

What do you want?

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[0 : 00] Amen. So we've been thinking about questions that Jesus asked in his time on earth, and our next question is the question here in verse 38, where Jesus asked, what do you want? What are you seeking? So we come to the desire question. It's a great question.

What do you want? It's a universal question. Everybody has basic needs and wants. There are desires that we will devote ourselves to. It's an interesting piece of reflection and indeed a conversation starter. What is it that you want? What are you looking for in life? It's also a deep question, isn't it? Because it's one of those that makes us stop and reflect. What is it that I value? What is it I want most deeply? Have I found it? Is this it? Is there more than what I see and what I experience? It's a challenging question. I was reminded of that famous quote from C.S. Lewis in his collection of essays, *The Weight of Glory*, where he talks about people being too easily pleased. You know, like our desires are too strong. Our desires, Lewis says, are too weak. And he uses that image. So we're people who would settle for making mud pies in a slum because we cannot imagine what a holiday at the beach would be like. So he says, you know, we fool around with drink and sex and ambition when infinite glory is offered us. We are too easily satisfied. So we're going to be asking ourselves the desire question, what do you want? We're at the beginning of John's gospel, and it's interesting to see how John loves to use questions within his gospel. There's a scholar called Douglas Estes who points this out, that John records the questions of Jesus at significant points within the gospel, in part to give structure to the book. I hadn't noticed this, but the first words of Jesus, we just heard them, are a question. What do you want? The first words of Jesus after his resurrection, recorded by John, another question. Why are you crying? The final words of Jesus recorded in John's gospel, another question. If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You follow me. The questions that John records from the mouth of Jesus are so important as well because they help towards John's great purpose in writing his gospel. In John chapter 20 verse 31, John, these things are written so you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing, you may have life in His name. And so actually the majority of questions that you find in John's gospel are either going to be asking, whom are you seeking or do you believe? So they both kind of move towards

John's great theme. And what I want us to think about this evening is that as John puts his gospel together, led by the Spirit, he places his first question in a strategic position. Think about what we just heard read. We heard the testimony of John the Apostle in the first 18 verses. We heard the testimony of John the Baptist sent to announce the coming of Jesus. They are saying together, this is who Jesus is, this is what Jesus brings, and then comes the question, what do you want? What do you desire?

What is your response? So that's what we're going to think about. We're going to move very briefly through the two testimonies and then think about response. Testimony one, the first 18 verses, this great introduction to John's gospel, where if we were to kind of give it a summary, John is telling us that Jesus is God who reveals God's glory. It's a wonderful introduction to Jesus.

[4 : 23] So John the Apostle is writing after being an eyewitness for three years. So he's been there during the public ministry. He was there when Jesus died. He saw the risen Jesus, saw him ascend to heaven, and he's writing after Jesus from heaven sent the Spirit to guide him in writing. So he's writing a reflection. Now what does John highlight about Jesus? I just want to pick out three words to show that Jesus reveals God's glory to the world. The first words is words. Verse one, in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. In the beginning. It's how Genesis begins, first book of the Bible. Genesis begins with creation. John takes us to creation but moves back to say that before there was creation, there was God, there was the Word. We've got the building blocks of the Trinity here, especially when the Spirit is introduced. And then

we're going to see that

John also moves from creation to think about new creation as well, that there is new life found in Jesus who is the Word, who is with God, and who was God. He's inviting us to reflect, go back as far as we can, and go beyond that, beyond our ability to fathom eternity past. There is God, and there is the Word.

The Word who is eternally with God, who is God's own self, who John will reveal in the gospel, is none other than Jesus. But it's a wonderful word to use of Jesus. When we think about John's Old Testament background, God's Word in the Old Testament was how He created the world.

God said, let there be, and there was. And then the author of the Hebrews tells us that Jesus was God's agent of creation. God's Word was how He revealed Himself in the world. Think about that phrase associated with the prophets. The prophets came and they said, thus says the Lord.

