

What Are You Looking For? Questions from the Gospel of John

4th Session: "Conversion & Baptism"

Introductory Statement: We begin this week with a major shift away from Jesus and the Cross to following the process of being a disciple. Begin with conversion and Baptism. We ask: What are we looking for, and how can one be "born again?"

CONVERSION

"Who Are you?" (1:19)

John the Baptist signals a break from the rigid structures of religion represented by the temple establishment. The establishment wants to know who he claims to be. He is announcing radical change, and they are attached to status quo.

"The is the Son of God. (1:34)

The Beloved Disciple led his community along the mystical path enabling them to see the divinity of Jesus. But, it also created conflict with their Jewish neighbors who thought this was blasphemy.

"What are you looking for?" (1:38) "Where do you stay?" (1:38) "Come and See" (1:39)

This is all about conversion because the disciples are about to leave their former way of life to follow Jesus. What appears to be a very casual question is really **THE big question**. He is asking them: are you REALLY seeking to know the meaning and the purpose of life.

"Where do you stay?" (1:38)

It is the same word used in 15:4 to express that profound union that exists between himself and the heavenly Father. Saying it another way: "Rabbi, where is your true home?"

"You have kept the good wine until now." (2:10)

The miracle of the changing of water into wine at the wedding in Cana belongs to the theme of conversion because it signals the kind of radical change that the coming of Jesus represents.

"Stop making my Father's house a marketplace." (2:16)

We can imagine Jesus with his whip taking swipes even at the pillars of the temple, for it had become symbolic of a religion that had become so rigid and stagnant that it was unable to welcome the God of change and progress.

Qualities of Discipleship

1. Profound yearning for the meaning of life
2. Stability. To be a good disciple one must be able to make a firm commitment and to stay with it through thick and thin.
3. trusting one's own intuition and being open to surprise.
4. personal experience is more trustworthy than provincial prejudice

BAPTISM

John is well aware that a ritual is involved here, and he knows how important that is. Still, he insists that we must not be satisfied with this external action which remains essentially **inoperative** without a free and personal faith commitment.

“No one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.” (3:3)

Nicodemus may will have been expecting Jesus to tell him about some new rite to perform or prayer to recite. Instead, he announces the absolutely necessity of a new birth.

“God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son.” (3:16)

The truth that Jesus came to reveal to us is not concerned with our sinfulness or any other discouraging reality. We can figure that out on your own. He came to reveal to us something that we have great difficulty in believing. That God loves you so much that if we really understood we would not fear anything.

“We know that this is truly the Savior of the world.” (4:42)

*In this story John show the progressive steps by which the believer coming to full recognition of Jesus. **First**, knowing Jesus as a Jew, **then** as one perhaps greater than Jacob, **then** a prophet, **then** the Messiah, **finally Savior**. Tis movement to an ever deeper personal relationship with Jesus is a dominate feature in John – constantly warning against superficial faith.*

“Go your son will live.” (4:50)

It is the faith of the royal official that is important. He himself and his whole household believed. This reminder seems relevant today when so many are baptized as infants and never come to a personal awareness of the commitment of their baptism. The visible sign is important bit not as important as invisible spiritual meaning.