

(Sunday – 01/15/2006) – John 1:37 – 51 – What Seek Ye?

Looking upon Jesus as He walked, John the Baptist said – Behold the Lamb of God, and two of his disciples, hearing this, followed Jesus - and Jesus turned, and saw them following Him and said unto them - What *seek* ye? Not – ‘whom seek ye’ which is what He asked Mary Magdalene at the tomb and the detachment of soldiers and officials from the chief priests and Pharisees that came with Judas that night in the garden to take him away. No, He stopped, turned and faced these two disciples of John the Baptist and straightaway asked them, pointedly, what seek ye? In other words, why are you following me, what is it you want?

That is the exact question I would pose to *you* today, for indeed, if you are earnestly following Him and not just caught up in the activities of this social institution we call church, He *will* turn and ask you directly – what seek ye, why do you follow me? This question that Jesus put to the disciples that day is the very one we should all put to ourselves when we follow Him - what are we seeking? Those that follow Christ, and yet seek the world, or self-satisfaction, or the praise of men, deceive themselves, for these are the very things that He is calling them from. Jesus invites the disciples to come and see what a humble and lowly lodging He has in this world, what meager accommodations He requires, that they may not expect any worldly advantage by following Him, that their faith be not grounded in worldly concerns. Come and see what you must count upon if you follow me. You must know what you are seeking before you will know you have found it. Consider it – what do you seek?

If we were to pose this question to the author of the Sixty-third psalm, which we read earlier, he would respond ‘early do I seek *my God*, my soul thirsteth for Him, my flesh longeth after Him. I seek Him from my bed and during *all* my waking hours. For His loving-kindness is better than life itself.’ For Philip and Andrew and Peter, our Gospel reading tells us it was He of whom Moses and the prophets wrote, the Messiah, the Son of God, the King of Israel that they sought - for Philip exclaimed, ‘*we have found Him.*’ And once they had found Him, they were never again the same - they followed Him and exchanged the life they had *been* living for one of constant fellowship *with Him*, learning of Him, forsaking their previous lifestyles to *follow Him*, wherever He went. What about St. Paul – He counted all things but loss for the

excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord: for whom he had suffered the loss of all things, and did count them but dung, that he might win Christ. But, these, you may say, were religious zealots. After all, these were apostles and disciples and psalmists. But did Christ do more for them than He has done for you? Did He leave the bosom of His father in heaven and become the babe in the manger, suffer at the hands of vile men, sweat great drops of blood in prayer, withstand the scourging and whipping, the scarring of His back with sickening furrows at the hands of the Roman soldiers, allow His temples to be pricked to bloodletting by the crown of thorns, to be despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, to be mocked and spit upon, to bear the wooden cross upon His shoulders, plodding towards Calvary, despising the shame when, naked, He hung upon that same cross, yield Himself to death, descend into the depths of death, into very Hell itself, for Philip, Andrew, Peter, Paul and the psalmist, and not for you? Were they simply fanatics, devoting their entire lives to Christ, and if so, then what was it that so possessed them that they willingly exchanged whatever life they had before to one of a constant pursuit of following Him, of knowing more of Him? Why were their lives *completely* changed from the moment they encountered Jesus? Could it have anything to do with them knowing exactly what they were seeking, and once they had found it, like the pearl of great price, abandoning all to possess it as a living reality in their lives?

Referring to ones' self as a Christian, claiming that Jesus Christ is the Lord and Savior of your life, is so much, so very much more, than simply going to church, than praying, than singing hymns. These are *indeed* valid expressions of your belief, but they are not *guarantees* that you have found the Messiah, that you have apprehended the reality that when He died, you died in Him. Christianity is about Jesus Christ, nothing less and nothing more. Not prayer meetings, bumper stickers, catchy phrases or tithing. Not good works, committees, bible studies or soup kitchens. Now mark my words carefully, these are all praiseworthy and desirous pursuits, but if they replace your personal relationship with Christ, if they are that upon which you place your hope of eternal salvation, then they are but wood, hay and stubble, and they are keeping you from that one thing needful, Him, and Him alone. If you have had a true life *ex-changing* experience with the Son of the Living God, if His Spirit dwells within you, then there is no doubt that it will be your constant heart's desire to not simply linger in the outer-court, to

go through life without ever really knowing Christ, of remaining a stranger to this seeking to know Him, regardless of the cost. There will constantly be a higher yearning, a fervency to *know* Him, like a dear panting after the water brooks, like a bride for her absent bridegroom. Alas, so many are content to talk about, and pray to, a Jesus they (s/l read) read about in the Bible but have never met, never found as a result of earnestly seeking Him. They are inspired by His words, motivated by His teachings, and impassioned by His death on the cross for their sins, but they do not yearn to know *Him* at any cost. They are willing to accept what He did at Calvary for them, but they somehow can not find the time to rid themselves of the cares of this world in order to know Him, to adore Him, to worship Him with every fabric of their being for that which they claim He did on their behalf. There are those who spend more time in a week shopping, watching television or going to the movies than they do in worshipping the one who has reconciled them to God, who has everlastingly saved them from His wrath to come, who is the 'ladder' whereby heaven has become open to them, and the angels of God ascend and descend upon Him for their sakes. There are many who know all about His birth in the manger and His death on the cross. They know all about His teachings and miracles and wondrous deeds. But though they may know all about the *life* of Christ, they know little of Christ as *Life*. They know nothing of sitting at His feet to hear what He has to say, of longing to know His person, to know not only His words, but to know Him as *The Word*.

Just as the *source* of the raging river is so much more pure and magnificent than are the tributaries and streams that issue forth from it, so is Christ ever better than the words He has spoken, or the miraculous deeds He has performed. We may love His precepts, His teachings, His words and deeds of love, *but* - to love Him, personally, to know the intimacies of communion with Him, to be able to say as did Solomon, 'let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for His love is better than wine', is infinitely more than any of these things. Don't settle for knowing Him vicariously, through the words of your friends, or your spouse, or your pastor; with all that is within you *seek* to know Him, directly, for yourself. We should hunger and thirst to *know Him*, to await with eager longing His second advent, His return, not because we *seek* the millennium kingdom, nor desire to reign over nations, but because we yearn to see Him, to know Him evermore, to behold Him face to face, to be in His loving presence and never again be separated

from Him. We must never be satisfied with *thinking* we know Him; *hoping* we know Him, but rather forsaking everything else to *know* that we *know* Him. *Seek*, and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you, for every one that asks, receives, and he that *seeks* finds – ask believing that you shall receive for the heavenly Father gives the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him, and without His Spirit, ye are none of His and you shall not know Him as He is.

But allow me to suggest to you an even greater knowledge of Him, a knowing that few are familiar with, and even if they were, would most likely not desire. There is a knowledge of Christ that can only be acquired, should you so *yield yourself*, that you may become *identified* with Him, to suffer with Him, to see things as He sees them, to feel His grief and His joy, His shame and His Glory. This one thing I know to be true, this I know experientially to be reality: that the more you know of Christ, the more you will want to know. The deeper you plunge the greater you will find the depth that is there to be revealed. The higher you climb with Him, the loftier become the heights which you will behold before you. And although He has quenched your thirst with the living waters, yet you will find that the more you feed on Him, the more you will want of Him, the more you will hunger for Him. This is the unfathomable, unsearchable riches of Christ of which no earthly treasure, no earthly pleasure, no earthly satisfaction can compare.

And so, I ask you one last time – what seek ye?

... The Rev. Paul G. Stanley†