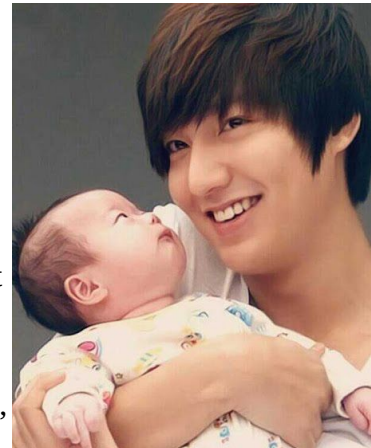


[John 1:35-42]

There is something wonderful about starting out: on a long journey; for a holiday; starting married life together; finding a new friend. Ask any married couple, or any two old friends, about when and where they first met, and you will stir up wonderful memories, even if the relationship has long since broken apart. The first memories remain.

When a mother and her newborn baby look at each other for the first time, it is an extraordinary moment. An amazing new beginning of a relationship that is lifelong... and beyond!



In this first chapter of John's gospel, we are seeing a couple of Jesus' friends meeting him for the first time. They are somewhere near the river Jordan. Jesus walks past, and John the Baptist points him out, so the two follow Jesus. *He* makes the first move, turning round to ask them 'What do you want?'

It's not just a simple question, such that we might ask someone who has wandered into our yard. Jesus is asking the deep question at the centre of each of our lives: 'What **do** I want?' ...from life. What do I expect after my death? What is my ultimate hope?

A thousand different people will answer that question in a thousand different ways: but in the end don't we all want 'to be happy'; 'forever'? For there can be no true happiness if it's going to end. And that means we want God, the Infinite Mystery. And Jesus here is God in human form.

The disciples of course don't yet get the mystery. They blurt out: 'Er... where do you live?' He says: Come and see! And so begins their friendship. Not just an ordinary friendship: this one is going to link them to the infinite: to the meaning of their life.

It is Jesus, who by his life, suffering then resurrection, would show *us* the key of our life. Jesus invites them to hang out with him for a day, just relaxing, talking, eating.

We don't know what they talked about, but in the end they *knew* he was the Messiah, the one who was to bring meaning to the human race. Call it saving the world. Eternal life.

This little scene reminds us that we too once heard about or met Jesus for the first time. And he is asking *us*, day by day, moment by moment, 'What do you want?' 'What do you want from life Peter, Maureen, Thomas, Jane, today and in 50, 100 years' time?'

Every day, every moment, we can ask him: 'Where do you live?' Where *are* you in my life; in these difficulties I'm just now living through?

And you know what? We will find that he is *here*; our friend, like no other. A friend who never fails us, no matter how poor *our* response might have been, at times. No matter what failures or betrayals we may have suffered from others, or caused to others. He will never betray us. The Risen One is our true friend. *This* is the Good News of the gospels: the heart of our faith.

But be careful: it doesn't stop there. It's not just about 'my personal relationship with Jesus'! He is a friend of everyone else! When we meet him we are meeting many other people: we see those difficult people in our life: can we forgive them? Love them?

And we meet people like the starving Yemeni child who still haunts me from the television news the other night: every rib showing; huge eyes staring; soon to die, like 10,000 other children around the world who *every day* die of hunger that is caused by our wealthy countries' failing to share. Who die in famines caused by the madness of wars. Wars that Australian arms manufacturers help to keep going. While we live in comfort. And watch silly entertainment.

This is part of Jesus' question to us: '*What do you want?*' Why are you doing this? Why don't we look deeper than the entertainment and the propaganda, to look for the real issues? Jesus, the Living One, challenges us to decide: will we live self-centred lives, or will we live for others, guided by love?

When, like those two new disciples, we ask him: 'Where do you live?' his answer will be the same as it was to them: 'Come and see!' And we will find God right *here*, where we are; *in each other*.

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