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George E. Mayer

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Why Are We Here?

George E. Mayer

*Pastor, Christ Lutheran Church,
Waterloo, Ontario*

Text: John 1:29-41

Why are we here? What are we looking for? What do we seek?

There are probably as many answers to these questions as there are people in this room.

Why are we here? "Mom and Dad said so. We have a great choir. I think we have a 'nice' pastor. It's convenient. I've always been a Lutheran and this is the closest church.

"Something is missing from my life, so maybe you can help me find it. I like the liturgy; it feels comfortable. The pastor said I have to be here if I want to be confirmed. I wanted to find out about the refugees and what we're doing to help them."

Why are we here? Some say, "We like a pastor who makes house calls." Others believe we have a good nursery for their infants. Some like the ample parking lot. Some that we are a growing church, and they like to be amongst people where a lot is happening.

When I asked this question, "Why are you here?" in a former parish I received the following response:

Pastor, I want to be honest with you. I hope you won't be offended. But this is the honest truth why I'm here. I work hard all week managing a business in which people are always making demands on me. They ask me questions, bother me with petty time wasters, make stupid demands, and tax my capacities to the limit. Then I go home to my three small children and the demands pile up all over again on different levels. Defend one child against a neighbour kid, help another with homework, drive the third to another lesson,

do the shopping, laundry, cleaning, cooking, maintaining. I come to church because it is the only quiet time I get in the whole week to think my own thoughts. No one is going to bother me, ask me a question, make a demand while you're preaching for twenty minutes on Sunday morning.

"What are you looking for?" are the first words spoken by Jesus in John's Gospel. They are spoken by him to two followers of John the Baptist.

These two had been told whom to look for—Jesus, the lamb of God who bears the sins of the world. These disciples of John had probably heard of lambs before, but for use in temple worship as a ritual sacrifice to God in thanksgiving for what God had already done in their people's history. But what could it possibly mean for John to refer to Jesus as the Lamb of God? That sounded strange.

So, being curious, they turned and began following Jesus. Jesus sensed they were there. In the midst of their questions, they were questioned by Jesus, "What do you seek? What are you looking for?"

Taken by surprise, perhaps, they ask a question in return. "Teacher, where are you staying?"

It was a tentative and safe approach. They could have asked, "Who are you? What are you about? What did John mean by sending us to you? We want to be convinced you're someone special; what do you have to offer?"

In response, Jesus issues an invitation: "Come and see!"

He didn't say, "I have all the answers," or, "I have a properly considered theological position," or, "Don't bother me," or, "What are you really asking?"

Jesus said, "*Come and see.*"

Spend some time with me.

My life and my house are open to you.

I offer hospitality.

Come and make up your own mind.

You're curious about where I live? I won't give you a calling card to give you an objective answer. I'll invite you over so you'll know from the inside where I am.

So, they get some exposure time with Jesus. Our text says they spent the rest of the day with him. We don't know what was said, what questions were asked or answered, how long

into the night they visited. We don't know whether they had a meal, or how many others were there.

We do know there were two results from that visit with Jesus. A discovery was made; the discovery was shared.

The discovery was, "*We have found the Messiah!*"

Andrew couldn't wait. The first thing he did was go to his brother Simon and bring him to Jesus. To Jesus:

The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

The one on whom the Holy Spirit of God descended and remained.

The Son of God.

The teacher.

The questioner.

The inviter... of infinite hospitality.

The Christ: the Messiah.

The person who will lead us to God.

Why are we here? What are we looking for?

Like those first followers, perhaps someone told us, or directed us to come here.

It's a welcoming place to be curious.

There are some people here who've found God in Jesus. And that is something worth sharing.

Why are you here?

Come and see Jesus...and discover the Christ of God.