

What Is It That You Seek?
Isaiah 55:6-9

Let us pray: Father in heaven, Your thoughts and ways reach far beyond our human understanding, and yet, through faith we seek to know You in Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Empower Your people today to reach out with the Gospel message of salvation to a world that is so distant from Your mercy. Grant it for Jesus' sake. Amen.

In 1849, pioneers packed their picks and shovels heading West to seek gold and fortune in California. The Gold Rush was on. Some industrious miners struck it rich and found overwhelming success. Most experienced hardship and hopes dashed. Religion has its seekers too. Some folks follow the latest trends, jumping from one belief system to another in search of that which satisfies and brings lasting happiness. Lately, science has been all the craze and the Church of Scientology has hooked many notable celebrities. With intellectual picks and shovels at hand, these seekers leave no stone unturned in hopes of one day hitting the jackpot.

What is it that you seek? As together we come to this house of worship on a sunny, summer morning, what is it that you hope to gain? You only need pick up the daily newspaper or click on the evening news report to find that people are looking in all the wrong places. Meth use is an ever increasing problem in Montana. Marijuana has evolved into a huge industry with users of all ages. Casual sex is the accepted norm in society. Others look for satisfaction at the bottom of a bottle. Our world is looking for an escape, some hiatus from all the problems that plague us as a society. It seeks relief from rampant crime on streets and in neighborhoods. We live in a world constantly on the move, always seeking out ways to survive and thrive. What are you seeking? Where do your priorities lie? How are you doing in the midst of pandemic measures?

The Lord calls us to seek Him and call upon Him in His Word. The Gold Rush of '49 came and went with boom and bust. Trends in fashion and appeals of popularity also come and go in our modern age. We know that the on-going use and abuse of

drugs, alcohol, pornography and the like to escape this present reality bring us to a dismal dead end. God's Word doesn't do that. It brings satisfaction complete and whole in Jesus Christ. It doesn't wax and wane from one generation to the next, changing with the times. Every generation, every age, needs the Word of God which is able to make us wise unto salvation. Those who would hear the Holy Scriptures, reading, marking, learning, and inwardly digesting, in turn embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life in Jesus, the Savior.

We know all too well this truth—that Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and that all who seek Him find Him as He Himself draws us to Himself. But the old ways of doing it our own way also draw us away. In holy Baptism, Jesus made us His own by clothing us with His righteousness. Not always have our lives reflected that. We are taught to seek those things above, not earthly things. Instead, we seek the things our eyes behold and ears are itching to hear. We find ourselves seeking the very things that bring us fast pleasure and quick success. Everyone wants what the other one has. Perhaps it's the newer, bigger, better, faster, more reliable set of wheels. A hole in one out on the links would sure be nice. A different job that requires few hours and higher pay would be a nice switch. You know how it is. By nature, we are a people focused inwardly on our own needs and own satisfactions. Looking out for #1 is the one thing you can count on. Yet in the midst of it all we are left still seeking, still wanting, still longing, still thirsting for that which truly satisfies.

Without the Lord we're lost. Holy Scripture teaches us that we are so lost in our sin that we don't even have the power to recognize or generate faith to believe. St. Paul reminds us that we were dead in our trespasses and sins, but God made us alive in Christ Jesus. Because of our inward turning of sin we've socially and individually distanced ourselves from God only to seek that which satisfies for the moment. Nevertheless, the Lord came to our rescue in His great mercy. It was for the lost, for you and me, for people living in darkness all over the world, that our Light has since dawned in Jesus Christ. God came seeking you out. He seeks you out today in His Word, drawing you unto Himself in mystical union through mere bread and wine. Jesus, our Good Shepherd, came to redeem the lost sheep of Israel. He sought us out while we were yet sinners. Even now He invites all who thirst to come and drink without money and without cost.

“Seek the LORD while He may be found,” Isaiah proclaims, “call upon Him while He is near” (verse 6). We would like to think that we have all the time in the

world to pull it together and get right with God. There's no rush. God's mercy will be readily available for me when I'm ready. But clearly the time is short, and God's mercy will give way to the judgment. This period of grace in which we now live will not go on forever. Let the wicked forsake his way NOW. Let him return to the Lord for mercy NOW. The day of seeking is soon over. The invitation to call upon the Lord is urgent and imperative. Don't put it off. Jesus is coming! Don't procrastinate, lulling yourselves into thinking you have years ahead of you to repent. "Behold, now is the acceptable time; now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2).

You have heard of a notable man who sought after the Lord, but acted in ignorance and unbelief. He knew well of the Law, of religion, of God and His Word, but his own self-interests and misplaced zeal got the best of him. One day as he was going about persecuting Christ and His Church, the Lord drew near and sought Saul out by brining him to his knees with utter blindness. Moved in repentance by the great change Jesus had brought about in his life, this hater of Christians was converted to the great apostle Paul. By his own admission he writes, "Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. The grace of our Lord Jesus was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus" (I Tim. 1:13-14).

What is it that you seek? Whose way will you go? Left to ourselves we remain mired in sin and eternally lost, blind as bats and without light, constantly seeking that which doesn't truly satisfy. But our Lord has successfully rescued us and brought us to faith. His way we will go and His path we will follow even when reason says otherwise and stubborn pride stands in the way. My since sainted uncle would chuckle at the saying inscribed next to his office desk: "Be reasonable, do it my way." How convenient for us!

Leaving behind this kind of self-centeredness and seeking the Lord while He may be found remains a daily wrestling. Called to repentance and faith, remembering our Baptism, confession humbles us and turns us again to seek God's mercy. There God assures us anew of the forgiveness He won for us at the cross. Absolved of our sins and fully pardoned, you and I go forth in peace to serve God and the neighbor. We love because He first loved us. In the name of Jesus. Amen.