

God's Questions (3): "What Are You Seeking?"

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning and a very warm welcome to you wherever you're joining us from. We're grateful to have you joining us for this service from Stornoway Free Church. We trust that as we worship God together, we will once again know of his blessing upon his word especially.

I want to just mention a couple of things before we begin the worship itself. There is some information available today in a pastoral letter. Most of you possibly have seen that. This is particularly for the congregation.

But anyone else of course is welcome to take that up as well. It's on our Facebook page, also on the congregation's website. It's a pastoral letter but it sets out in some detail our current situation and why we're not able to meet in the building meantime.

And something of the next few weeks we trust the steps that we need to take. So if you please have a look at that and just take in some of the detail on it. And you'll find that that's setting out how we are currently thinking in terms of returning to our building eventually, our buildings eventually.

The other thing is if you hear some noises, some paper, some voices. Today it's because I've got a much larger congregation here with me, with some of the family with me.

[1 : 1 6] So hopefully they'll help when it comes to the singing so that you'll hear more than just two voices. Okay, let's begin first of all by reading. And we're reading today from John's Gospel and chapter 1 and verses 19 to 34.

So that's the Gospel of John and chapter 1 and from verse 19 down as far as 34. And this is the testimony of John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who are you?

He confessed and did not deny, but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Are you Elijah? He said, I am not. Are you the prophet?

And he answered, No. So they said to him, Who are you? We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself? He said, I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness.

Make straight the way of the Lord, as the prophet Isaiah said. Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him, Then why are you baptizing, if you are neither the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?

[2 : 2 8] John answered them, I baptize with water. But among you stands one you do not know, Even he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie.

These things took place in Bethany, across the Jordan, where John was baptizing. The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and said, Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.

This is he of whom I said, After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me. I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, That he might be revealed to Israel.

And John bore witness, I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, This is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.

And I have seen and bore witness that this is the Son of God. We pray again God will bless this word to us as we read it together.

[3 : 39] Let's now seek God in prayer. Let's join together in prayer. Almighty God, we give thanks today for this opportunity to worship you together, and for this way that we have of gathering together by this technology.

While we cannot be together physically in our usual place. We thank you Lord that we have your word freely available to us. We pray as we have been reading here of the Holy Spirit descending upon Jesus.

We give thanks that you have given your Holy Spirit to all who trust in you. So we pray today that while we are bound together by way of technological means, Help us we pray so that we will be bound together in the bonds that your Spirit creates.

The bonds of faith and spiritual fellowship. We pray Lord today that you would strengthen these bonds. We give thanks for the way that this time of lockdown and this time of being separated from each other physically, has reinforced for us the importance of the fellowship of your Church.

The importance of being a people together, bound together in the bonds that you create through your Spirit. We thank you Lord today that we are able to exercise that as we pray for one another, as we pray for your people elsewhere in the world.

[5 : 01] Lord, we do pray for your Church. We pray that you would bless your people in all their circumstances. Because we know that while ours may be difficult and trying and challenging at this time with our situation in regard to the pandemic.

Lord, we know that there are many other places in the world where your people suffer from greater adversities. Where ours pale into insignificance at times compared to theirs.

And we ask today that you would bless your Church. Where they are persecuted severely. Where they are put to death, O Lord, in certain parts of the world because they trust in you and confess you openly.

And Lord, we pray that you would grant that your blessing will follow even such times of trauma and trial for your people. That they will be strengthened more in their bond with yourself and with one another.

And that you would use this time, O Lord, in their experience too. To be productive towards the conversion of others, even those who persecute them. But we know that you have done this so often in the past.

[6 : 07] Where people who have been determined to wipe out the Gospel and to eradicate your people. Have had to confess that the Lord is God. And have had to come to acknowledge before you that they cannot remove you from your government in this world.

We thank you, Lord, today that in the many ways in which your providence reaches us, you still speak to us. And especially that you speak to us through your Word.

And we pray that you'd help us always to regard the events of our lives using the light that your Word gives us. Shine into our hearts, we pray today, with your truth.

