

Preaching for Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, Reno, NV

Pastor Scott Trevithick

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Text: John 1:29-42

Title: A Quirky Conversation

Focus: Jesus has what initially seems like a quirky conversation with two disciples, but it turns out to be an essential conversation about what matters most in life and being in relationship with him. “Come and See” is Jesus’ compelling invitation in this conversation as he invites them to abide with him. What matters most to you? How do we reflect this invitation by Jesus in the way we welcome folks to Good Shepherd?

Gospel Reading: John 1:29-42

²⁹The next day he [John the Baptist] saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, “Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! ³⁰This is he of whom I said, ‘After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me.’ ³¹I myself did not know him; but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel.” ³²And John testified, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. ³³I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ ³⁴And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God.” ³⁵The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, ³⁶and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, “Look, here is the Lamb of God!”

³⁷The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. ³⁸When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, “What are you looking for?” They said to him, “Rabbi” (which translated means Teacher), “where are you staying?” ³⁹He said to them, “Come and see.” They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o’clock in the afternoon. ⁴⁰One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. ⁴¹He first found his brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which is translated Anointed). ⁴²He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, “You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas” (which is translated Peter).

A Quirky Conversation

Quirky.

That’s how I would describe this conversation between Jesus and two disciples. Quirky—as in odd, peculiar, or unexpected. But it’s not quirky in an awkward way—it’s quirky, but intriguing.

Let's get oriented to where we are. . . We're in the first chapter of the gospel of John. Just 2 weeks ago we read what's called the *prologue* of the gospel, which is John's description of the impact of Jesus coming into the world.

- "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God" (John 1:1-2).
- Jesus has existed with God from the beginning of time and now has come into the world.

We're still in the first chapter and we are continuing to get to know Jesus as we move from the prologue to John the Baptist introducing him. John calls Jesus. . .

- The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (v. 29)
- The one on whom the Spirit of God has descended and remained (v. 32)
- The Son of God (v. 34).

And here's where the quirky conversation happens between Jesus and two disciples.

John is standing with 2 disciples. As often as we hear the word *disciples*, we quickly associate them/the term with Jesus, but notice that these are followers of John's.

- Two disciples follow Jesus (v. 37)
- Jesus asks them "What are you looking for?" (v. 38)
- They respond, "Rabbi, where are you staying?" (v. 38)
- Jesus invites them, "Come and see. . ." (v. 39)

Quirky, peculiar, but intriguing is how I'd describe this conversation because the questions and responses are so odd. They don't seem to follow one another.

"What are you looking for?"

Jesus asks, "What are you looking for?"

"What are you looking for?" That's a direct, practical, even ordinary question—it could be understood as a geography or directional question. These two guys are hanging out with John, John's helping them get oriented. They're looking around, maybe they're confused, so the question from Jesus could be understood as something simple and helpful like, "Can I help you guys find something?" It's like a clerk in a store asking, "Did you find everything okay?"

It could be understood in that way, but I think there's more to it than that. The interaction between Jesus and these two disciples continues. If this conversation or interaction were just about finding something simple, the conversation would likely conclude right there; there would be nothing else to talk about. Instead, there's more

going on here with “*What are you looking for?*” than a simple question about where something is located geographically.

Another way to translate this verb *looking for* is ***searching for***. ***What are you searching for?***¹ That translation from the original Greek to English may be better or more accurate because it signals that this is not just a simple, “Hey, what’s up? What’re you looking for?” question.

It’s a deeper, more probing question, “What are you searching for? What are you longing for? What is most important to you and where are you looking for that? What is your deepest longing, your deepest need? Have you found that; Can I help you find that?”

The context or setting supports this deeper reading

These two guys weren’t just any two random guys. They were followers of John—students, disciples. They were intentionally following John to learn from him. And while they’re staying with John, he points them to Jesus and tells them, “Here is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world.” (vs. 29 and 36).

Here’s someone important! Here’s the one for whom we have been waiting. Here is the one who saves us.

Remember that these two are followers of John. They are connected to John and yet John, as is his role, points them to Jesus. He tells them, “This is the one to whom you should be paying attention. This is the one.

In the passage immediately preceding what we read today. . .

³⁰ “This is he of whom I said, ‘After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me.’ ³² [At his baptism] ‘I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him.’ ³⁴ And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God.”

So they are followers or disciples of John and John directs them to Jesus:

³⁷The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus.

