

**First Presbyterian Church  
Southampton, New York  
“Why Look for Jesus?”**

**Isaiah 40:21 – 31  
Mark 1:29 – 39**

**February 8, 2015**

Have you ever found yourself looking for something... but, you weren't quite sure what it was that you were looking for? And, I don't mean, like, you started to look for something... and then halfway through the process you forgot what it was that you were trying to find. We've all had that happen to us at one time or another! And the older I get, the more often it happens to me! No, I'm talking about looking for... you know not what; I'm talking about the effort to locate... something, that you can't quite put your finger on.

This happens to me sometimes, late at night, when I'm really tired, and trying to find something to watch on TV. I'll sit on the couch with the remote-control, rifling through 800 stations... without ever finding anything that I really want to watch. I mean, we've got rhesus monkeys in South America; and people trying to make desserts out of kelp and Vienna sausage; and the world series of sumo wrestling; and the latest breaking news about the “real” housewives of Coney Island; and “The Shawshank Redemption” being shown for the twenty-fifth time in the past two weeks. And none of it really appeals to me; so I keep on clicking, and searching, and shaking my head, until I finally give up and go to bed.

Sometimes it happens at the grocery store. I'll be at Waldbaum's, with instructions from Sylvia to bring home something for dinner... and either *everything* looks good to me, or *nothing* looks good; both of which situations result in my standing in the aisle, scratching my head, searching for something that will jump out at me and break up the culinary logjam. And usually I wind up going with my default choice; and reach for the microwave lasagna...

And when we adopted our cat, Vic, from ARF last year... we had no idea what we were looking for. So we just went into one of the “cat rooms,” sat in a chair in the middle of the room, and let our cat find *us*! Vic was the first cat to jump in my lap and start purring... so, he got the gig! And I'm sure you could all add similar stories of looking and searching for something that just wasn't quite clear to you.

Now, I mention this phenomenon of “looking for we know not what,” because I think it also crops up from time to time in our spiritual life... our ongoing life of Christian faith. I think we all go through those times in our life, when something seems to be out of whack... but we can't quite put our finger on exactly what it is that's broken; when we feel like we're missing something, or lacking something in our hearts and souls... but we don't really know what it is that isn't there. So we look, and we hunt, and we search, and we seek... trying to fill the gap, or plug the hole, or feed the hunger that's gnawing at us and making us feel uneasy.

Maybe we're seeking peace... in our hearts, in our families, in the midst of the non-stop stress and pressure of our twenty-first century world. Maybe we're looking for hope... as we deal with the challenges, and the burdens, and the daily uncertainties of life. Maybe we're searching for meaning and purpose... in a world that can leave us feeling so small, and weak, and

insignificant. Maybe we're hunting for guidance, for some kind of signpost to point us in the right direction, as we try to fulfill God's plan and purpose for our life. Maybe we're in quest of forgiveness; and mercy; and grace; and reconciliation, with God or with a friend or family member; a chance to clear the board, clean the slate, start from scratch, and make a better effort than we have before.

All of these various and assorted quests and searches can be going on in our hearts and minds... and it can leave us feeling uncertain, unclear, and undecided as to just what it is we want; just what it is we need; just **how** it is we're supposed to get to wherever it is we're supposed to be. And that's a very unsettling and uncomfortable way to feel.

Of course we know that plenty of people in our world try to find what they're looking for in the things **of** the world; in money, and possessions, and status, and public acclaim. There's a longstanding and deeply engrained myth in our culture which says that, the more stuff you have and the more important you are, the happier and more fulfilled you'll be. Well, we all know that that's a bunch of cockadoodie nonsense. Not that we can't **ever** find joy and happiness in the things of this life... sure we can; just that, we aren't likely to find **true and lasting** peace, and joy, and meaning in all the things of this world. The truth of which conviction is attested to by the tortured lives of so many famous and wealthy celebrities.

But the good news for us, however, is that there's a much better way in which to find that for which we seek as we make our way through life; and this better way is simply, and beautifully, expressed in our lesson today from Mark's gospel.

The first chapter of the Gospel of Mark is a whirlwind rundown of the earliest days of Jesus' ministry. After a quick introduction of John the Baptist, and then a five verse recap of Jesus' baptism and temptation... Mark embarks on a high-speed recitation of Jesus' healings, exorcisms, and calling of disciples. It's all jammed together in a running narrative of non-stop action; and by the time we reach the end of our text, Jesus has understandably pulled Himself away from the hubbub hoopla... and, early in the morning, taken a walk out to "a solitary" place, for a little peaceful prayer time.

And, just as Jesus had settled Himself down into some quiet conversation with His Heavenly Father, the text tells us that "Simon and his companions," meaning Simon Peter and some of the other newly minted disciples... "went to look for him." And, when Simon and the others finally found Jesus, what did they say to Him? Do you remember? They said: **"Everyone is looking for you!"**

*"Jesus! What are you doing out here, praying in the sticks? Everybody's trying to find you! The people are looking high and low, because they need you! Come on, man! Let's get back to the village!"*

So, according to Peter, everybody was looking for Jesus. But, why? **Why** were they looking for Jesus? That's the question of the day... for us, as much as for the people who actually knew Jesus and followed Him around.