Give us, we pray, a further understanding of our need as sinners who are lost without you. We ask today that you bless the Gospel to us, whatever our relationship presently is with you.

Lord, we pray that today we may know you as our God and as our friend, as our Saviour. We ask that you would bless those who may be listening to the Gospel today or watching on video.

[7 : 12] And they're still not savingly related to you. Or maybe are, but are seeking confirmation of it. Lord, we pray that through your Spirit there will be much advancement in the understanding of each one of us.

Especially those who are seeking you and seeking peace for their souls. And we pray today that you bless us as a congregation when we are still unable to meet together in our buildings.

Oh Lord, we thank you for the measure of protection that you have given us. For the way that you have given us the patience and the way with all to wait until it is safe to do so.

We bless you that even these times are times when we can find more about ourselves and about our relationship with God being brought home to us.

And Lord, we pray that you would bless any today who are ill of our number. Those who are in hospital, in the hospice, in care homes. We pray that you would bless them and those in recent days who have lost loved ones.

[8 : 16] And for whom these difficult times add to the trauma of their loss. Oh Lord, bless them with your comfort today. Bless them with your own Spirit to direct and lead them into your truth.

And we do ask that you would grant blessing, oh Lord, to all who have had to deal with illness in these days. We are apprehensive even of going to hospital or to clinics.

We pray that you would give us, Lord, that faith in our hearts that would look beyond these things that are immediate. And we'll place our trust and our confidence in you while using the means of safety that you have given us.

We pray that you would grant blessing today to our governments. We pray that again you would guide those who are in charge of us in the nation. Continue, Lord, to direct them, to guide them.

Help them, we pray, to deal with this situation each day as it develops. And we pray that you would further protect us as a people from further outbreaks, Lord, of this virus.

[9 : 18] And we ask that we may find in days to come that you have brought to us a means by which this virus can be eradicated. Nevertheless, Lord, we pray at the moment that you would uphold us.

That you would grant us through your blessing and great mercy. That we will know your protective care. We ask your blessing for all who are engaged in the activities of nursing care and medical practices, clinics of various kinds, especially dealing with the virus itself.

We give thanks, Lord, for all who look after us at these times. And for all others at this time who are themselves, oh Lord, engaged in whatever form of work they're engaged in, in looking after others and seeking their well-being.

And we ask that you would graciously bless us now. And as we confess our sins, we pray that you would freely accept of us and pardon and wash us from our transgressions.

For Jesus' sake. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Well, children, we're going to look at another bird from the Bible today. And our bird from the Bible today is the turtle dove.

[10 : 29] We've already looked at the dove, but the turtle dove is mentioned in the Song of Solomon. One of the places it's mentioned, Song of Solomon, chapter 2 and verse 12, where we find it saying, The flowers appear on the earth, the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtle dove is heard in our land.

The turtle dove is a type of dove, and it's one of the smaller doves. It's a very beautiful bird. It has a beautiful voice. And the older translations I used when I was young to wonder why it was turtle.

It's shortened to turtle in some of the older translations. The voice of the turtle is heard in our land. And I always wonder, well, how can a turtle's voice be heard in our land?

Doesn't it actually live in the sea? And of course, it's a shortened form of turtle dove. And it's called turtle dove on account of the noise that it makes, of the call that it has.

It sounds like doot, doot, doot, doot, doot, doot, doot, like that, something like that, which sounds, when you hear it, a bit like turtle. Anyway, it's one of the smaller ones. And it's a bird which migrates.

[11 : 42] In other words, it goes for the summer weather to a different place from where the Song of Solomon here is set in the Middle East or in Israel. And what it says here is that the summer has actually come, and the turtle dove has come back from its time of migration, and is back here for the summer.

So this is what it says, if you read it from verse 10 there, my beloved speaks and says to me, arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away. For behold, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear on the earth, the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtle dove is heard in our land.

And the turtle dove, because it migrates like that, there's always a sign of better weather in summer when the turtle dove has come back to where it's found in summertime.

And the turtle dove in the Bible is often used as an image of love. It's an image of love here as well, in a sense.

