

**Sermon Series: 4 Words Every Christian Should Know**

**Sermon: Truth**

**Date: Sunday February 19, 2017**

**Scripture: Philippians 4:8**

**MONDAY February 20, 2017 John 1:35 39 “What are you looking for?”**

Two of John’s followers (we learn that one of them was Andrew) were so intrigued when they heard John describe Jesus as “the Lamb of God” that they followed Jesus on the spot. When Jesus noticed them, he asked a simple question that shaped his ministry, and reshaped the two men’s lives: “What are you looking for?” The two men couldn’t say for sure - they simply asked where he was staying. Jesus compellingly invited them to “come and see.”

• Re-­imagine this scene. What if instead of his question, Jesus had greeted the two men by saying, “Please take one of these tracts. Have a seat, and I’ll explain the plan of salvation to you in detail, using these diagrams.” What made Jesus' simple question more effective in starting what became a life-­long relationship? What wisdom might his example give us as we seek to relate to people around us?

**Prayer**: Lord Jesus, you ask me what I am looking for in life. Help me to take the question seriously, and to shape my life by ultimately looking for the true life that you offer me. Amen.

**TUESDAY February 21, 2017 John 6:61-­69** **“Do you also want to leave?”**

The gospel of John focused on the meaning of events in Jesus' life, not just on the outward facts. Instead of just reporting Jesus' use of bread and wine at the Last Supper, John wrote about a time when Jesus used graphic imagery to express the Supper’s meaning. Many people left Jesus because of that strong imagery (John 6:48-­55). It must have been painful, and Jesus asked the Twelve if they intended to leave too. Peter expressed faith—but in slightly shaken (“Where would we go?”) terms.

• How can having some bread and grape juice be called a “means of grace,” a way of taking in God’s love and life, and not just a tiny snack in church? In what ways do the physical acts of eating and drinking, which Jesus used as symbols, help you to fill your inner self with Jesus' forgiving, strengthening grace and love?

• Earlier in John 6, Jesus invited his listeners to consider what kind of "food" they valued most: "Don't work for the food that doesn't last but for the food that endures for eternal life" (verse 27). When he asked the Twelve, “Do you also want to leave?” he was inviting them to carefully ponder the spiritual consequences of their choice. How clear is your sense of the two kinds of food Jesus spoke of? In what sense(s) do you trust Jesus to be “the bread of life,” the ultimate source of consistent spiritual nourishment for your life?

**Prayer**: Dear Jesus, please nurture and nourish all that is best in me. And when I start to stray, ask me through your Spirit whether I really want to leave your side. Amen.

**WEDNESDAY February 22, 2017 Matthew 19:16-­22** **“Teacher, what good thing must I do to have eternal life?”**

Sometimes Jesus asked people important questions. At other times, people came to him with important questions. That was the case with the young man’s serious question in today’s reading. His question about how to find eternal life seemed to come from a genuine desire to follow Jesus. But when Jesus made it plain to the young man that his heart was not free because of the way he idolized wealth, the young man sadly turned away.

• All kinds of life-­shaping questions stand behind the surface question in this story. Jeremiah 31:33 said, “I will put my instructions within them and engrave them on their hearts.” The young man said, perhaps proudly, that God’s instructions were in his mind, but his sad decision showed that they hadn’t quite reached his heart. He refused Jesus’ call to new priorities. One question is, do you obey God out of a sense of duty or family pressure, out of heartfelt love for God and others - or not at all?

• Another crucial question that grows from this story is: Is there any possession or position that is so precious to me that I’d choose it over Jesus? The central issue for Jesus was not the young man’s wealth, but what held the central place in his heart. The gospel of Matthew told us how the young man sadly answered the question. What is your honest answer today?

**Prayer**: Lord Jesus, I’m asking you what I must do to have eternal life. Please show me if there is anything I value more highly than you and your Kingdom - and if there is, help free my heart from that captivity. Amen.

