

“Seeking, Staying, and Seeing”

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Third in a series on the Gospel of John, chapter 1

John 1.35-42

September 28, 2014

The next day, John was again standing with two of his followers. He looked intently at Jesus walking by, and he said, “Look! The Lamb of God!” The two followers heard him say this, and they followed Jesus.

Jesus turned and saw them following. He said to them, “What are you seeking?” They said to him, “Rabbi” (which means Teacher), “where are you staying?” He said to them, “Come and you will see.” So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day. It was about four in the afternoon.

Andrew was one of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus. He was Simon Peter’s brother. He first found his brother Simon, and said to him, “We have found the Messiah!” (That means “the anointed one,” like our word “Christ.”) He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him intently and said, “So you are Simon, the son of John? You shall be called Cephas (which means “the Rock,” like our word “Peter”.)

John 1.35-42

We hear this episode happened about 4:00 “the next day.” For us it’s a week later at about 11:20. Last Sunday, we got into Baptizing John’s encounter with Jesus. I imagined us sitting by a late-night campfire with a character I’ve made up; I’m calling him Yohannan. We were sitting together, listening as Baptizing John told us what had happened earlier in the day. How the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus and stayed with him, and John saw. With that Spirit-sign John realized this Jesus is God’s Messiah, God’s Promised One, our Rescuer and God’s Kingdom-Bringer.

Also God’s Lamb, John said. Jesus is like a sacrificial lamb, except he chose this path. He chose to enter into the world’s sin, to rescue us from it. His redeeming work is as broad and expansive as the entire cosmos, all things. His redeeming work reaches as deep as the darkest crevice of brokenness, evil, sin and pain. Jesus’ redeeming work is as personal as you and me. Jesus can cover everyone, and he can cover you as if you were the only one. You can receive for yourself Jesus’ great gift of love, his self-giving passion and world-healing grace.

John told us about Jesus. Now, as the story continues in our reading today, he tells it again. It’s the next day. Two of John’s followers are with him.. One is Andrew. The other unnamed, so let’s imagine it is our friend Yohannan.

John points them again to Jesus, the Lamb of God. Us too. They start after him.

II

Jesus turns. Until now in this book, much has been said about him. Now Jesus speaks, for the first time, directly to us. With a question! "*What are you seeking?*"

What a great question! Let Jesus' question penetrate you.

What are you seeking? Where lies your deepest dissatisfaction? Your most persistent yearning? The promise you almost dare not hope for, yet can't stop dreaming of?

What are you seeking? How will you answer Jesus? What will you say?

He won't necessarily give you exactly what you're looking for. What Jesus does is take us into him, and re-shape our desires, re-form our dissatisfactions. He re-orientes our yearnings, and seeds us with new dreams.

Too often we are sure what we want. Yet Jesus knows us better. He invites us to put everything in his hands, including what we are seeking, and follow him. Follow him to receive the fullness of who he is. And thereby, following him, you receive the fullness of who you are.

What are you seeking?

III

Andrew and (I'm imagining) Yohannan don't answer directly. Instead, they ask, "*Teacher, where are you staying?*" It seems a peculiar response to "*What are you seeking?*" Still, it is wisdom.

Teacher, where are you staying? If we are going to follow him, if we are going to be with him, we have to know where he is.

Where is Jesus staying? Jumping ahead, after his crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus ascended into the heavenly realm. I don't think heaven is some far off place. It is the God-space that is everywhere. Hidden, yet breaking it. Not here fully, yet fully present.

Where are you staying, Jesus? Everywhere heaven is.

Yet "everywhere" feels vague. Jesus is concrete.

Where are you staying, Jesus? Wherever we are together, sisters and brothers brought together in him, Jesus is right here. Wherever we share broken bread and pass wine, Jesus is right here. Wherever we crack open and digest these Bible writings which bear witness to him, he is right here.

Where are you staying, Jesus? Where someone is hungry, Jesus is there, hungry. Where someone is captive, Jesus is behind bars. Where someone is ill, Jesus is running a fever. Where a stranger is welcomed, Jesus is ushered to the best seat. Where someone is clothed, Jesus gets dressed. Where someone is being abused, terrorized, murdered, Jesus is there, abused, terrorized, murdered. Where they gave the death penalty to two bandits, and a third between them . . .

Where are you staying, Jesus? It might be the best question for us to ask. *Where are you staying, Jesus?* Because wherever he is, we need to be.

IV

They ask Jesus, *“Where are you staying?”* Jesus says to them, and you, *“Come and you will see!”* It is a promise. Jesus makes a promise. *“You will see!”*¹

They go. They do not know what they will see. But they trust enough to follow.

When I follow Jesus, I don't know where he is going to take me. I don't know where he is going with me. Believe me, I'd like to know. Honestly, I'd really like to set the itinerary. But that is not what “following” is about. I don't know what he is going to take me to see. But, I trust it is going to be good, because I'll be seeing it with him.

He takes us places we never imagine. He shows us things we've never pictured. Wonders to behold. Tragedies to walk in. Because he takes us into the real world. That's where he is staying, always in the real world. When we are here, worshipping, we are in the real world. Because Jesus is here, and he is in the real world. When he brings us anywhere, we are in in the real world, because Jesus is there. I might lose everything. But it will still be good, because I'll be with the One who holds everything.

“Come and you will see,” promises Jesus.

V

They went with Jesus to where he was staying. We don't know what they talked about.

¹ Bruner, 103.

What they said. What he said. What they thought or felt. Nothing like that.²

It was the first time Jesus had followers. It's the first church meeting.³ Yet no minutes were kept. It was very personal, between Jesus and them.

It's personal, but not private. Andrew rushes off to find Peter, his brother. He loves Peter. Andrew has got the best news to share, and Peter is worth sharing it with. That is the reason we share with others our experience of Jesus. It is news worth telling, and they are worth telling it to. "*Guess who we've found!*" Peter comes back with Andrew, and he sees too.

Jesus gives Peter a new name, "Rock." When you follow Jesus, and he shows you where he is, he changes the core of who you are.

Andrew rushes off to tell Peter. What about Yohannan? I imagine he tells many too. Because of Yohannan, many will hear Jesus ask them, "*What are you seeking?*" And hear Jesus say to them, "*Come and see where I am staying.*"

One more little thing. Probably meaningless, but intriguing. As Yohannan tells the story again and again, one detail sticks with him. He remembers that he first followed Jesus at 4:00 in the afternoon. Funny how certain things stay in your mind, when you see where Jesus is staying.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.