But the turtle dove has come to be regarded because of its beauty and the gentleness of its voice and so on. It's often used throughout history as an image for love or for gentleness and for beauty.

[12 : 58] Now, the language here is really beautiful, isn't it? It's a language of talking about flowers and a beautiful garden, the time of singing and the voice of the turtle dove, the fig tree ripens its figs, the vines are in blossom, they give forth a wonderful fragrance.

And all of that gives you a wonderful picture of beauty, of beautiful, not just beautiful weather, but a beautiful garden or environment. And in the Bible, we can say that the winter went out with the coming of Jesus.

The spiritual winter waiting for the coming of the Savior, in a sense, that's what's happened when Jesus came. The summer of salvation began with his coming.

Not that people weren't saved in the Old Testament, but it's a big change when Jesus came because the promise in the Old Testament was that a Savior would come. And this is what happened with the birth of Jesus.

And if you use this passage, you can see in it the beauty and the singing and the rejoicing and the joy. You can associate that with salvation. And Jesus is calling on us to come in to enjoy the summer of salvation that he himself has brought about.

[14 : 14] See, in verse 14, here is saying, O my dove in the clefts of the rock, let me see your face. Let me hear your voice.

For your voice is sweet and your face is lovely. If you take the imagery there to be Jesus calling on us to come and enjoy fellowship with him, enjoy being his people, enjoy the summer weather of his salvation.

Well, the turtle dove reminds us really of all of that. He's inviting us today to come to him and to come to enjoy everything that he has to give us and to turn away from the winter, the coldness of sin, the darkness of death that we caused by our sin against God.

And he's saying, leave that behind. Come to me and come to enjoy the summer weather of my salvation. And that's what we're reminded of in the voice of the turtle dove.

When you hear a turtle dove, if you hear a dove cooing, especially some of the more gentle types of doves, it reminds you of this particular passage and what the turtle dove stands for.

[15 : 23] It's love, it's gentleness, it's beauty, but especially it's to do with salvation, the summer of God's salvation that's arrived with Jesus himself.

So, let's say the Lord's Prayer together. We'll sit slowly so that the little ones can actually follow in with it as well. Let's say the Lord's Prayer together. Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

I'd like us to turn now to John chapter 1. I'm going to read from where we finished reading. John chapter 1 and at verse 35. I'm going to look at some of the verses following on from that today.

[16 : 35] So, John 1 at verse 35. The next day again, John was standing with two of his disciples and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, Behold, the Lamb of God.

The two disciples heard him say this and they followed Jesus. Jesus turned and saw them following and said, What are you seeking? They said to him, Rabbi, which means teacher, where are you staying?

He said to them, Come and you will see. So they came and saw where he was staying and they stayed with him that day for it was about the tenth hour.

Now we've been looking for a couple of weeks at the first question that was asked of human beings in the Bible from God in Genesis chapter 3 and verse 9 where after Adam and Eve and tried to hide from God after they sinned against him, God asked this question, Where are you?

And we saw how that's related to our position, our condition after the fall, after our sin against God. We are in that state of sin which involves sin and death.

[17 : 41] So God was bringing Adam to think seriously about what he had done and we saw how that applied to ourselves. Now the second question we're looking at here is the question Jesus put to these disciples, What are you seeking?

In verse 38. We're taking it as a question from God. It's one of God's questions because Jesus of course is God. He's your God as he's come into the world. And this question that addresses these disciples is in the context of two disciples that had been following John the Baptist.

Now after hearing what John the Baptist has said about Jesus, they begin to follow Jesus. So the theme of our sermon this morning, our study this morning, is following Jesus.

That's really what we want to think about some of the things that we learn from this passage about following Jesus. We're going to look first of all at following Jesus, the beginning of the relationship.

Then we'll look at following Jesus, the examination of the relationship as Jesus asks this question, What are you seeking? And thirdly, we'll see following Jesus and something about the core of the relationship what really lies at the center of the heart of this relationship in the answer that these two give, these disciples, where they say, Where are you seeking?

