

Opening Words

Have you gone after Jesus? Have you sought him out? And if you have, and if Jesus asks you, “What do you seek? What do you want from me?” what will you say?

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There were so many wonderful things that John had been telling others about Jesus. He had said he is the Lamb of God. He had said that he saw the Spirit of God come upon him like a dove. He had said that he was the one who would give the Spirit to God’s people, and he had said that Jesus was God’s chosen one, the King, the Son of God, the one who would carry out God’s plan in the world.

We don’t know the reaction of all the people to John’s amazing words, but we know the reaction of two of the them. Andrew, the brother of Simon, and John, the son of Zebedee, were nearby when the prophet said, “Look, there he is, behold, the Lamb of God!” And this time, the two went after Jesus. We read about this in John 1:35 ff, and I hope you will follow in your Bible as I teach you today. So let’s see what happened.

In verse 38, we discover that when they caught up with Jesus, he turned and said, “What is it you are looking for?” And the two men replied, “Teacher, where are you staying?” Their question seems rather bland and unexciting on the surface. But when we probe more deeply into the culture, we will learn many new things.

First, Jesus knows that he must gather disciples, but he must be careful in his selection. It was customary and a right for teachers to include or exclude people from his following. He would only want those who wanted to pursue and advance his agenda. And so, Jesus asks, “What is it you are looking for?” Jesus knows that John has been talking to them about him, but he wants to hear from their mouths what it is that truly want.

Their answer was indirect. Notice that they did not say, “We want to be your disciples.” Instead, they asked, “Rabbi, or Teacher, where are you living?” Why did they ask this? It would not be appropriate for them to invite themselves to his house which would imply that they wanted to be his disciples because disciples often lived with their teacher. He must invite them. Yet, they drop a hint that they want to be his disciples because they called him, “rabbi,” which meant “My master,” and implied that they wanted Jesus to be their teacher.

Graciously, Jesus did invite them. “Come and see.” And my friends as we read or hear these words, we must see them as an invitation not just to John and Andrew, but also as an invitation to us.

I want to ask you, “Have you gone after Jesus? Have you searched for him? Have others pointed you to Jesus and have you pursued getting to know him better, perhaps by reading his word, or joining a small group bible study, or listening to my words today. You must go after him, and when you do,

you must do some soul-searching and be ready with a good answer because if he asks, “What do you seek? What do you want?” what will you answer? And so, I ask you today, “What do you want from following Jesus?” Are you just curious? Do you want to see something spectacular? Do you just want to have a philosophical discussion? What do you want from following Jesus?

It is my prayer that you will have a good heart in following him, and if you do, he will invite you to “come and see.”

It must have been a life-changing experience for Andrew and John. What did they talk about? Well, we can only guess, but we can have some good guesses. I think they talked about Israel, about the future of their people, about the prophet John and his ministry, about the things John said about Jesus, and about the coming kingdom. If you would like to hear more about this, I would invite you to listen to our dramatic portrayal of these events in our program *Stories of the Master*. You can go to our website, **Stories of the Master.com**. Click on **Stories of His Life and Mission**, and then under **Season One** click on **First Encounters with Jesus**, and you will hear this dramatic, imaginative, and biblically faithful presentation of this conversation between Jesus and his first disciples.

But for our purposes today, the important thing we must know is that Andrew and John spend the evening and the night with Jesus, and they are so excited that Andrew immediately searches for his brother Simon so that he can meet Jesus. When Andrew finds his brother Simon, we find in verse 41 that he says, “We have found the Messiah!” Andrew must have told Simon all the things he had learned from John the Baptist. He must have told Simon about the evening that he and John, son of Zebedee spent with Jesus and all they talked about. That’s another conversation you can hear dramatically portrayed in our program *Stories of the Master*, same episode, and I hope you will listen as it makes this story come to life.