Revelation. And then we think about Hebrews 1, how a New Testament author understands it. In the past, he spoke through the prophets, but now he's spoken in a new and a decisive way through his Son.

[7 : 02] So he creates, he reveals, and he brings salvation through his Word. I don't know if you noticed that as we sang Psalm 107, verse 20. He sent out his Word and healed them. He rescued them from the grave.

His Word that creates, that reveals, that saves. And John wants us to know this is Jesus. Jesus is this Word. And that matters. So when we come to the Gospels, and we consider the actions and the words of Jesus, we need to understand that these are the actions and words of God. Jesus is how God speaks and reveals in a new way. And this Word is so powerful as to transform. So verses 12 and 13, we're told that to all who did receive Him, He gives the right to become children of God.

A new identity, a new citizenship, a whole new life, because the Word reveals God's glory. The second word for us to focus on is the word light. It's there in verse 4 and verse 5 and also in verse 9. Again, to go back in the Old Testament, creation begins with light. God said, let there be light.

And everything else follows. Light is essential for life. We also know from the Old Testament that light becomes this powerful reality for revealing God's presence. So when the people had been set free from slavery, they followed a pillar of fire. When they set up the tabernacle and the temple, when they met God at Mount Sinai, there was this cloud of glory that shone that had lightning coming from it. Light is also a symbol to speak of God's purity. And the apostle John, when he writes his letters, first, second, third, he loves that idea of light and darkness. God is light in Him.

There is no darkness at all.

And God's Word is light that guides His people's walk of faith. Psalm 119, Psalm 19. And look now with me at verses 4 and 5. See how John uses the idea of light in two distinct and significant ways. Verse 4, in Him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.

This is John's way of saying Jesus is the one who gives life, a reminder that He is Creator God. And then in verse 5, the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

[10 : 04] Here is light in the sense of salvation, in the sense of darkness being dispelled. You know that sense that light will always conquer darkness. Picture yourself in a perfectly darkened room, but then when the door opens or you open the curtains and as light begins to come in, darkness has to leave. Jesus comes to defeat the darkness of sin and evil. And so, John is saying to us, using the imagery of light, that Jesus reveals God's glory to us both as our Creator and as our Savior.

And Jesus Himself will declare, I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. And so, we have this reality within John's gospel that by the grace of God, people are transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light and life and love. And still, by His Spirit and through His Word, Jesus, who is light, directs His people, directs us to walk in His ways through the Word of God. He is the Word. He is the light. The last word to think about in John's testimony, and it's the word glory. It's there in verse 14. The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the one and only Son who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. John loves to draw from the Old Testament. He loves to draw from the book of Exodus. And in the book of Exodus, we discover God's glory appearing in the tent, in the tabernacle, so that God could dwell among His people. We thought about that this morning, that God graciously chooses to come down to be present among us. And now John brings this revelation that in Jesus, the glory of God has set up camp among us.

That the unique glory of God is revealed by the unique Son of God, the glory of God in the tent of human flesh.

[12:28] Jesus, the great figure of the book of Exodus, prayed to God. Maybe Exodus 33, maybe 34, I can't remember.

Show me your glory. And the response of God at that time was, no one can see my face and live. But now with the coming of Jesus, the glory of God is seen in His face. There is that sense in which that glory is still veiled. And we know that because on the Mount of Transfiguration, Jesus and three of His disciples are there. And then Moses and Elijah appear, and then the glory cloud comes down, and the voice comes from heaven, and it's as if the curtains are pulled back, and Jesus shines with the radiant glory of God. And Moses got to see the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus. So, as John introduces us to Jesus before he begins his gospel proper, he concludes with this testimony in verse 18, No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son who is himself God and is in the closest relationship with the Father has made him known. To see Jesus is to see the Father in His glory. In Jesus, the glory of

God shines in a whole new way as John declares that God has made the eternal, invisible God visible. John's testimony is that Jesus reveals the glory of God.