[19 : 04] staying. And following on from that, Jesus says, Come and see. So it begins here, the following of Jesus begins with these two disciples beginning to follow Jesus in verse 37.

That's what it says. They heard him say this and they followed Jesus. Now we read earlier in the chapter how John the Baptist previously had pointed to Jesus and said, Behold the Lamb of God in verse 29.

Behold the Lamb of God takes away the sin of the world. Here again, he's saying, Behold the Lamb of God. Now these disciples of John the Baptist had been taught in the things of the Old Testament.

John the Baptist was the last of the prophets. He belonged to the Old Testament, although he's here in the time of Jesus. There's an overlap into the New Testament age. But John really belonged to the Old Testament age.

And because these disciples had been taught by him and they would have been taught about the coming of the Saviour and the expectation of the Saviour coming into the world, when John said, Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, they associated that with what the Old Testament teaches about through sacrifices, through the Lamb being a sacrifice that God required and how that's related to forgiveness of sin and covering for sin.

[20 : 23] They related that to Jesus. and realized this must be the person that was prophesied about. So they began following him on the basis of what they heard as him being the Lamb of God.

Of course, the Lamb of God, if you take everything in the Old Testament which speaks about the sacrifices and this is really a summary that John the Baptist is giving in this title that he's giving to Jesus.

It takes in everything to do with making an atonement for sin and doing so by a sacrifice which of course comes to be the death of Christ. Well, that's where the following of Jesus begins for us too, isn't it?

It begins in looking to the Lamb of God. It begins in looking to Jesus as God's answer to our sinfulness. What we saw last time, where are you, Adam?

Where is mankind? Where are we in consequence of our sin? We are lost. We are under the condemnation of God. Yet, God in his kindness and his love provides an answer to that and he provides the answer to that in Jesus as the atoning sacrifice.

[21 : 32] To by his death we come to have a right relationship with God when we trust in this Jesus. That is where the gospel invites us. That's where the gospel brings us today to Jesus, to the cross, to his resurrection, so that following on from the question where are you?

There is this wonderful, wonderful emphasis where God is saying behold the Lamb of God look at what I have provided for you in your lostness so that you will be delivered from that so that you will be saved.

The Lamb of God. What a beautiful title that is for Jesus. And when you come to the book of Revelation you will find that the Lamb is sitting on the throne of heaven.

He is the King. You have both emphasis on the Lamb being the sacrifice and also the fact that Jesus is King sitting on the throne. Today and every day and all the time the world is being governed and especially the lives of God's people they are being governed by a Lamb by the one who died for them and he was now seated as the King of the universe.

So following Jesus the beginning of the relationship is turning to Jesus as God's Saviour for us. Following Jesus secondly is something that is examined here because as soon as they began following Jesus Jesus turned and saw them following and said what are you seeking?

[23 : 06] There are two things here especially the emphasis here that Jesus turned and saw them following. He didn't just hear them walking behind him and then without turning around asked them what are you guys doing?

Why are you following me? He actually turned around it's a deliberate emphasis on Jesus turning round right round to see them and the word see itself here is also very important.

So this is a deliberate action on the part of Jesus and there's a spiritual meaning to that as well because as Jesus turned this was no accident that he actually asked this question.

He wanted to get to the heart of why they had begun following him and when you find this word see elsewhere in the Bible the likes of Luke chapter 23 for example verse 55 you'll find the women who came to the grave after Jesus had been the body of Jesus put into the sepulcher it says that they saw where he had been laid it's a word which means paying very careful attention to something seeing with the kind of seeing that really looks carefully at something to take it in they'd have to that grave they'd have to take a note of where it was what it was like because they were intending to come back afterwards after the Sabbath and this is what it says they saw and here Jesus turns and he saw them following he looked at them with a studied look he looked at them in a way that saw into their hearts he looked at them in such a way that they would realize this person is measuring us he's really looking so intently at us he's looking right into our minds of course that is something that you and I also know from the Bible that Jesus sifts our lives that he looks through the things that are happening in our lives and as we'll see in a moment that's for our good as well there's this penetrating insight along with this deliberate action and then the question that Jesus asks is very interesting he turned saw them following and said what are you seeking he didn't say who are you looking for he said what are you seeking in other words he's really turning and saying to them what's the reason for your following what's your motive what is it about why are you actually following me in this way what is it that is behind your following what's at the root of your following because John in his gospel tells us other people follow Jesus and they're called disciples but they weren't actually savingly connected with Jesus word disciple means a follower but there's a type of following that just follows formally or in an outward way where the heart is not really engaged in it if you go to chapter 2 for example you'll see there at the end of the chapter when Jesus was in Jerusalem at the Passover verse 23 many believed in his name when they saw the signs that's the miracles that he was doing but Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them because he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man for he himself knew what was in man now there's we don't have time to go into it but there's a great emphasis there there's a wonderful truth there that when you come to entrust yourself to

