
Is 49:1-7; Ps 40:1-12; 1 Cor 1:1-9; Jn 1:29-42

Unto God be the glory,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

The first words of Jesus
in St John's Gospel
are a question:
What are you looking for?
(Jn 1.38)

For the 2nd time
in two days,
John the Baptist
has directed the attention
of his disciples
to Jesus, with the words:
Behold, the Lamb of God.
(Jn 1.36)

The previous day,
he'd described the
extraordinary phenomenon
that accompanied
Jesus' baptism:
I saw the Spirit
descending from heaven like a dove,
and it remained on him;
(Jn 1.32)
and had concluded
that Jesus ranked
ahead of him,
as the goal towards which
his own ministry
was directed: –
(in his own words)
I came baptising with water
in order that he might be
revealed to Israel.
(Jn 1.31)

Now, on this 2nd day,
there's no further
clarification, or explanation; –
just the announcement:
Behold, the Lamb of God.

Do those listening to him
know to what he refers?

The phrase occurs
nowhere else in Scripture.

So, perhaps not.

That being said,
the Baptist's first use
of the phrase
is coupled with the words:
*...who takes away
the sin of the world.*
(Jn 1.29)

Words that relate
his announcement
to the divinely ordained
temple sacrifice of lambs
for the people's forgiveness.

Given time –
the Baptist's words
will take root in
his listeners,
as Jesus makes himself
known to them.

May they also
take root in us –
that you,
that I,
may know Jesus to be –
*...the Lamb of God
who takes away
the sin of the world –*
and, as such,
your sin
my sin.

Back to our text.

Two of John's disciples
hear his words again,
but this time –
as a direction,
even, a command:

(Jn 1.37)

✱

Their following him,
evokes Jesus' question:
What are you looking for?

The two of them
aren't sure.

Their former master
 has aroused
 their curiosity...,
 but how are they
 to respond?

So, they answer
with a question
of their own:
Rabbi, ... where are you staying?

It's a striking question –
suggesting their desire
to accompany him –
 be with him –
as they've hitherto
 been with the Baptist.

(Jn 1.39)

*

An invitation?

Or is it a command?

Whichever it is,
St John tells us,

*They came and saw
where he was staying,
and they remained
with him that day.*
(Jn 1.39)

A word about my query
as to whether Jesus
- offered an invitation
- or issued a command.

It's a question
we do well to ask
of many of Jesus' sayings.

I suggest that –
more often than not –
Jesus' words are,
at once –
invitation,
and command.

Why?

Because, he is –
always, and ever –
- our companion,
- and our Lord.

As our companion
he invites us
to accompany him
as his friend.

As our Lord,
he commands,
he exhorts, us
to follow in his steps,
to serve him,
in willing imitation,
and joyful obedience.

Our gracious Lord
is our faithful companion.

Our faithful companion
is our gracious Lord.

Back to our text.

Only now do we learn
the identity of one
of these two disciples.

The other's name
we never learn.

Verse 40:
*One of the two
who heard John speak
and followed Jesus
was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.*

Andrew finds his brother
and brings him to Jesus.

Why?

As he explains to Peter –
We have found the Messiah.
(Jn 1.41)

Already,
Andrew is convinced
of Jesus' extraordinary
identity,
and must bring
his brother
to meet him.

*

What about you?

What about me?

Are we convinced
of the incomparable worth
of our Lord –
the one, in whose name,
we are here, together,
this morning?

If not..., of course,
we'll have no incentive
to bring a family member,
friend, or acquaintance,
to get to know
and worship him.

But..., if we are...,
 how can we not
 find ourselves
 compelled to bring others
that they too
 may embrace with joy
 the one who is their
 saviour, lord, and friend?

Again, back to our text.

Andrew's brother,
 having come into
 Jesus' presence,
 is startlingly
 addressed by him.

Verse 42:
*...Jesus ... looked at him and said,
 "You are Simon son of John.
You are to be called Cephas"
 (which is translated Peter).*

Can you imagine
 how startled Peter
 must have been?

We're not told
 that Andrew
 introduced him to Jesus.

But Jesus knows him,
 and who his father is,
and – without having spent
 more than a few
 moments with him –
gives him a new name –
 a name which he, and we,
 shall later learn
 is freighted with
 significance.

*

So it is with all of us.

From the moment
 we begin to attend to Jesus,
 our identity –

our-selves as we
know ourselves –
will, whether we
like it or not,
begin to be transformed
by God the Holy Spirit.

At the heart
of our transformation
will be a gradual shift
of our attention –
away from self,
and onto Jesus –
- in trust,
- in ground for hope,
- in love –
love for our Lord,
and love for all
with whom we
have to do.

Let me draw to a close.

It's surely no accident,
that the 1st words of Jesus
St John records in his Gospel
are his question –
What are you looking for?
in Greek, just two words,
ti÷ zhteivte?
literally, *Whom seek?*

They're addressed
originally
to the two
who are following him,
they're also addressed
to every reader
of the Gospel –
to you and me, this morning.

What –
or, as the Greek
can also be translated –
Who –
are you looking for?

Or..., have you,
have I,
grown so cynical,

so hardened,
so world-weary,
that we've given up
looking for anyone
or anything?

I pray not.

I pray that we,
with these first disciples,
find our curiosity awakened
by John the Baptist.

So awakened
as to heed
our Lord's invitation:
Come and see.

*

How do we
come, and see?

Permit me –
I trust not unfittingly –
to expand our Lord's
invitation
as if he's speaking to us.

'Hold on to my question –
Whom do you seek? –
and look for me
to answer it.

'Let me, in the Gospels –
indeed, in all the Scriptures –
day by day, unfold to you
the fullness of who I am.

'In so doing,
let me show you
that I am, indeed,
the one whom –
above all others –
you seek.

'I am, to paraphrase
my servant, St Augustine –
"the rest which your
restless hearts long for";

or..., to paraphrase
another of my servants,
C. S. Lewis –

“I am, and will prove
to you to be,
the consolation
of your soul’s
inconsolable longing” ’.

*

Enough!

I give the last word
to John the Baptist:
*Among you stands one
whom you do not know,
the one who is coming after me;
I am not worthy to untie
the thong of his sandal....
Behold, the Lamb of God
who takes away
the sin of the world!*

(Jn 1.27, 29)

Amen.