Here's part of the background for that question that Jesus asks, What do you want? What are we seeking? God has come down, entered in, bringing light and life and salvation, demonstrating the perfect glory of God in His God in His person and His work. Stack that up against anything that we find ourselves seeking.

Weigh that in the balance, whether that's status or security, achievement or honor or relationship. What do we want? Are we being too easily satisfied?

[14:59] John's testimony invites us not to settle for a temporary slice of happiness, but to receive the invitation to infinite joy from the God of infinite joy and glory.

So that's testimony one from our first John, John the Apostle. Now we need to hear a different testimony, the testimony from John the Baptist. Verses 9 to 36, we hear a lot of John's testimony. And again, to summarize John the Baptist's testimony, I think we could say his testimony is that Jesus is God's chosen Savior. We're going to begin where John concludes verse 34, I have seen and I testify that this is God's chosen one. Think about that, that idea of the chosen one. It's a powerful image and theme in our stories. Some of the great stories, whether it's film or in book, have this theme. One is selected, often a surprising candidate, usually to save the world. So again, this morning we thought about King

Arthur. But we can think about Frodo Baggins, we can think about Luke Skywalker, we can think about Harry Potter, all with that same theme. Here is the one, the chosen one who will defeat enemies, who will bring rescue, who will bring freedom. Why do we love that theme in our stories? Why do we hear it repeated so often? Because it's God's story, because it's the theme of God's story of salvation. And John the Baptist is enabled to see that as he considers Jesus. And John the Baptist's testimony is very different from the apostle. So the apostle has long years to reflect back on the life and ministry, the teaching, the miracles of Jesus, and to formulate his gospel. What we're getting from John the Baptist, though, is a prophet who is speaking in the moment directed by God. Here is the moment of truth. The time is now, the Messiah is here. One other thing that we need to know about John the Baptist is that he loves the book of Isaiah. He loves the book of Isaiah, and he draws on it again and again to help us understand that Jesus is the chosen Savior. And I hope we'll see this together. Again, three words, three themes from John the Baptist. The first theme or word is the word Lord. Verse 23, as John speaks of himself,

I am the voice of one calling in the wilderness, make straight the way for the Lord. And here he's quoting from Isaiah chapter 40 in verse 3. Okay, so just to set the scene, John the Baptist is being grilled by the Jewish leaders. We said it this morning, expectation for a Messiah was always high. Every generation was looking, is the chosen one in this generation? And so they come to John, who's gathering great crowds in the wilderness, and he's speaking with authority from God. John, is it you? Are you the Messiah? Are you the one we're waiting for? And we get that wonderful example of John the Baptist. For our own sort of lives and testimonies. He always, when you encounter John the Baptist in the gospel, he's always pointing away from himself, don't look at me, look at Jesus.

[18:52] He's happy to lose followers. Don't follow me, follow Jesus. He must become greater, I must become less. He understands Jesus is the true light. He and every Christian ever since, we are reflected lights, and the light we are to reflect is not our own glory, but the glory of Jesus. So

they're asking him, who are you? Are you Elijah? No. Are you the prophet? No. Who are you? And he says, I am the voice.

I'm the voice. In a sense, he's saying, I am the king's herald anticipated by the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah. And so he quotes from Isaiah 40, prepare the way for the Lord. And this is huge. Let me show you why. In Isaiah, the book of Isaiah breaks into two parts. The first 39 chapters of the book of Isaiah are largely a message of judgment and the anticipation of exile because of their disobedience. There are wonderful glimpses that the Messiah will come and God will be gracious. But then we get to Isaiah 40 to 66, and it's often known as the book of comfort. And it brings a message of comfort to people living in exile, that there will be a second exodus. There will be a return and a restoration. There is great messages of salvation. There's the promise of new creation. There's the promise of the king who is the servant. But the question was always, well, when will this comfort come? When will this salvation come? When will we find peace? Who is going to be sufficient to bring hope of the new creation? And the message of Isaiah is, all of this is wrapped up in the coming of the Messiah King. We thought about that this morning, who is also the servant of the Lord. And so when John announces, my job is to get people ready for the coming of the Lord. He's saying, he's here. God has kept his promise. [21 : 00] The king, the Lord himself has come. Get ready to receive your king. A wonderful announcement about who Jesus is. The second theme, which seems so in many ways strikingly different, is of Jesus as the Lamb.