Jesus in faith where that is really genuine heart faith doesn't have to be great faith as long as his genuine sincere faith there's a wonderful thing that's happening Jesus entrusts himself to us it's a two way relationship Jesus gives himself to us to be our Lord and Saviour and friend as we come to take him to be our Saviour and our friend but you see these people in chapter 2 there they weren't following for the right reason they saw the miracles they thought this is great this man will be our teacher now because he can do these wonderful things and then when you go further on you can see in chapter 6 of John how you've got there many of his disciples after Jesus had been teaching them things which were difficult for them to accept that he was going to be the sacrifice that would atone for sin and so on many of his disciples verse 66 of chapter 6 many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him in other words they no longer followed him the thing was too much for them they just couldn't accept the kind of thing that he was saying discipleship involved but also what he himself was going to do or to be and so Jesus turned to the 12 disciples and he said do you want to go away as well will you also go away and Peter answered him this famous reply

[28 : 08] Lord to whom shall we go and so you find you see the following that's mentioned in John's Gospels of two kinds there's a following where our heart our life is committed to Jesus which is the kind of following you and I would want to have but there's also a following if you like from a distance or formally and just outside where the heart's not being given to Jesus when you look if you're online at all if you're using social media you go to the likes of Twitter for example and you see some of the celebs that use Twitter and you see the number of followers they have there's thousands and thousands you could see somebody there let's say 50k followers but most of these people don't know that celebrity at all they just follow for the sake of it because they're famous because it's cool to do so because they're added to this number that are followers of the celebrity but very few of them really know that celebrity personally as a friend as a companion as somebody they're familiar with each day and sometimes it's like that spiritually as well following has to be more than just an outward following that's why he puts this question in chapter 6 in verse 67 as we saw when he turned and said will you also go away you 12 disciples have been with me and Simon

Peter answered him Lord to whom shall we go you have the words of eternal life and we have believed and have come to know that you are the holy one of God there is really the crux of the issue that is what following Jesus really is about you have come to know that he's the holy one of God that he's the saviour that God has provided in other words this question while it analyses us and examines our following today it's actually designed for our good it's designed so that we will look at what it is that makes us follow Jesus is it just a matter of belonging to the church is it the church we trust in well I hope not it's good to be part of the church it's good to be a member of the church it's good to belong to the church that worships the Lord but what Jesus is saying is what are you seeking what motive do you have in following me you see it's designed for our good because this is really something that counters mere formality in belonging to disciples being disciples of Jesus so we have to be afraid of a dead orthodoxy just as much as being afraid of a lively heresy you can find something that's completely different to God's will and against the truth of God and yet it's very attractive it's very lively it's got something that draws you in yet you can have on the other hand you can have people who are genuine believers and their life is so dull they are orthodox everything's in the right place but they show little sign of joy or celebration of what it means to belong to

Christ and to be saved so let's not have a dead orthodoxy let's really show that Jesus is our Lord that we have our heart in his hand that he is in our hearts that application to us today is so important where Jesus is turning around to us today through the gospel and he's really addressing me as I preach the gospel right here and now and saying what are you seeking why are you doing this why are you following me and he's saying through the preaching of the gospel to yourselves today in his own wonderful penetrative loving way what are you seeking what is following Jesus about for you isn't it really that you want him to be the king of your life the saviour the one who will be with you now and on into eternity so following Jesus the beginning of the relationship in regard to him being the lamb of God the testing or the examination of the relationship with a question he asks what are you seeking and then thirdly following Jesus is in the answer that they give to that the core of the relationship and in many ways this is the most important part of the passage where they're saying to him

