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Epiphany 2A
Peace, Seattle
January 16, 2011 epk
John 1:29-42

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR?

It started the same way every time, without fail. Papa would come into the kitchen begin opening drawers and cupboards, searching for some simple utensil or tool or object, which inevitably eluded him.

He would only attempt this rummaging around when Anna wasn't near the kitchen, which wasn't very often. In spite of the fact that he was in his own home, he was a visitor here—the kitchen was her domain.

And so when he began his rummaging, it wasn't long before her voice could be heard from another room asking, **"What are you looking for?"**

And after about the second or third time she'd asked the question, he would finally tell her what it was he was looking for—maybe an empty jar to hold his workbench nails—and she would go directly to the small cupboard above the icebox and pull down the jar he wanted.

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR?
It's a simple question. The kind of question that gets asked and answered in our homes all the time. **What are you looking for?**

As we witness the startup of Jesus' ministry with the calling of the first disciples, we hear Jesus' asking the same question: **What are you looking for?**

Beginning with verse 35 we read:

> John was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!" The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, "What are you looking for?"

What are you looking for? It's a simple question, and if we allow ourselves to trade places for a moment this morning with those disciples of John, we discover that both the question and the answer can be addressed on at least three different levels.

(1) First, there's the practical approach. The kind of approach that Anna takes when Papa is gets into her kitchen. **You want something? Tell me what it is and I'll get it!**

And sometimes we wouldn't mind having that kind of Jesus—the kind who could help us with practical issues like finding lost tools or misplaced car keys, or locating a convenient parking place.

But the Jesus we meet in the Scriptures wants to be more to us than a genie who gets conjured up when we need something, a kind of celestial "step 'n fetch it."

In John's story this morning, something else is happening. And we find ourselves knocked down to the second level; a level whose answer goes deeper.

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(2) What am I looking for? If you really want to know, Lord, I'm looking for…

- a good job with benefits,
- stable health,
- a mortgage that's not underwater,
- well-adjusted children,
- a secure life,
- that illusive "something more" that we can hardly define much less understand.

Can you give me that, Jesus? Can you provide that?

The Jesus we're after at level two is still the consumer's Jesus, and no wonder: we spend a good part of our lives trying to get our constellation of needs and desires in order, and when in that rare moment it seems like we may have actually done it, we suddenly turn around to discover that our lifeboat is one fragile vessel, and it's taking on water.

(3) There's a third level to the Question & Answer of today's story and it takes us down to the deepest place of all.

Like John's disciples we look at Jesus and wonder if he is the one who'll be able to address what truly is our most fundamental need—the hope we carry in the secret corners of our hearts: to know beyond doubt that we are accepted and loved unconditionally.
Can you give us that, Jesus?

COME AND SEE, he says, COME AND SEE. And with that invitation a whole other world opens up.
- A world in which being in relationship with Jesus means more than personal well-being—it means being called beyond the satisfaction even of our most personal desire.
- being called to a place where our lives have purpose and meaning beyond self-preservation…
- To a place of knowing that, in spite of the uncertainty and chaos that grips our world and moves in and out of our own lives, God is present in our world, shaping it toward his own grace-filled future.

You see, in the end, it's really not about what we're asking him to do for us, (that's the naval-gazing path); it's about what he's going to call us to be and do together.
That's why Jesus says…COME AND SEE.

> NOW THUS SAYS THE LORD, WHO FORMED ME IN THE WOMB TO BE HIS SERVANT:
> IT IS TOO LIGHT A THING THAT YOU SHOULD BE MY SERVANT TO RAISE UP ONE PEOPLE;
> I WILL GIVE YOU AS A LIGHT TO ALL NATIONS.

In the reading from Isaiah, the prophet has come to the conclusion that his life has been wasted, that his strength has been all played out and that all he's given, all he's invested has amounted to nothing.

How does God answer the complaint? With new marching orders:

> YOU THOUGHT YOU COULDN'T HANDLE MY FIRST CALL—WELL GUESS WHAT!
> I'VE GOT EVEN BIGGER PLANS FOR YOU! YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD, YOU ARE THE CITY ON THE HILL, NO ONE LIGHTS THE LAMP AND PUTS IT UNDER A BASKET, IT'S THERE SO EVERYONE CAN SEE, SO LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE!

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At the third level, you see, the question, <u>what are you looking for</u>, becomes an invitation to exchange the ME for the WE of community.

The holy meal we share here each week is Jesus' way of inviting us again and again unto that journey. This is where God makes us into a community, where having taken in the body of Christ we become the body of Christ for the world.

Sisters and brothers, I don't know what you're looking for. But I know what Christ is looking for. He's looking for you, he's looking for me, he's looking for people ready to be fashioned into a community of light for the world.

AMEN.