Verse 29, the next day John saw Jesus coming towards him and said, look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. And then again in verse 36, look, the Lamb of God.

The Lion is the Lamb, the great King is also the great sacrifice. The significance for the people when John says, look, the Lamb of God, for them being used to going to the temple, bringing sacrifices, they understand what's going on. To hear someone spoken of as the Lamb of God is a message of mercy from God. Sacrifices are always connected with God's mercy, that God has mercifully provided a way of sacrifice, of a substitute that will bring forgiveness and reconciliation. It's there from the first pages of the Bible. It also says the wages of sin is dead.

It also says there is a need for blood to be spilled, for justice to be done, for God's wrath to be turned away, for forgiveness to come. The Lamb of God speaks of sacrifice. And of course, the great text in the book of Isaiah that the New Testament writers come to love is Isaiah chapter 53 of the sufferings. One of the amazing things about Isaiah is he brings together that the Messiah King is the suffering servant, and the suffering servant is the Lamb of God, the Lamb who is led to the slaughter.

We all like sheep have gone astray. We all turn our own way, and the Lord has laid on him, on this one, on the Lamb of God, the iniquity of us all. And so John the Baptist announces, Jesus is the chosen Savior who saves by way of sacrifice.

[23 : 26] Notice that John the Baptist says, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. John the Apostle loves to record this idea of the world, this idea of a system, of a people, in active rebellion against God, a way to include us all. And we have this gracious, gracious truth that God is pleased to save sinners, to pull sinners out from the darkness, bring us into the kingdom of light. Jesus, who is eternal God, as the Lamb of God will suffer punishment. He will be forsaken. He will know what it is to feel the full weight of sin, and the punishment that sin deserves falling on Him. And in the sacrifice of the eternal Son of God, we have a sacrifice of eternal value, giving forgiveness and giving eternal life. And so John the Baptist gets us ready for the gospel. The only reason there needs to be sacrifice is because we sin against a holy God. We sin against a holy God. We deserve eternal punishment for disobeying an eternal and righteous God. But God, in His own Son Jesus, takes upon Himself the punishment, experiences death, knows separation, knows separation, that sense of being forsaken, pays the price in full as the perfect sacrifice, the perfect substitute who takes away sin and gives us heaven. And so the question returns, what do you want? What more could we want than this Jesus?

The last theme is the theme of the Spirit. So there in verses 32 and 33, we hear John giving his testimony, I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on Him. It's significant. In the Old Testament, we read of the Spirit coming down upon various of God's servants at different times.

Sometimes it's the judges, sometimes it's prophets, sometimes it's kings. There's something unique here though, because the Spirit remains upon Jesus. He is anointed for His task by the Spirit. So

here we have the Son of God coming to do the Father's work in the power of God, the Spirit. He is the Spirit-filled man. And notice that John connects, John the Baptist connects, the idea of Jesus having the Spirit and the Spirit remaining on Him, with verse 34, Jesus being the chosen one. And that's significant because those two themes appear again in Isaiah chapter 42, one of the great servant songs, anticipating the coming of the King who is the servant. And so John is telling us here, Jesus is the chosen servant of the Lord. And as the servant of the Lord, he is filled with the Spirit. He reads Isaiah 42. It's a wonderful, it's a short chapter, it's a wonderful chapter. This servant who comes bringing justice to the nation.