Rabbi where are you staying now the old translations have the word abide we've come to know through history through long term use of the word abide and John especially it's been taken into various hymns abide with me and so on that's a wonderful word it means living with Jesus John's theology of abiding is really what following Jesus is about it's to do with living with Christ in a living relationship abiding with him in this life and abiding with him as we leave this life to go to heaven it's all about living with Jesus abiding with Christ that's the that's the power of John's theology of John's gospel which where it speaks here about abiding chapter 15 Jesus himself saying to the disciples abide in me and I and you using the imagery of the vine and the branches and they meet the challenge of the question in other words with another question that shows up that their desire is really to follow him closer to follow him in an even closer relationship than they have where he says what are you seeking he says where are you staying we want to come and see where you're living we want to come and live with you we want to come and spend time with you that's how the answer the challenge is that what you're saying yourself today where Jesus is asking you and asking me what are you seeking doesn't your heart then reply

I want to know more about you I want to know you better I want to progress this relationship with you that's begun by my trusting in you as the lamb of God I want to bring that further on through your blessing I want to know more fellowship with you all of that that applies to abiding in Jesus staying with Jesus this is what's built into the language of this passage in John's theology what a wonderful theology what a wonderful emphasis it is and then it gets even better because Jesus then says come and see come and you will see it's probably better just leaving it come and see here is Jesus himself inviting them now that they've responded in this way Jesus himself is actually now saying well come and see and that's what he's saying to you and to me through the gospel today it's Jesus who's speaking to us and when he's asking the question what are you seeking and we're replying to that where do you abide where do you stay

[35 : 22] I want to come and know more about you well he's saying well come and see see he's inviting them to see for themselves what it is to be with him what it is to hear him further to know him better now there's an important emphasis or two or more in fact in this for a start we cannot accept or dismiss Jesus on the basis of what other people say even when they're saying the best things about him even when people like yourselves myself and Kenny seeking to preach the gospel will say things about Jesus we hope that are true to the Bible's teaching and some of the wonderful theology you find in John about Jesus you still don't accept or dismiss Jesus hope you don't dismiss him anyway but even if you do don't dismiss him on the basis of what anyone even a preacher of the gospel says say that carefully because you need to come and hear him for yourself you need to come to know him for yourself and when you come to know him you'll want to know him more you'll want to know him better and again in John's gospel we find an example of that in the woman that came to the well the woman of Samaria as she's known chapter 4 and when she came to meet with Jesus there as you know

Jesus proceeded to speak to her and as he went on speaking to her he finally revealed to her that he in fact was the Messiah the Savior in verse 26 I who am speaking to you I'm here what a phenomenal moment that was in the experience of this woman she'd been expecting been taught to expect the Savior the Messiah here's this man sitting on a well tired with his journey and wanting a drink from her he said I'm the one I am he I'm the promised one and then she left her water pot there and she went away into town and said to the people come and see a man who told me all that ever I did can this not be the Christ must this not be the Christ you see the same language there come and see a man who told me everything that I've ever done and if you're hesitant today in the relationship with Jesus the best thing is to listen to himself and say come and see for yourself come and actually see what it means to be in a saving relationship with me come and see for yourself and prove for yourself who Jesus is what he can do what he's done because when you go on in this passage in chapter 4 as you go down the passage you can see there for example verse 39 many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony he told me all that ever

I did so when the Samaritans came to him they asked him to stay with them and he stayed there two days and many more believed because of his word they said to the woman it is no longer because of what you said that we believe for we have heard him for ourselves and know that this is indeed the saviour of the world what a fantastic passage what a wonderful way of bringing on further the teaching of chapter one of what following Jesus is about they didn't just accept the word of the woman who said come and see they did accept that they went to Jesus and what did they do they begged him to stay with them just as in chapter one we're seeing these disciples saying well where are you staying and we'll see that they came and stayed with him and here in chapter four you have the same Memphis they came and he stayed with them after him being requested by them and many more believed because of his word and then their testimony was we believed what you said but now we believe especially we believe because we heard him ourselves now we could put a false distinction between what you hear in the gospel being preached and what you hear

