

So often I have found myself searching the internet for one thing only to find an article about something that seems more interesting. After finishing such an article, I realize I can't even remember what I was searching for in the first place. How often have you done the same; searching, gotten distracted, and lost track of what you were looking for in the first place?

Obviously, it is easier to find something if you remember what you are looking for!  
*Even more frustrating is to search when you don't know where to begin!*

When we don't know where to start the search, we can be just as frustrated as when we forget what we are looking for. I can't tell you how many times I have not been able to find a particular item in one store because I usually buy it in a different store which is laid out differently. You know what it is like to try to find something in Walgreens that you usually buy in Target, right?

Mark's Gospel is full of searches. Most important was Jesus' search for disciples, wounded people, lonely people, empty people he knew he could heal. At the same time, he was surrounded by people engaged in their own scavenger hunts. The hungry wanted food. Religious and political leaders wanted evidence to warrant an arrest of Jesus. Disciples hoped for respect. The sick begged for healing. Everyone was searching for something important. Each wanted more than they had but weren't sure what would help.

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Unfortunately, then, and now, too many are "searching for love in all the wrong places" (just like the refrain of a well know country/western song.)

Some feel being hyper religious is the ticket. Others feel it is just important to do what feels good, take care of yourself, and don't worry about others. Many have no clue where to look and are paralyzed by emptiness, anger, selfishness, or grief. Many have simply given up or lash out in frustration and pain. And many others aren't even aware they are in the midst of a confusing search.

Mark's text shares a pattern replayed over and over again in Jesus' ministry. As soon as he healed one, hundreds came searching for more. As cries for help grew louder, however, Jesus often disappeared. Disciples constantly rebuked him with questions about how he could leave when people needed so much! (Doesn't that sound familiar?)

People were searching in all the wrong places, looking for what they thought they needed rather than listening to what Jesus offered to forgive or heal. Many simply wanted to control Jesus rather than allow him to change their search.

Everyone loved miracles, but they were never Jesus' goal or the most important thing he offered. They were simply his calling card to announce that he was on the scene and had the power to deliver what he promised. That is why Jesus kept moving on

when the demands became so intense. As he moved to the next town, it was not for lack of compassion, but to keep his mission clear.

(How might that change our perspective of Jesus' love for us when we beg and plead and don't get what we want? So often we think he doesn't care and fail to remember how much he truly does care.)

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Jesus needed the crowds to understand what his mission was truly about. He needed them to be patient and wait until Good Friday and Easter as then they would be able to start putting the pieces of the puzzle together. His loving desire was for them to find what he brought rather than miss the boat by focusing on the wrong search.

Too often the crowds missed the obvious and wanted more. We do the same thing as we neglect meditation and prayer and assume a stronger financial savings plan, a cottage, a newer car, or different friends will finally give us what we really are looking for. In some ways this time of quarantine is a blessing that has forced us to slow down and cease much of our frenzied searching. As we realize there is much we can't control, it is easier to remember faith.

Psalm 46:10 says all of this better than I ever could. It goes like this: *"Be still and know that I am God."* That is good news. Be still. Quit searching. Quit worrying. Understand that God has come to you!

How often as kids did we see a rainbow and rush for our bicycles to see if there really was a pot of gold at the end? And aren't those daily pots of gold at the end of the rainbow (whatever they might be for me) what much of our daily searching is all about? Don't we assume that if we simply look in the right place, we will find what we feel we need or deserve? Don't we get obsessed with what we think we need and fail to understand what Jesus offers.

How much time is spent on searching for something that is already within reach, if only we would be still and let God show us what he has already given?

In the midst of everyone seeking something from Jesus, he relocated to a quiet place to pray. He needed to put a stop to their search and refocus on his! In that action he also offered us an example of a better search we might undertake more often. To be still. To be quiet. To surround ourselves with God's presence rather than the business and anxiety of our searching.

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How many earthly searches end with the beginning of another? A new car becomes used, and we need something different. A great job becomes boring, and we stare at the grass on the other side of the fence. Expensive clothing is suddenly out of style. Our passion becomes complacency. All of this happens because we forget what our important search is really all about.

That is point of the Gospel and the reason for Jesus' life. *Here is the truth:* My future not dependent on what I deserve or find but that Jesus has found ME! Life changes when we can live in such peace rather than obsessing with more intensive searches.

The world is fixating on finding the perfect formula to make life good again. Maybe we are searching for God in all the wrong places!

The good life is not about Jesus giving what I want but giving me what I need! Despite all of my shortcomings Jesus has found me, loves me, forgives me, and in doing so gives value and purpose to every part of my life.

The question no longer should be “what are you looking for?” but instead will you be still and know that God has already given more than you ever imagined.

The only search of real value started at the manger and ended with an empty tomb. In other words, the search is over. It is time for life to begin.

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