

Questions from John for Lent and Easter
The Life Question: What Are You Looking For?
John 1:35-42

It may be said that from the day we are born until the day we die, life may be viewed as a series of questions to which we are seeking answers:

On the day of our birth,
What is that bright light, and why is it so
noisy all of a sudden?

In the days following our birth,
What are all these new sensations, and,
When is the milkman coming again?

In our childhood,
Where does Mom hide the cookies?
What will I be when I grow up?
Am I ever going to grow up?
What am I getting for Christmas?
What am I getting for my birthday?
Who invented homework?

In our teenage years,
Like, how did two such clueless, uncool
people ever give birth to someone as
awesome as me?
Can I have the car keys?

In our adult years,
 Why didn't someone tell me it was going to
going to be this hard?
 How are we going to put these kids through
college?

In our senior years,
 What was the question?

Ok, some of them may not have been completely serious, but each age of life has its own questions, its own concerns. And we spend our time seeking answers to those questions and concerns wherever we can find them.

But there is one question that follows us through each period of life until we find the answer: What are you looking for, or, to make it personal, What am I looking for?

It is perhaps the central question of life. What am I looking for? What do I hope for in my life? What are my dreams and expectations? As we consider this precious thing that is our life, what do we hope for it? What do we want to make of it?

Blaise Pascal, a 17th Century French philosopher said,

“There is a God shaped vacuum in the heart of every man (which cannot be filled by any created thing, but only by God, the Creator, made known through Jesus.”)

Pascal said more about the subject, but let's leave it at that for the moment. “There is a God-shaped vacuum, or hole, in the heart of every man....” Profound – and true.

He was saying that we are born defective; that there is something missing. What follows is that every person spends their life trying to fill up that space, that vacuum, that hole. We instinctively realize that we are incomplete, that we are not whole, and it is a great part of life's work to correct that, to fill up that hole, to eliminate that vacuum.

What are you looking for? is the root question for the quest of life.

So, what are you looking for? I'll be honest with you. When I was young, a kid, into my teens, I was looking to be rich. We didn't have a lot of money. I wasn't poor by any stretch of the imagination. Both my parents worked and had good steady incomes, but there wasn't a lot of disposable income. I wanted a lot of disposable income! So that's what I was looking for – I wanted to be wealthy.

You know what they say: Man plans; God laughs!

What are you looking for? Maybe you, too, are looking for material wealth, hoping for the high-paying job, the investment portfolio, the big house, nice cars, all the things money can buy.

Maybe you're looking for something else. Maybe you're looking for any kind of job. Lots of people in that situation today.

Maybe you're looking for a bit of peace in your life. Perhaps your life has been difficult, unstable, full of conflict or uncertainty. Maybe all you'd like is a some peace.

Or perhaps you're lonely; or you feel disconnected. Perhaps you're looking for friendship, someone you can depend on, or maybe a group where you belong.

Maybe you haven't yet found someone to share your life with. It seems harder to do today than it did years ago. People are waiting longer to get married and it seems it gets harder to find that special person as you get older.

Maybe you're looking for some direction in your life. Maybe you haven't yet answered that question of childhood, "What am I going to be when I grow up?"

Or maybe you've tried a couple of things and nothing has "fit". Maybe you're asking, "What am I doing to do with my life?"

Lots of people today seem to be asking, “Is this all there is?” They’ve achieved what they thought was their dream, and it wasn’t nearly as fulfilling as they thought.

Or maybe they thought they had found their special someone and it didn’t work out, and they’re wondering, “What now?”

What are you looking for? What did you come here today looking for?

A little soothing music? A word of wisdom? A friendly smile? Friendship? Someplace where you felt like you belonged? A word of wisdom? The feeling of the presence of God?

I hope you are finding whatever it is you are seeking.

I believe, and I suspect old Blaise Pascal would agree, that answer lies in filling that God-shaped vacuum in our hearts.

Until we do that, nothing will satisfy us – no amount of money, no relationship, no success in our profession or business, no amount of education.

People try. They try to cram all nature of things into the God-shaped hole, sometimes some very bad things. Just pick up any supermarket tabloid and you’ll be treated to an unending parade of Hollywood folk trying to fill up that vacuum in themselves in

any number of self-destructive ways. Alcohol, drugs, sex, multiple marriages, fame. And failing miserably.

Sometimes we try to fill up that vacuum with very good things: marriage, children, family, sports, healthy lifestyles, charitable work, all manner of things – and still we fail.

And the reason is that same as it was 10 or 20 or 40 or 60 years ago, when you were a little child and you had one of those marvelous, frustrating toys that consisted of a number of holes of various shapes and a number of blocks of matching shapes and a wooden hammer. And no matter how hard you pounded on that circular block it would not fill up that square hole.

Until we fill up that God-shaped vacuum in our hearts, the peace, the contentment, the joy, the life, the answers that we seek will be elusive.

Andrew and John seem to have known that. The story from John is kind of a sad one, in a way. They were both disciples of John the Baptist. But as soon as John the Baptist pointed Jesus out as the Messiah, the Savior, the Lamb of God, they dropped John like he had leprosy and followed Jesus. We might feel bad for John – don't, he didn't feel bad for himself; he knew the deal. But we have to give credit to Andrew and John. They knew the answer to their hearts' question. They knew what they were looking for. OK, to be absolutely truthful, they didn't know

everything Jesus was going to do or who He was completely, but they knew that He was involved with the answer. And they dropped everything to follow Him; left their homes, their families, their jobs, everything, to follow Him.

And that God-shaped hole got filled! And they never looked back.

They discovered through experience with Jesus what Blaise Pascal discovered in God's Word. The rest of his quote goes like this: "There is a God shaped vacuum in the heart of every man which cannot be filled by any created thing, but only by God, the Creator, made known through Jesus."

Only God can fill that vacuum in our hearts and He does it through His Son, Jesus. Jesus says, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except by Me."

Only God can fill that vacuum in our lives; only a relationship with the one true God can bring us that peace that we seek, and that relationship comes only through faith in Jesus, His Son.

By trusting in Jesus, that He is the Son of God, who came into our humanity to rescue us from our sin, we know God. By believing that Jesus' suffering and death paid the price for our sins, that He took the punishment for us, and that in His

resurrection God acknowledged His work as full payment for our sins, we have the promise of forgiveness and eternal life.

And the hole gets filled.

And when that happens then the other things can happen. When we know the love of God in Jesus, then things like peace and contentment become part of our lives. Through faith in Christ, the Holy Spirit helps us understand that money, fame, things will not provide us with the happiness we seek.

Even the best things in life: family, marriage, children, friendships are so much better when that vacuum is filled to overflowing with the presence of God.

Pascal also said this:

“There are two kinds of people one can call reasonable: those who serve God with all their heart because they know him, and those who seek him with all their heart because they do not know him.”

Which are you? If you are the former, if you know God through His Son Jesus, give thanks and nourish that relationship, and enjoy how that relationship makes all of life richer and fuller.

If you are the latter, put your faith in Jesus and feel that vacuum, that hole within begin to fill.