This servant through whom God's covenant promise is kept. This servant who is a light, not just for his own people, but a light bringing salvation to the Gentiles. This servant who delivers, gives freedom from blindness and captivity. And John the Baptist tells the crowd on that day, he's here. The one we're waiting for, God's chosen Savior, he's come. God has kept his promise. And not only that, which is remarkable enough, verse 33, John says, the man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.

[27 : 38] Just stop and think about that for a moment. We as New Testament believers, we have a privilege every Old Testament worshiper could only dream of. Moses, Abraham, David, none of them had this privilege. Every believer, not just the elite, we have the Holy Spirit within us. And not just for a while, but always. So the New Testament can speak about believers becoming the temple of the living God, because the Spirit comes to live within us. The life of God and the soul of man.

People are looking to connect with ultimate reality, wanting to connect with God. John is telling us faith in Jesus brings us into personal living relationship with the living God.

Well, having said all that, let's very briefly think about two responses to our question, what do you want? John in his gospel prepares us to hear the question. He's given us grounds for an answer by presenting these two testimonies. And now Jesus is here. He speaks to these two disciples of John the Baptist. What do you want or who are you speaking? And we get to meet Andrew, our patron saint, and a great model for our faith. He's heard what John the Baptist had to say about Jesus. He spent an afternoon with Jesus. And from that comes this response in verse 41.

The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, we found the Messiah. That is the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus. Two responses that we see from Andrew. First response, he believes in Jesus as Lord, in Jesus as the Messiah. We need to make sure that we get the significance of that. We spoke about it a fair amount this morning. But maybe this will help. For every visitor who comes to Edinburgh by rail, some of us spend a lot of time coming into Edinburgh by rail, the tracks all run into the heart of the city.

Okay, the terminus is Waverly. That's the destination. And if we live here, the destiny, that's our home. Okay, so we follow the tracks, we come to the terminus, we find ourselves at home.

[30 : 24] For Andrew, as someone raised to be taught the Old Testament, his great hope, his great home, God with his people. God with his people in a promised land. The reality of God bringing salvation and peace. The return of God's glory and the joy of rest with God. That's the destination that he is desperately longing for. That's home. Now, what are the tracks that will bring him home?

Where the tracks along which his hope runs? It's the Messiah. It's the coming of Messiah. When the King comes, then all of these promises can belong to the people of God.

If we were to ask Andrew, Andrew, what do you want? Deep down, Andrew, what are you seeking? He seeks the Messiah because he seeks life with God. Like Andrew, we will find ourselves believing and trusting and finding hope when the Spirit enables us to see Jesus and to seek him as our great treasure, as our final destination, as our true home. So, he believes. And the second response, he shares Jesus. First thing he did, he understands, sharing completes the joy. If I find the hope of the people of God that I need to share it. And so, he goes to share it with his brother. It's this wonderful pattern for the church of God. As we are led to see and believe, we are then sent out to share, to bring people to see Jesus to you. You and I know that that can often be difficult. We can often struggle with it.

We find ourselves disappointed in ourselves or disappointed by reaction, and so we can find it hard. There's a couple of things. Perhaps one of the reasons why we can find it hard is because we don't stop to wonder. We don't stop in order to worship, because it's gazing on Jesus' glory that will cause us to want to share that glory with others.

Perhaps we lose a sense of wonder. Perhaps deep down we know he's not always who and what we want most. We know that our hearts are prone to wander. They're prone to create idols.

[33 : 18] And so, John's gospel, even as it begins, gives us this invitation to see and to see again, to rejoice and to recover a desire for Jesus. What do you want? If you were to reflect on your life today, do you feel that you're on the right track in terms of your pursuit of joy and happiness?

Don't settle for a slice of what is temporary. When God in Jesus invites us to infinite joy, we're invited to center our life and our longings on Him, and to invite others into the joy of knowing Jesus too. Let's pray about that together.

Our Father in heaven,