Why were people looking for Jesus? Because He was rich? No. Because He was famous? Possibly; I mean, there were curiosity-seekers in the first century, just as there are today... and some people were undoubtedly looking for Jesus because a buzz was beginning to build around Him. Some people looked for Jesus for the same reason that people looked for the Kardashian sisters last summer.

Were people looking for Jesus because He was a mover, and a shaker, and serious muckety-muck? Nope. Most of the movers, shakers, and muckety-mucks of the time wanted Jesus to disappear. And they had no intention whatsoever of admitting Him into the fraternity of community big-shots. Okay, well, were they looking for Jesus because He had some kind of “in” with the Romans... the *real* power in Israel at that time? Did they think that Jesus might be able to do them some good with Caesar and the Centurions? No. Jesus didn’t care about the Romans; and at this point, the Romans didn’t even know that Jesus existed.

The fact of the matter is that Jesus was poor, socially marginal, from a backwater village in an irrelevant Roman province, with no friends in high places, and doing things that were very likely to get him into serious trouble with the people who *were* in high places. Yet, according to Peter and the other disciples... *everybody* was looking for Him. And, not surprisingly, the reason why they were looking for Jesus, is because of what He could give them, once they found Him.

Not wealth, or fame, or success, or worldly importance; but the life-changing assurance that their lives, and their souls, were held firmly in the hands of Almighty God. All those people who came out to Jesus really were searching for something... and, like us, they weren’t always sure just what it was they were looking for. They just knew that they needed *something*... something that only God could give them. And in Jesus Christ, they knew they had finally found that “something...” they knew that in Him, the aching of their hearts and souls could finally be put to rest; and that they could live their lives in peace from that point forward.

Now, it’s definitely true that some of those people were out there looking for Jesus because they *didn’t* like Him; or because they misunderstood Him; or because they were *afraid* of what might happen if they didn’t keep an eye on Him to make sure He stayed in line. And so there were scribes, and priests, and Pharisees looking for Jesus, to see if He’d do something to break the Law of Moses... like working on the Sabbath, or breaking bread with tax-collectors, or getting too close to a leper. And if He did, they intended to shut Him down.

And there were people out there looking for Jesus because they thought that, as the Messiah, He really would throw out the Romans and re-establish the glory days of the Israelite monarchy. These people mistakenly believed that Jesus had come to rearrange the Jewish political order. And if He did, *they* intended to ride His coattails to glory.

But most of the people who were looking for Jesus that day, were searching for the same reasons that you and I would also be searching: because they were discouraged... and exhausted... and anxious... and frustrated... and in need of something blessed and holy to fill the void in their hearts.

They were looking for Jesus because their bodies were broken and wracked with illness... and they knew that in His hands, they might be made well. They were looking for Jesus because they were oppressed by sin and evil... and they knew that by His power, the very forces of Hell itself would have to flee in terror. They were looking for Jesus because they longed to grow closer to God... and they knew that through His preaching, and teaching, and parables, their life with the Lord would grow richer, and deeper, and more meaningful. They were looking for Jesus because they knew that He was not afraid to hang out with the marginalized people that the bigwigs kept at arm’s length; like prostitutes, tax-collectors, lepers, and other community ne’er-do-wells. Jesus not only hung out with such people... he treated them with respect and made them feel like they mattered, like they counted, like they were as important as anybody else in the eyes of God.

They were looking for Jesus because they loved Him, and trusted Him, and found in Him the answer to their questions; and the reassurance for their worries; and the calm within the storm of their doubts, and fears, and difficulties. In other words, they were out there looking for Jesus... for the same basic reasons that we're in here looking for Jesus! To find the key ingredient to life that will give us peace, and hope, and joy, and courage... which can only come from the One who made us, and loves us, and has promised never to forsake us: *ever!* That's why people were looking for Jesus! And that's why we look for Jesus, too!

Wherever we may be at this morning, in our life and in our faith; whatever it is that we might be seeking... even if we're not completely sure ourselves exactly what it is; *wherever we're at today*, I encourage each and every one of us to make like the disciples in our text... and to always be about the business of looking and searching for Jesus.

I encourage us to seek His wisdom; to search for His guidance; to be on the lookout for His presence; to always keep our hearts open to the blessed discovery of His love. I encourage us to keep up this quest at all times, and at all costs; because, if we *seek* the Lord... we *will* find Him. And when we find Him... He will meet the deepest needs of our hearts and souls. And then, as with those long-ago searchers from the Gospel of Mark, our lives will never be the same again!

That is the promise of our Lord Jesus Christ. And that's the hope on which we build our life with Him! In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, amen!