So Jesus knows what they’re looking for and it’s not just where to find the pretzels on aisle 5.

¹ zéteó: to seek Transliteration: zéteó, Phonetic Spelling: (dzay-teh'-o), Short Definition: I seek, search for, desire, Definition: I seek, search for, desire, require, demand.

³⁸ When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi" (which translated means Teacher), "where are you staying?"

“Where are you staying?” The quirkiness continues!

- Jesus asks them, “What are you looking for?”
- They reply, “Where are you staying?”

Initially, that seems an odd response. Jesus asks them what they’re looking for and they don’t seem to respond to the question, but they ask another one. It seems like a different conversation. One part of the conversation doesn’t seem to follow the other.

But just as “What are you looking for?” isn’t about the pretzels on aisle 5, but about one’s deepest longings and search for meaning, their response makes sense because they want to talk about hope and purpose as well.

When Jesus asks, “What are you looking for?” what he more profoundly asks is, “What is your deepest longing, the place where you find the deepest meaning? Have you found that?”

And when they reply by asking “Where are you staying?” that actually makes sense also because they’re not talking about the pretzels on aisle 5 either. They’re responding to where they expect to find that deeper meaning to life.

- **Here’s the key to the quirkiness: It’s the Greek verb *meno* imbedded in the passage, repeated a number of times.**

“Where are you staying?” This English verb *staying* is translated from the Greek verb *meno* (*MEN-oh*). It can mean *stay, remain, abide, continue to be present*. When they say, “Where are you staying?” they actually *are* responding to Jesus’ question. They’ve already made up their minds that wherever Jesus may be, that’s where they also want to stay, remain, and abide, *meno*.²

It’s like they’ve already decided, “Because wherever you are, Jesus, that’s where we want to be.” “We want to be with you, Jesus. Wherever you are staying, we want to be there. We want to stay, remain, abide with you. We want to experience what you have to offer. Where can we be in the very presence of God?”

² The verb *meno* is used frequently in this passage and throughout John. It’s used 40 times in 33 verses in John and 29 additional times in 20 verses in the letters of John. Total occurrences 69 of 120 total times in the New Testament are from John or Johannine letters or 57.5%.

³⁹He said to them, "**Come and see.**" They came and saw where he was staying, and they *remained* (There's *meno* again) with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon.

(I think it's quirky to add that final detail, "It was about four o'clock in the afternoon," but maybe that detail is just a way of emphasizing, "This is just as it happened; just as I remembered it.")

Jesus invites them to "Come and see."

Isn't that the good news in this passage? Jesus invites them, saying, "Come and see." That phrase occurs 4 times in John. We'll hear it next in a reading on the 3rd Sunday of Lent, when the woman at the well with Jesus says to those in her village,

- "Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?" (John 4:29).

How about you? What are you looking for?

- What are you looking for?

Have you found what you're searching for? Have you found what satisfies your deepest longing?

Jesus invites you, too, "Come and see" Come and see where I am staying, so that where I am, there you may be also. (To borrow from Jesus' words in John 14)

The mission of the Church (Capital "C" Church) is to demonstrate the love of God for the world.³ It is to live in such a way that people see/find/discover that their deepest human longing could be met in the person of Jesus.

What are you looking for? And the "Come and See" invitation—where have you heard that in addition to the times we've mentioned in the gospel of John?

It's the culminating invitation in our Good Shepherd Welcome Statement:

Welcome to believers, questioners, and questioning believers. This is a place where you are welcome to celebrate and grieve, to rejoice and recover. No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here. This is a place where lives are made new. **Come and see!**

³³ See *Presbyterian Catechism* **Question 63. What is the mission of the church?**
The mission of the church is to bear witness to God's love for the world in Jesus Christ.

This final portion of the Welcome Statement is printed on the quilt that greets people when they come into our Welcome Space. The full statement is printed on the back of the *What's Happening* handout each week. You'll also find it on our website. But if we print it in those places, as prominent as they may be, and don't live it out in the way that we greet newcomers and interact with others, then we're failing. What ultimately matters is the way that we demonstrate the love of God for the world.

Closing

We, too, are on a journey, looking for that which gives our lives meaning and purpose. "What are you looking for, what are you searching for?" Jesus asks us.

"Come and see," he invites us, to *meno*, stay, remain, abide with him, that we might find our deepest longings met in him. The Church lives out its calling when, like John, it points people to Jesus as the one in whom we can abide.