

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
Amen

Our meditation this morning focuses in on these words from our Gospel reading.

- “The next day (John the Baptizer) saw Jesus coming towards Him and said, ‘Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.’”
- “The 2 disciples heard him say this and they followed Jesus. Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them.....”
- “What are you seeking? And they said to Him, “Rabbi where are You staying?”
- “He said to them, Come and you will see.”
- Thus far our text.

Jesus asked Andrew and John, “What are you seeking?”

- What do you want from Me? In effect, what do you want out of life?
- What is your desire?

If Jesus asked you that question.....how would you answer?

- What do you want from Jesus?
- What do you want out of life?
- In preparing for this message, I did a little bit of research.

What are the 10 things people say they want most from life?

- Number 10 was fulfillment. Number 9 was peace.
- Number 8 was hope. Number 7 to leave a legacy.
- Number 6, meaningful work. Number 5, good family relationships, friends, and harmony.
- Number 4, security. Number 3 wealth. Number 2, health.

And number one.....

- Have you figured it out?
- Either by reasoning or the process of elimination.
- The number one thing people want most from life is happiness.

Happiness.

- What do you want most out of life?

The irony here is that a recent gallop poll showed that happiness is at an all time low.

- It had a little bump up and increase when the vaccine came out for the coronavirus.....
- But now again it has dropped to an all time low.

Jesus asked Andrew and John.....what are you seeking?

- Looking at the entire sequence of events given to us in our Gospel reading; we can learn much from this and apply it to help us answer these questions.....
- What are you seeking and where can you find it?

Two days before the events of our Gospel reading today, John the Baptist had baptized Jesus in the Jordan River.

- We observed and celebrated this event last Sunday.
- And at Jesus' baptism John the Baptist was given proof, validation, verification that this Jesus is the Messiah.
- The heavens opened and God the Father said, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."
- And the Holy Spirit descended and anointed Jesus.

Now Andrew and the disciple John were followers of John the Baptist.

- But John the Baptist having experienced the baptism in the Jordan River now sees Jesus and proclaims, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."
- Andrew and John the disciple heard this and left John the Baptist and began to follow Jesus.

And Jesus turns to them and asks, "What are you seeking?"

- And they replied, "Where are You staying?"
- And Jesus responded, "Come, and you will see."

Similar to the dialogue, this morning we need to answer 2 important questions.

- Where do we find Jesus?
- And, what do we want from Him?
- Let's take these questions in opposite order.

What do you want from Jesus?

- I've already given you the top 10 things the world would say.

Do you remember the list?

- Fulfillment, peace, hope, to leave a legacy, meaningful work, good relationships, security, wealth, health.....and happiness.

Without knowing it, as people try to find these things.....what people really need and the only way they can have these things is in deliverance from sin and all its affects.

- For example.....peace and good relationships.
- People cannot truly be at peace unless their sins are forgiven and they forgive others.
- And likewise this all fits together for relationships.

Proof of this?

- Consider the burdens you carry when you fail to forgive or receive forgiveness.
- Without forgiveness of sins, we cannot even approach the throne of God.

How about health, security, hope, and a meaningful life?

- The erosion of all of these things comes from being a part of a broken, sinful world.

How about wealth and a purpose in life?

- Wealth is, at best, only temporary. Eventually there will be an end for each of us for our time on this earth.
- And for purpose in life. If we are not anchored in forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation, our purpose for life becomes very shallow.
- As Solomon said in Ecclesiastes chapter one, “Vanity of vanities. All is vanity.”
- “There is no remembrance of former things, nor will there be any remembrance of later things yet to be.”

Yes, what we want may be far different from what we pursue to get these things.

- What we truly want and need is deliverance from all the effects of sin.
- And that forgiveness and deliverance from sin is only found in Jesus.

John the Baptizer was given validation of all this at the Baptism of Jesus. And we are too.

- And now he sees this Jesus and what does he proclaim?

“Behold the Lamb of God WHO TAKES AWAY the sin of the world.”

- Consider these words.

Behold the Lamb of God.

- That is fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.
- The One who would be sacrificed for us.