But for our purpose today, all we need to know is that whatever Andrew told Simon, it was enough to at least spark his curiosity, and so Simon went with Andrew his brother to the place where Jesus was staying. They walked in the door, Jesus looked at Simon and said something which we read in verse 42 that would change his life forever, “Shalom, Simon, brother of Andrew and son of your father, Jonah. Simon, I am giving you a new name. From this day forward your name will be Peter, Rock!”

In ancient times, a person’s name reflected his character or a significant event in his life. The Bible has many episodes where God changes the name of a person such as Abram to Abraham or Jacob to Israel. It was always a sign of ownership and a change of life direction. When Jesus changed Simon’s name to Peter – to “Rock” – he was giving him a vision for what kind of person he would become – a man of steadfast, rock-like character who would be a pillar of strength for others.

Shortly after this, the four of them reach Galilee, the northernmost part of Israel, bounded on the east by the Jordan River, the north by Lake Hula, and the west by the region of Cabul close to the Phoenician city of Tyre. During the time of Jesus it was relatively prosperous. It was a place of

fertile soil, abundant rain, and a mild climate that made the growing of crops easy. And of course, the famous Sea of Galilee with its fishing industry was there.

Although Greek was spoken in Galilee, most of the people were Jewish, and they were devout. Many synagogues served the thousands of Jews who held fast to the Law of Moses. Galilee was a hotbed for Jewish nationalism and revolutionary zeal against Rome. It was also the place where Jesus was raised in the village of Nazareth.

As the men came into one of the villages of Galilee, Jesus spotted a man and said, “He is the one. I want that one also.”

“You mean Philip? We know him.”

“Yes, go call him and tell him to come.”

And so they went to Philip, much like Andrew went to Simon and told him about Jesus. Philip looked in Jesus’ direction and he heard him say, “Philip, I want you to follow me. I have a great task ahead, and I want you to be part of it.” And that day, Philip followed Jesus and listened and was convinced that Jesus was the promised one. It didn’t take Philip long to want to share this exciting news with others. So, away Philip ran to find his friend, Nathanael, who some believe was also the disciple known as Bartholomew.

Can we imagine this conversation? It is based upon John 1:45 to the end of the chapter. It must have sounded something like this. “Nathanael, the most wonderful thing has happened. You know that Andrew and John went to hear the prophet in the wilderness. They have returned. Simon is with them, and – someone else – Nathanael, the Messiah has come. We have found the one Moses and the prophets wrote about. He is Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

“Jesus ... of Nazareth? Did you say Nazareth, that little run-down village west of here? Can any good thing come from that place?”

Nazareth had never been a prominent town in the history of God’s people. Being in Galilee which was considered culturally backwards by the more sophisticated inhabitants of Jerusalem, Nathanael had reason to doubt. Why would the Messiah associate with such a backward place?

Yet, Nathanael came with Philip, and when he walked in the door, Jesus said, “Yes, here truly is an Israelite in whom is no deceit.”

And Nathanael with astonishment said, “Jesus, how do you know me?”

Jesus’s answer would change Nathanael forever. He said, “Nathanael, before Philip found you, when you were sitting under the fig tree, I saw you.” Perhaps Jesus also said, “I also heard everything you

said and good things can come from Nazareth!” All of that was enough for Nathanael, He fell to his knees and said, “Teacher, you are the Son of God. You are the king of Israel!”

Jesus replied, “Nathanael do you believe in Me because I said I saw you when you were sitting under that fig tree? Is that why you believe? You will see greater things than this! A day is coming when you will see heaven open and you will see Me enthroned, surrounded by angels who come up to the throne of God and who leave the throne of God to carry out their assignments. You will see who I really am, the heavenly one who is Lord of all.”

And there you have it. These were the first meetings that Jesus had with these five men – Andrew, John, Peter, Philip, and Nathanael. These times changed their lives. Their life and their destiny would never be the same, and as we end today’s lesson, I have a question for you, “Have you met Jesus, and has that meeting with him changed you?”