

**Looking For...Happiness**  
**John 1:29-42**  
**Second Sunday After Epiphany**  
**January 15, 2023**  
**Pastor John Klawiter, Preaching**

Grace and peace to you my friends in faith,

What are you looking for?

An online search beginning with those words will lead you to many suggested ways to finish that question. For example... “what are you looking for in a relationship/dating app/in a partner?”

Beyond asking the internet for relationship advice, Google is also the place to go when looking for direction when it comes to **WORK**.

- What are you looking for in your next role?
- Compensation and benefits
- Job/Company/Employer

Why are we looking for new relationships, new jobs, more money?

There’s a hope for something better—getting something more than what we currently have. The grass is greener on the other side.

Yet, sometimes this hope is warranted. A change is needed. A new relationship or job can create a new and healthy change. In fact, sometimes that new thing we’re looking for is a reflection of the new thing in ourselves that we’re looking to have shine.

Has anyone ever told you they got a new job, or a major in school, and you said “oh, that’s perfect. That’s YOU!” Or maybe two people you know started a relationship and you thought, “yes, they complement each other so well!”

When Jesus asks the question “what are you looking for?”, let’s pause to acknowledge where he is and who his audience is before we get the answer. It’s people who’ve been looking for something specific for generations!

First of all, in the previous verses, the baptism of Jesus occurred, led by John the baptizer.

John saw the Holy Spirit descend upon him, like a dove, which affirmed to him that this guy, right **HERE** is exactly who he is looking for. This is who the prophets foretold!

John is looking for the Lamb of God—in fact, the Son of God.

Out in the desert, John and HIS followers are experiencing a powerful revelation and John is the one encouraging his believers to listen to Jesus. **He's the lamb of God** (scripture)—**and hearing this gets them to follow Jesus (click to followed Jesus)**.

So, as two of John's disciples —**notice John has disciples** (John's disciples)... catch the eye of Jesus.

And he asks them **“what are you looking for?”**

What's the answer? Is it a new job? A new relationship?

If you think about it, that's **EXACTLY** what they're looking for. Jesus will become their new calling.

**Rabbi/teacher**... where are you staying?

They're looking for a teacher. They're looking for a new way to follow. They are looking to get to know Jesus better. So, despite the odd answer, they wanna know where Jesus is staying precisely because they wanna follow him there.

Jesus invites them. **COME AND SEE!** This is what Jesus is all about. To join Jesus, you don't need an amazing resume and tons of experience. Jesus wants you to Come and See what he's all about.

What are the best ways to do that?

I hope that's what you are experiencing through participating in this congregation.

It doesn't matter how smart you are, your financial status, whether you're outgoing or like to stick to yourself.

This church is the place where a wide array of backgrounds gather to literally Come and See what God is up to in this place.

Belonging to a Faith community, in many respects, is about belonging to a place that provides you with new life.

We are looking for the abundant life. A life filled with fellowship, friendship, service, and fulfillment.

I wonder, could this potentially lead us to greener pastures? Could it bring about happiness?

Can the church learn something by visiting the Happiest place on earth? (**picture of Disney**)

Wait... while Disney *may* have the title of the happiest place on earth, it doesn't ALWAYS live up to that name (**slide of tantrums**).

How about the happiest country on earth instead? Know what it is? Hint: it's not the United States.

The country voted the **happiest in the world is...** (**show picture of the people**)

That's right. **Finland**. For 5 years in a row.

An article on CNBC was written by a Finnish psychologist, Frank Martela. He explained what makes Finland unique and listed the three things that Finnish people *don't* do to maintain a high quality of life.

First, he said: **We don't compare ourselves to our neighbors.**

I love that! It's like the perfect definition of the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> commandments—not coveting what belongs to our neighbors. Value isn't determined by what we have compared to our neighbor.

Martela shared an anecdote about running into one of the wealthiest men in Finland who was pushing a stroller at the tram station. Even though this man had the wealth to drive a luxury car or hire his own driver, there he was, taking public transportation among everyone else.

His tip is to focus on our own standards, not to compare ourselves to others to measure our happiness. We're all human.

Think about John—he's not trying to make sure his disciples stick to him. He's not grabbing for more power—his self-worth isn't minimized because of the stature of Jesus—instead, he encourages his followers to join Jesus. What a selfless act that we often don't call attention to.

Second, **2. We don't overlook the benefits of nature.**

Even in a country with as much snow as our state, Finnish people cherish the opportunity to be outside and to take holidays out in the countryside.

Martela's happiness suggestion is that spending time in nature increases our vitality, well-being and gives us a sense of personal growth. Get some fresh air—or even buy a plant for your house during long winter months.

Isn't it fascinating that this pivotal moment in Jesus' ministry is taking place out in the countryside—where people have left the city or village to come and see?

And third, Martela's last point about Finnish people is that **We don't break the community circle of trust.**

There are high levels of trust within the country. They did something called the "lost wallet experiment". 92% of the wallets in Helsinki were returned to their owner!

People trust each other and value honesty.

Martela's tip is to think about how you can show up for your community. How can you create more trust? How can you support policies that build upon that trust? Small acts like opening doors for strangers or giving up a seat on the train make a difference, too.

I can't help but think about the community that John first created and his ability to transition to Jesus. The disciples join the ultimate circle of trust. They build belonging.

What's the event disrupts that circle? Isn't it when Judas betrays that trust?

Even in Christ's day, he wasn't immune to humanity. Even following Jesus wasn't a guarantee of happiness—there would be much loss, suffering, and death.

Yet, that community of trust was there for each other in those moments of grief, tragedy, and uncertainty.

Happiness is a byproduct of Faith—it's about being comfortable in our own skin and surrounding ourselves with the people that lift us up, not tear us down.

Finland can teach us a thing or two about characteristics that lead to a better way of life. Are you surprised that those three points are in-line with what Faith Lutheran does?

We don't promote one Christian over another as the ideal. We encourage Faithfulness inside and out of the church. And our circle of trust demonstrates that we can serve more people together than we can on our own.

I've been told that sometimes, the adults in our congregation learn more from the children's sermon. What we learn from our kids informs what we are looking for in our own faith development.

So, what are you looking for... from Jesus?

Come and See that life in relationship together is life in relationship with Christ.

Why does Faith Lutheran care so much about others? (video)

*Becccccccauuuuuuuse. Amen*