**THURSDAY February 23, 2017 Matthew 25:37-­40, Matthew 19:13-­15 “Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you?”**

Jesus' parable in Matthew 25 held the delightful picture of those invited into the Kingdom asking the King, “When did we see you hungry and feed you?” But one dimension of Jesus' answer often escapes us. When the disciples asked, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” (Matthew 18:1), Jesus called a little child to sit among them as his answer to the question. Our world and culture tends to value children highly, so it is hard for us to sense how little regard most people in Jesus' day had for children.

• Pastor John Ortberg wrote, “In the ancient, status-­ordered world, children were at the bottom of the ladder….Jesus said the kind of thing that would literally never enter the mind of another human being to say: ‘And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.’” When children were brought to Jesus, “the disciples rebuked the parents. Jesus rebuked the disciples.”1 When Jesus spoke of “the least of these,” we often realize that his words applied to the hungry, the sick and the prisoners. How often does it cross your mind that Jesus was probably also thinking of the youngest among us?

• Plutarch, a Greek writer who lived shortly after Jesus' life, wrote that infants were “more like a plant than a human being.” By contrast, the early Christian book The Shepherd of Hermas said, “All babies are glorious before God.” How crucial was Jesus' regard for children in showing how highly God values children? How does PWPC’s ministry to children seek to live out that value? What qualities of children do you believe make them a picture of the spirit God seeks in all of us?

**Prayer**: Jesus, King Herod called himself “the Great,” and slaughtered children in Bethlehem. But you showed us how God values all people, including children. Remind me that it is those who offer innocent trust who are truly great in your sight. Amen.

**FRIDAY February 24, 2017 Matthew 16:13-­18** “**Who do you say that I am?”**

Jesus’ first question was, in one sense, a setup. He knew, as the disciples did, that there were many opinions about him. The disciples’ answer to that question (“Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the other prophets”) tried to shield Jesus a bit. They knew that most of the religious leaders hated Jesus as a threat to their cherished traditions. But his second question to the disciples (a question he asks us, too) was the defining, personal question.

• As Peter and the other disciples heard Jesus ask, “Who do you say that I am?” do you think they fully understood what it meant to believe that Jesus was “the Christ, the Son of the living God”? (Don’t forget: a few weeks later, they all fled, and Peter denied knowing Jesus.) Why would Jesus ask that question before they could fully answer it? How important was it that they sensed how central that question was in their lives?

• Has there ever been a point in your life when you have come face to face with the question, “Who do you say that I am?” If so, how did you answer the question—who do you believe Jesus is? If not, take this moment right now to ponder the question, and to answer it for God and for yourself. Picture Jesus looking you in the eye and asking, “Who do you say that I am?”

**Prayer**: Lord Jesus, sometimes I wish you wouldn’t be so direct. But that’s how life’s most important questions are. Like the father you met in the gospels, I say, “I believe—help my unbelief.” Amen.

**SATURDAY February 25, 2017 John 14:1-­7** **“How can we know the way?”**

Thomas had a gift for honest questions. He wouldn’t pretend to understand if he didn’t understand. Madeleine l’Engle’s A Wind in the Door imagined a setting in which her young heroes asked “Where?” and were told, “Where doesn’t matter.” Similarly, when Thomas asked where Jesus was going, Jesus responded that he was going (along with all his children) “to the Father” - a person, not a place. Our confidence and security does not rest in a map or detailed “where” description, but in the eternal person of Jesus, of God.

• Earlier in John’s gospel, Jesus said those who trust in him have eternal life—present tense (John 3:36, 5:24, 6:47 and 54). We don’t need to wait until our death to begin living the eternal quality of life that Jesus came of offer us. In what ways can you make God’s love and grace the “home” in which you live spiritually every day? How can making Jesus your spiritual “home” fill your life with what the apostle Paul called “the peace of God that exceeds all understanding” (Philippians 4:7)?

**Prayer**: Lord Jesus, thank you for the joy of walking with you each day through the Holy Spirit’s presence with me. Guide me as I make you my home for eternity, starting now. Amen.