Jesus himself saying because really the preaching of the gospel is Jesus speaking to us when we're true to God's word but what this is really saying is we need to hear him for ourselves and not just hear the mere words of the Bible or the mere words of a preacher when we're listening to the gospel reading the Bible listening to the gospel being preached we have to be attuned to our hearts need to be attuned to listening for Jesus himself to speak to us and through the Holy Spirit that is what happens and it's then that we're able to say like these people in chapter 4 now I believe not because of what the preacher said merely but we have heard him for ourselves so here today is how Jesus is putting it to you and to me what are you seeking and then the response that they had is important where are you abiding where do you stay and the passage finishes so they came and saw where he was staying and stayed with him that day for it was about the tenth hour see we began in verse 37 the two disciples heard him say this and they followed

Jesus now we're coming to the end of the passage where are you you're with these disciples who began in chapter 37 to follow him now they're sitting with him that where he is staying this is what the journey has led to so it is with everyone who comes to follow Jesus for themselves this is what it takes you it takes you to be with himself to be in fellowship with himself to want to know more of himself to stay with him you know ultimately that's what heaven is about that's what the core of heaven is too because it's the core of following Jesus is to be with him and to know him well that's made perfect in heaven where being with him and knowing him is on a higher level and nowhere better is that expressed than in his own words in the prayer you find in John chapter 17 remember he was praying there with the disciples shortly before he went out and went on to the cross the death of the cross and in chapter 17 towards the end of the prayer there in verse 24 he's really bringing it all to a conclusion and saying father father

[42 : 27] I desire it's really father I will my will is that they also whom you have given me may be with me where I am to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world that's what Jesus prayed for and that's what will be answered in the population of heaven because that's where this journey takes us that's where this journey reaches its terminus although it goes on forever once you've reached that terminus there's the beginning of the relationship Jesus as the Lamb of God there's the examination of it what are you seeking why that was being put to them so that they would know they were following Jesus for the right reasons not just outwardly but in their hearts wanted to know him and to know him better and the core of the relationship abiding with him fellowship with him being united to him and that also is our evangelistic focus come and see for yourself may God bless these thoughts on his word let's pray almighty God we give thanks for every opportunity you give us to know you and especially in the way of following you that we give our hearts so that we are not only ruled by you but also come in knowing you to be saved to be delivered from our sins to be a living people of God in this world to have the hope and the expectancy of life in heaven with you and thank you Lord for all that your word brings to us with regard to these very important issues be today we pray our Lord our saviour our friend our companion and give us Lord each day we learn that our heart may be set upon abiding with you and on you abiding with us hear us we pray for your name's sake amen we're going to conclude now by singing from sing sam's version of psalm 34 that's on page 40 if you're using the usual blues and books and we'll sing to the tune jackson verses 1 to 9 at all times

I will bless the Lord I'll praise him with my voice because I glory in the Lord let troubled souls rejoice down to verse 9 come taste and see the Lord is good who trusts in him is blessed oh fear the Lord you say with need you will not be oppressed so from verse 1 at all times I will bless the Lord at all times I will bless the Lord I'll praise him with my voice because I glory in the Lord let troubled souls rejoice together let us praise the Lord exalt his name with me

I sought the Lord his answer came from fears he set me free they look to him and shine with joy they are not good to shame him this suffering man cried to the Lord from him deliverance came the the angel of the Lord surrounds and guards continually all those who fear and honor him he sets his his people free come and see the

Lord is good who trusts in him is blessed oh fear the Lord you saints with me you will not be oppressed now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and evermore amen thank you once again for joining us for this short service do join again please this afternoon this evening if you can at 630 when that will be Reverend Kenny I McLeod will be conducting the service and in the meantime may God bless you and keep you safe in these days to come