

**Epiphany 2 – Year A**  
**20 January 2008**  
**St. Anne’s Episcopal Church**  
**Lee’s Summit, Missouri**

**John 1:29-42**

*Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful people and kindle in them the fire of your love. AMEN.*

My most favorite game show on TV is “Jeopardy.” You can have all the new, flashy game shows with the bright lights, screaming contestants, and gorgeous women on them. No, I’ll take good, old-fashioned, not flashy at all, been around forever “Jeopardy.”

So, I thought we’d start out the sermon this morning by playing a little “Jeopardy.” How does that sound?

Okay, here’s the Jeopardy answer,

“The first words spoken by Jesus in the Gospel of John.”

Can anyone give me the correct Jeopardy question?

What is, “What are you looking for?”? That’s right.

Now, we all had a little help in providing the correct question this morning, because we just heard those words in the Gospel reading from John. But, I have to admit that if before I began working on this sermon I’d been a contestant on “Jeopardy” and gotten the answer “The first words spoken by Jesus in the Gospel of John,” I would have been standing there with my hand limp on the buzzer because I wouldn’t have known the right question to give.

### **What are you looking for?**

It does seem curious, doesn't it, for those words to be the first thing that the writer of John has come out of Jesus' mouth in this gospel story, this story of the "Good News."

The Gospel of John began with the familiar Prologue that we read three Sundays ago.

**In the Beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...The Word became flesh and lived among us.**

And now, this one who was God's first Word, this one who was the Word made flesh, the one who revealed God incarnate in human flesh speaks his first words in John's Gospel. And, frankly, they're not the words I would have expected, and they are perhaps not the words you would have expected.

### **What are you looking for?**

Now, I don't know about you, but I hear this question quite a lot. As I wander through the house from room to room, Jerry asks me, "What are you looking for?" And, I easily answer, "my keys." Or, "that paper that I just laid down somewhere."

Or, I walk into a store and the sales clerk says, "What are you looking for?"

And, I answer quickly, "I'm looking for something, preferably on sale, in my size, that I can wear to the Bishop's Ball."

“What are you looking for?” It’s a question that we can handle pretty easily most of the time in our daily lives.

In our reading today, two of John the Baptist’s disciples were following Jesus, literally walking behind him. Intrigued, no doubt, by the words of John the Baptist, when Jesus had walked by.

**Look, here is the Lamb of God.**

Now, Jesus may have simply been saying to these two people who were walking behind him, “What are you looking for?” That is, why are you two following me around?

But, on the lips of Jesus, as his first words in the Gospel of John, I believe that this question is something more. Something deeper than its superficial, day-to-day meaning.

It’s important to remember here that the Gospels are not actual biographies of Jesus and that the words of Jesus they relate, like this question we have from the Gospel of John, are not always meant to be actual verbatim reports of what Jesus said.

With this question – What are you looking for? - I believe the author of John was giving us a clue about what will come in the rest of the Gospel, about what this writer thought the Good News of Jesus was all about.

You see the Gospel of John is full of people who were seeking, looking for something in Jesus. In John, like in none of the other three gospels, we find seekers who come to Jesus and converse with him about life and death, rebirth and revelation.

The Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. This one who came to Jesus seeking to learn from him under the cloak of night, perhaps so others would not see him. This one who discussed with Jesus the new birth of the spirit.

A Samaritan woman drawing water at Jacob's Well in the brightness of mid-day. This one set apart from Jesus, this Jewish man, by both her gender and her religion. This one who talked with Jesus about living water and was the first to whom Jesus revealed that he was indeed the Messiah.

A group of Greeks who came to Philip saying simply, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus."

These were all people seeking answers to life's deepest questions. Just like all of us, who are in some way seeking answers to life's deepest questions.

One writer suggested that when John told us that Jesus asked these two disciples, "What are you looking for?" that Jesus was asking these two and all the other readers of the Gospel – including us –

What is your target?

What is your goal in life?

What is it that you seek to have and to be?

With all your striving and working and spending and living, what are you aiming at, and what do you hope to grasp and get and gain?

Now, curiously, the disciples of John the Baptist, answer Jesus' question with another question.

**Rabbi, teacher, where are you staying?**

Think about it, a conversation that goes like this –

What are you looking for?

Teacher, where are you staying?

At first glance, this just doesn't seem like an appropriate answer to Jesus' initial question. We might even wonder if this seemingly inappropriate or trivial response is made because these disciples of John the Baptist are so confused by Jesus' unusual question.

But, if we read further into John's Gospel, I think it can help us understand their reply more clearly and see that it bears more meaning than may appear on the surface.

The word that these disciples use for where are you staying can also be translated, where are you abiding or dwelling. This word (the Greek *meno*) is used more in John and the other Johannine literature (that is, the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Letters of John) than in all the rest of the New Testament put together.

**Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me.**

**Abide in me as I abide in you.**

Now, we can see that Jesus' question and the disciples' response take on greater significance.

One commentator on the Fourth Gospel wrote this about the exchange between Jesus' and John the Baptist's disciples.

“It (that is, what are you looking for? – it) is clearly the first question which must be addressed to anyone who comes to Jesus, the first thing that must be clear. And, it is essential to know where Jesus ‘lives’; for in the place where Jesus is at home the disciples will also receive their dwelling.”

The Gospel of John is all about seeking something in Jesus and dwelling in him. That’s the Good News it shares.

And, how does Jesus respond to the disciples question about where he stays, or abides?

**Come and see.**

He didn’t tell them the physical address of where he is staying or the name of the local Palestinian inn where he had checked in earlier in the day. He didn’t give them a direct answer. In fact, he didn’t really answer their question at all.

No, instead, he only invited them to join him on the journey. To have faith to come join the journey with him first and then to see. Even though they, like us, would probably have preferred to see who Jesus was and what he had to offer first and then to decide whether they would come and join him.

Today, I think Jesus asks those of us here -What are you looking for? What are your hopes and your dreams? Do you seek peace, love, happiness, meaning in your life, fulfillment? Is it joy, forgiveness, justice that you most long for? Within yourself, at home, at work, in the world, what are you looking for?

Jesus, where are you staying? Where do you abide? Can we find these things we are seeking if we abide in you?

And, Jesus says to us – Come and see. Step out in faith, even though you don't know where it will lead you. Journey with me. Come and see.

AMEN.