

**Readings:** Isaiah 49:1-7; Psalm 40:1-11; 1 Corinthians 1:1-9; John 1:29-42

From John's Gospel, we hear the first public words of Jesus, a question: *What are you looking for?* Grace to you and peace from Jesus the Christ; whose next words in John's Gospel are: *Come and see.* Amen.

*Christ has no body now on earth but yours,  
no hands but yours,  
no feet but yours,  
Yours are the eyes through which to look out  
Christ's compassion to the world;  
Yours are the feet with which [Christ] is to go about doing good;  
Yours are the hands with which [Christ] is to bless [people] now.<sup>1</sup>*

This poem attributed to Teresa of Avila came to my eyes this week; and the first time I read it, I thought to myself: "That sounds like a lot of work, sounds like a lot of (I don't know) effort, responsibility this *being Christ's hands and feet, eyes and body to the world.* I don't know if I'm up for that."

That was my first thought, then John's Gospel hit me... OK, actually, it didn't hit me, at first. It's a pretty boring little bit of conversation, isn't it?

I wouldn't mind some fireworks. Some mystery. Some scandal or excitement to kick-off the very first time we hear and see this Jesus in John's Gospel. I wouldn't mind something to keep me engaged (sure, maybe entertained), but something to keep me reading and following the story for 20 more chapters (if not something to keep me following this Jesus for a lifetime).

But instead, we get this – this simple, boring conversation. It is boring, isn't it? Sure, it starts off *kind of* exciting. "Look, here's the Lamb of God!" says John the Baptizer to two disciples. There is an exclamation point after Lamb of God. I guess that's something. But that's about it.

Because then, the two disciples hear it and they just turn and *follow Jesus* like a couple of lost puppies looking for a new owner. And trust me, it only gets more boring.

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Rodger Y. Nishioka on page 260 of *Feasting on the Word* (Year A, Volume 1), Westminster John Knox Press, 2010.

Jesus turns, sees them following, and says, “Hey, what ya lookin’ for?”

The disciples say, “Teacher, where ya stayin’?”

Jesus says, “Come and see.”

And the narrator says, “They came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day. [And] It was about four o’clock in the afternoon.”

[Yawn.] *Boring!* Isn’t it?

Isn’t there something more to following Jesus? Isn’t there something more to being introduced to the Messiah, the Lamb of God (with an exclamation point, for God’s sake)! Is this really all there is to faith and life, to God and Jesus the Christ?!

I’d like to tell you there’s more to it. I’d like to pull out the fireworks. And I’ll be honest, sometimes I mistakenly think that’s my job as a pastor, as a preacher. To manufacture a Messiah who’s just a little more interesting, just a little more exciting, just a little more entertaining, (at the very least) just a little “more.”

But more often than not, that’s my little attempt at trying to do the work of the Messiah. I suppose I look around the world and wonder if God isn’t up to doing the work that God’s supposed to be doing; although someone once taught me that more often than not criticizing someone else, has as much to do with a lack of reconciling one’s own weaknesses.

And that’s how I got Teresa of Avila’s poem all backwards. I thought it was about me. When really it’s about Jesus – the Messiah – the Christ:

*Christ has no body now on earth but yours,*

*no hands but yours,*

*no feet but yours,*

*Yours are the eyes through which to look out*

*Christ’s compassion to the world;*

*Yours are the feet with which [Christ] is to go about doing good;*

*Yours are the hands with which [Christ] is to bless [people] now.*

Conversations can be so deceptively simple, can’t they?

When I was in junior high, my confirmation teacher (Pastor Sam was his name) would drive me home from confirmation. It was about a ten-minute drive. Pretty boring. But one week, Pastor Sam says to me, “You ever think about being a pastor when you grow up?” I shrug my shoulders, roll my eyes a bit like every good junior high student has been trained to do.

And that was it... and it’s a conversation I’ve never forgotten.

Then again, being a pastor isn’t a very good metaphor for a life of following Jesus. That’s another mistake I often am tempted to make as a pastor, as a preacher. But don’t think for one minute that following Jesus means wearing a robe like this. My job isn’t to say, “Look what I do, follow what I do...” My job is to say, “Look, *behold... here is the Lamb of God (with an exclamation point, for God’s sake)!*”

“Look, *behold* [point at the font]... *here is the Lamb of God. Revealed in water and word. Come and see.*”

“Look, *behold* [point at the table]... *here is the Lamb of God. Revealed in bread and wine. Come and see.*”

“Look, *behold* [point at the cross]... *here is the Lamb of God. Revealed in suffering and weakness. Come and see.*”

Following Jesus, it’s so much more and it’s so much less; it’s such simple stuff – so boring and so exciting. But it’s all there in that simple conversation.

“Hey, what ya lookin’ for?”... “Teacher, where ya stayin’?”... “Come and see?”... “They came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day. [And] It was about four o’clock in the afternoon.”

What has been the simple, the foundational conversation for you? Not just the ones where you were called into a certain vocation, but the one where God’s love in Christ Jesus was made known to you.

*What are you looking for? ... Teacher, where are you staying? ... Come and see ... And they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day. [And] It was about four o’clock in the afternoon.*

It’s not quite like a Sherlock-Holmes-kind-of-mystery-story, but there are little clues, little pointers. The words (simple as they are) betray the story. *They stayed with him that day. [And] It was about four o’clock in the afternoon.*

Time is always important in John's Gospel. So what does it matter if it's four o'clock? Well, imagine you're camping. It's four o'clock... it's about two hours before sunset. What's on your mind? What's your first priority? What are you looking for? ...*where are you going to stay?* Literally, where are you going to set up your tent? Time's almost out. If you don't find somewhere soon, well... night's just an hour or two away. Sun's almost down. If you don't find shelter soon, and food...

*What are you looking for?* Two unknowing disciples don't really know what they're looking for, they just have questions; but Jesus offers them a place. A place to ask them...

*Teacher, where are you staying?* Their question – their words betray them. The disciples think they're looking for a place to stay for the night, but you know as well as I; stay in one place long enough and you get bored. But brothers and sisters, you also know or you wouldn't be here this morning, that following Jesus, now that's a place you can "stay..."

So, "*Come and see,*" Jesus says. And there it is – a relationship with Jesus the Christ is not an answer to a problem, it is an invitation to a mystery. It's an invitation you simply can't turn down, because you can bring your questions, your doubts, your anger, your joy, your love, your hatred, your weakness, your strength, your boredom, your excitement. All of it. You can come with your whole self and you can see what kind of rest there is in God. What kind of forgiveness [font], what kind of nourishment [table], what kind of healing [cross] there is.

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no hands but yours,  
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*Yours are the eyes through which to look out*

*Christ's compassion to the world;*

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It is not a command with consequences – *Be the hands and feet of Christ! Be the eyes and body of Jesus to the world! ...or else!*

It is the promise. It is the invitation. *Come and see.* "...and your body will be my body," Jesus says. "...your eyes will be the eyes of my compassion; ... your feet will be my feet going about doing good; ... your hands will be my hands with which to bless people." *I will work through you and it might seem simple, even boring at times; and it might be thrilling at times, but come and see,*" Jesus says.