Who takes away the sin.

- It is in Jesus that our sins are forgiven.
- It is in Him that we find true joy, peace, meaningfulness, and eternal life.

And it even gets more personal.

- John doesn't say, "Who takes away the sins of Israel."
- No, he says, "Who takes away the sins OF THE WORLD."

And Andrew and the disciple John asked Jesus, "Where are you staying?"

- We, like John the Baptizer, know from the baptism in the Jordan, this is Jesus, the Messiah.
- And so we too ask, where can we find Him?
- This was the first of the 2 questions we posed today.
- Where do we find Jesus?

He is with us. He is in our midst.

- He is the Word of God.
- The Word read from Scripture.
- That word that John the Baptist proclaimed in the account we just read, and other places each day and week in devotions, Bible study, word of mouth one to another, and here in God's House.

Just as in our Gospel account it is also found in not only the Word but the Sacraments.

- Jesus had been baptized in the Jordan River.
- We also find Jesus at the baptismal font.
- Not just when the act of baptism is performed; but each time we renew our baptismal vows.

Jesus was present with Andrew and John.

- Jesus is present at all times with us also; but we can physically see and taste Him in the bread and wine.
- His very body and blood of which we will soon partake.
- And then He dwells within us and goes with us into the world.

- To the times of joy, to the times of sorrow, to the times of certainty, and to the times of uncertainty.

And what happened to Andrew and John after this?

- They had peace and joy and meaning and relationships.
- They each went to their brother and proclaimed, “We have found the Messiah.”
- And they brought them to Jesus.
- There was great joy and strength and peace and all the things we listed earlier.

As I begin to bring this message to a close, I’d like to share something I saw this past week.

- I shared a little bit of this in one of my daily devotions live streamed and posted earlier this week.
- Today I carry it further and even if you re involved in my daily devotions, it bares repeating in the context of this message.
- I think it gives a good illustration of what I have been talking about.

As many of you know, Sandy went to Barnes Hospital this past week for her next infusion.

- The visit went very well for us.
- But there are many people at The Siteman Cancer Center that are hurting and looking for strength and peace.

On a board where you check in to start the process for the day, there are a number of 4 inch by 4 inch tiles.....

- Where people, mostly children, but also adults, have been able to draw things and put words to express themselves and give encouragement.
- I observed these tiles while I was waiting for Sandy and I wrote down a few of them I would like to share with you.

There are very many messages.....

- Corresponding to where I started this message by telling you the top 10 things people most want from life.....I limited it to 10.

These are the words on the tiles I have chosen.

- God is my friend.
- Child like faith.
- Miracles happen.

- Enjoy every day to its fullest.
- I am not afraid. I trust God.
- I can do all things through Him who gives me strength.
- Every day is a great day. Just check your attitude.
- God is my healer.
- Hope, believe, faith.

And the final one I mention to you.

- On the tile was given just the book, chapter, and verse of a Bible passage.
- It read, “Isaiah chapter 40 verse 31.”
- That verse?
- “But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.”

There was something else that happened while I was doing all this.

- Again, I need to give you a little background for this.
- Also on the wall, near the tiles, is a bell.
- When someone has finished all their treatments and are declared cancer free, they get to ring the bell. The victory bell.

After I wrote down the words from the tiles, I went over to an empty table where I could spread out and write this sermon.

- As I was sitting there, almost finished writing this sermon; in fact, at this point in the sermon where we are right now.....
- A patient came out, over to the bell, and began ringing it.

Dear Christian friends.....

- What is it you really want out of life?
- The joy and the peace and the hope and the strength and the meaning and purpose, and good relationships that only the forgiveness of sins offers?

And that is found only in Jesus Christ.

- He has already won the victory.
- He has already rung the bell and He is ringing it for you.
- He is our strength, our stability, our Rock, our forgiveness of sins.
- Let us go forward together in Christ.
- He is the answer to all our most important needs. Amen.

(Please stand) And now, may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Having heard the Word of God we now prepare our hearts and minds to confess together the words of the Nicene Creed as found on page 206 in your hymnal.