eternity itself. And it is out of his grace that Jesus begun his kingdom with people that had a hunger for the right answer to the right question.

The right answer was not based on reason and human wisdom. Rather it is begun by Jesus, the Christ, who desires that people would know him for who he is.

It doesn't matter who is asking the question, doesn't matter their social or political position. What matters is that they are asking the right question. And the right answer is life eternal in Christ.

What are you looking for? Jesus asks and the correct answer is "eternal life." A friendship with God a life in Christ. This is the simple, clear, definite statement of the end goal that any body with a serious pondering of his or her life will arrive to.

Therefore, today we need to ask, what am I looking for? What am I seeking? And I venture to say, ask that question in all aspect of life. In your marriage, in your academic quest, in just about anything in life. Don't be shy, and don't ignore that question, asking the right question will bring satisfaction, purpose and a clearer vision of your life what ever it is.

And above all, don't ignore that question regarding your spiritual life. At any stage, it is good ask that question, ask it and take it seriously. Many may know more or less what they want spiritually, but they lack the courage and attention to pursue that end in the face of distractions and opposition. They know that they should be growing in holiness, but the secular culture proposes sex, pleasure, power, and honor so attractively that they lose their way. Or perhaps they receive humiliating criticism from those who are stuck in the old, standard way of life, and they give in, because we don't want the answer. But once we focus on Christ, that will change.

As you see, formulating the right question, the answer will always lead us to Christ, to his Gospel, to his works and to his gifts of grace.

Always!

Now you might say, but you are conditioning us with that answer. You are telling us what and how to think!

Our task as preacher here at Faith, is simply this, to point to the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Our function is to join John who said that he didn't know who Christ was until the holy Spirit revealed him. So it is with us, we didn't know who Christ was, if it wasn't through his word, by the power of the Holy Spirit. Answer our questions, what am I looking for? A question that we ask continually not because we don't know who Christ is, but so that we remain in fellowship with him.

What are we looking for?

Friends we are—all of us—born into a deeply dysfunctional world, and we continue to live it, plugged and conditioned by selfishness, cruelty, injustice, stupidity, fear and confusion. This has created a poisonous atmosphere that conditions all of our thoughts and moves and actions. Therefore, taking some time to ponder what am I looking for is indeed an important question.

Asking continually the right question, or questions, is very important. What am I seeking? Equally important is being able to hear the answer and live by the answer. May we all say like Andrew and John: Jesus, where are you staying? So we can stay and fellowship with him, so he can answer all our questions, so he can embrace us with his grace and love.

In his name,  
Amen!