

---

## Come and See

John 1:29-42

---

"I have climbed highest mountains  
I have run through the fields  
Only to be with you  
I have run  
I have crawled  
I have scaled these city walls  
Only to be with you  
But I still haven't found what I'm looking for."

The gospel according to Bono, of the band U2.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus, the rockstar from Nazareth, had burst on the scene—no longer the baby in a manger, but an adult about to begin his ministry of *The Way*—and John the Baptist announces his arrival: "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

John had been preparing the way for this moment—"Oh, you like what I've been doing, just wait until you see this guy . . . I've just used water to baptize—which can get a person only so clean; Jesus baptizes with the Spirit of God, which changes the whole person from the inside-out." John testifies that he saw God's Spirit descend on Jesus and remain on him at his baptism. Before we get out of chapter 1, John is already announcing his arrival again: This time, he's with two of his own disciples: "Look, here is the Lamb of God!" Jesus then utters his first words in John's gospel. A question. This would become typical of Jesus, questions.

Oh, how we often want the Jesus who proclaims . . . we want long-haired, blue-eyed Jesus that rides into town offering strong statements, ones we can build our opinions around, ones we can bludgeon others with, ones that translate to

quick social media posts. The two disciples called him, “Rabbi”, and true to Jewish rabbinic tradition, this initial back-and-forth encounter between teacher and pupil starts out with only questions. “What are you looking for?”, Jesus asks. A better translation is, “What are you seeking?” This was an invitation to deeper examination; to actively examine the heart, the motives, the intentions.

And these two disciples of John leave the question unanswered and pose one of their own in return: “Where are you staying?” This is likely another poor translation of the text. We might read in this that the disciples are wanting to know where Jesus is laying his head these days—“What hotel are you staying at, Jesus?” Yet, the Greek verb used here μένω (menō), which means “to remain,” “to abide,” or “to dwell”, is the same verb John uses later in chapter 15 when Jesus at the Last Supper, says: “Abide in me as I abide in you”. It’s the same verb used earlier in the chapter when the spirit of God came to rest, or dwell, on Jesus at his baptism.

So their question carries more weight and significance than merely wanting to know location. It’s as if they are asking: “Jesus, where are you abiding? Where can we come and be present with you? Where can we go to dwell with you?”

I don’t think there’s a direct connection, but in my mind, when I think of Jesus’s question: “What are you looking for?”, I hear Bono’s rocking response: “I still haven’t found what I’m looking for”. By the time that song hit #1 on the charts in the late 80’s, I was already a music fanatic. It wasn’t too long after that I taught myself how to play the guitar, so you bet I had quickly learned The Edge’s iconic electric guitar opening. In those days, I loved U2! Still do! There was just one problem back then. I grew up in a conservative, evangelical house in which only Christian music was allowed. U2 was arguably not a Christian band.

Though, I can remember jamming out, singing in full voice: “I still haven’t found what I’m looking for”, wishing that they would just *find* it! How I wanted them to change that repeated refrain into a proclamation of belief. After all, I had it all figured out, why couldn’t they! I wanted Bono to say that he found Jesus so I could buy all their albums and blast their music in the house, even in my church. U2 was never considered a Christian band, but in this song, they came the closest. Especially in that final verse:

I believe in the kingdom come  
Then all the colors will bleed into one

But yes I'm still running  
You broke the bonds  
And you loosed the chains  
Carried the cross of my shame  
You know I believe it . . .

Yes, Bono, *I* know you do! Yet, every one of those statements of searching and even discovery through those epic verses is qualified: "But I still haven't found what I'm looking for . . ." As the track fades to nothing, the song ends but the search seemed to continue.

As I grew much older and went through years of deconstructing my faith, I came to appreciate those lyrics more and more. I came to understand that Jesus wasn't calling us to certainty, to systematic theologies, to having it all nailed down, but to a journey, to following a *way*. Jesus wanted to know that we wouldn't just "figure it all out" and stop looking.

What are you looking for? The question is an invitation *back* to the search, not an urgency to end it. It's a question meant to destabilize those who "have it all figured out." The question is better put: "Why have you stopped looking?"

But Jesus, "Where are you staying?" If we search for you, where will we find you?" His response, invites all of us, endlessly: "Come and see." He doesn't say, "Come and understand everything." He says, "Come and see." The word translated see here comes from the Greek word **horao**, which can be translated as perceive, recognize, experience.

Another prophet from another time, the Harlem writer, James Baldwin, said, "If I love you, I have to make you conscious of the things you don't see." This could have been words right out of Jesus's mouth. And a word for us in 2026: "Because I love you, I want to make you conscious of the things you don't see." To "come and see," then, is really an invitation to abide. To remain. To dwell.

The disciples do not fully understand who Jesus is when they first follow him. Their vision is partial at best. They are curious, hopeful, and often confused. But what matters most in these early stories is not how much they understand—it is that they stay. And it is in their staying, in their abiding with Jesus, that their seeing deepens. Understanding grows not through certainty, but through presence. Not through mastery of the content, but through relationship.

In John's Gospel, transformation does not come from seeing clearly right away. It comes from abiding long enough for love, truth, and life to be revealed and take hold in one's life.

On this weekend when we celebrate the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., we remember a man who held out a similar invitation for all of us to see again, and endlessly over and over, until seeing allows truth to take root in our lives and transform our way of being in the world.

Oh, we thought we understood human kindness, human decency and dignity. We thought we knew how to best order society for flourishing. What community should look like. Dr. King said, dream again. Dream of a world where justice rolls down like waters. Dream of a *beloved* community. Dream of love taking on flesh and dwelling amidst all people, especially a people who were oppressed. Come and see. See again. See endlessly . . .

As we, people of the Presbyterian Church in Leonia go about organizing and reorganizing our ministry here and among this community, we have to hear Jesus's invitation again. To ensure we are building something not merely of our own doing, but aligning the heartbeat of this ministry with the heartbeat of God, we have to continue the search. The moment we feel like we have figured it all out, we miss the Christ who is always on the move.

Maybe you're here this morning, a long-time church member, a professional church-goer, here every time the doors are open, chairing 4 committees and leading a Bible study. You have the liturgy almost memorized—when to stand, when to sit, when to pray.. Church life is about the only life you've known. Could Christ be inviting you to be more than just a good church member? What are you searching for?

Or maybe your story is different: You're used to worshiping from the fringes, a bit unsure about engaging to a certain level. It feels like a commitment you are not ready to make. It feels safe to keep your distance. Christ may be calling you to deeper engagement with the beloved community. To risk being in closer relationships with others who might come to know you and share life with you. To invest in your community by offering your energy, your resources, your abilities, your availability.

To come to Christ and see will look different for each of us and at every different stage of life. But that calling comes just as urgent as it did at the first.

The Celtic tradition talks about the Holy Spirit, not as a domesticated bird but a Wild Goose. One can be tamed into predictability. The other is loud, disruptive, and unpredictable, unable to be tamed and domesticated. Can we follow *that* Spirit, opening ourselves to find Christ in new ways, in new places, in new people. My friends, this is the radical way of Jesus. Come and see.