

TEXT: John 1:35-51

TOPIC: Jesus calls his first disciples by going to them, asking questions and inviting them to come and see.

SUBJECT: Jesus' questions and invitation to "come and see" is about creating a home of the world.

TITLE: The Question of Home

"What are you looking for?"

Those are Jesus' first words in John's gospel.

"What are you looking for?"

Just as the question applied to Andrew, who was one of John's disciples, and his brother Simon Peter, and then Philip and Nathaniel, the question applies to you and me, too.

"What. Are. You. Looking. For?"

The question sets the stage for everything then and everything now. It's a question I've often asked myself, and it's a question I'm sure some of you have asked yourselves, and not because we went into the kitchen and forgot what we went in there for.

"What are you looking for?"

Some will try and answer the question by buying the biggest and newest house. Some may try and answer the question by having the nicest vehicles in their driveway. Some might answer the question with the stuff they own or the clothes they wear. Some try and answer the question in other ways which might be good or bad. I'm not sure goodness or badness are really the issue. I think loyalty to come and see and follow me – Jesus' words – are at the heart of the matter.

What are you looking for is what I'll refer to today as the question of home. It has to do with where we're at and whether where we're at is where we should be. The question of home has to do with the invitation to "come and see" just like the one Jesus extended. The question of home has to do with how we are going to live together in our neighborhoods, our

communities, our states, our nation, and the world God loves so much, following Jesus rather than merely worshiping him.

What are you looking for is the question of home every one of us must face. There are no exceptions.

The question of home has to do with how we relate with others and how willing we are to look at ourselves. The question of home represents the difference of people saying, “I’ve found Jesus” rather than acknowledging that Jesus is the one who found them. It would be like me saying, “I found Jesus” when in truth, Jesus found me.

In John 1:35-51, Andrew, Simon Peter, Philip and Nathaniel didn’t “find” Jesus, either; he found them. Jesus turned and saw Andrew following him, and he asked “What are you looking for?” Andrew went and got his brother, Simon Peter, to announce that he had found the Christ, so Peter went with Andrew and Jesus looked at him and gave him a new name: You are Simon, son of John. You will be called Cephas (which translated is Peter). Peter, like Thomas later on in the gospel, doubted.

The next day, Jesus went into Galilee. There, he found Philip, and invited Philip to follow. Philip found Nathaniel and Nathaniel asked, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” That’s when Jesus saw Nathaniel and Jesus identified him as a true Israelite Jesus had seen under a fig tree, which has several interesting connotations. One of the connotations supported in 1 Kings, Micah, and Zechariah, is that sitting under a fig tree is a place that represents the comforts of home, in part because Nathaniel doubted at first, too.

I don’t know about you, but anytime I’ve been uncertain how to address the question of home in my life, I got caught in limited and even ignorant, uninformed thinking. For years, I

limited home to where I grew up. Sometimes home would be where I slept at night; making home a dorm room or a motel room. Until I went to Liberia in 2011, I didn't understand that the world is my home right now. The question of home necessitates that I ask myself what I am willing to do to take care of that home? The question of home is how will I pass home onto future generations? The question of home is how can I help to reverse the way things have gotten?

I hope the question of home challenges everyone to think and to action regardless of what we believe in or what we doubt.

By calling doubters, following Jesus suggests that God will work through the people we least expect, and those we least expect might be the biggest doubters or they may be the poorest and most marginalized. They might be as humble as Jesus was, coming from what seems like nowhere. And when you look at the question of home across the pages of John's gospel, you'll see it explained in men and women; you'll find it in Jews and Gentiles; it's there in the rich and the poor; it's there in the powerful and the vulnerable; it's evidenced in people of all shapes and sizes. When we find ourselves wrestling with the question of home, I think there's a likelihood that we're asking ourselves, "What are you looking for?"

And Jesus is responding: Come and see what home really can be. Come and see.

Asking yourself the questions of home can be challenging to say the least. The questions of home parallel following Jesus to unexpected places that may be home to others. The questions of home will challenge how you think about the world we live in and the resources we waste, the resources we share, and the resources we hoard. The questions of home will ask you if you want to see even greater things than these, just like Jesus told Nathaniel. The

questions of home will challenge you to think about the kind of world you want to create and welcome others to live in, and I think that's something we are all facing now but without any concrete answers.

Like Andrew, Peter, Philip and Nathaniel, it isn't that we find Jesus; it's that Jesus finds us, and Jesus finds us, so we can be part of something much larger than we realize. Jesus finds us so we can be part of something that really matters. After all, discipleship is about an active engagement with Jesus in all those places – all those places – people call home.

In the name of the triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – one God in perfect community. Amen.