

Sermon Scripture Matthew 7:7-8

Larger Passage: Luke 2:25-38

“Are we searching for Him?”

The real passage for this morning’s sermon comes from Luke, chapter 2, verses 25-38, but I thought that was too long a passage to ask someone else to read so I’m gonna share it with you this morning. Would you please grab your pew Bible and turn to the Gospel of Luke. If you don’t know where Luke is there is an index in the front of the pew Bible. I’ll give y’all a minute or two to look it up. Let’s read this together.

**(Read Luke 2:25-38)**

Both Simeon and Anna were seeking God. They were seeking God with all of their heart, mind, soul and strength (Deut 6:5). **(pause)** What happened when they looked for the Lord? **(pause)** They encountered Jesus. **(pause)** Simeon and Anna sought and they found. That’s exactly what Jesus says in Matthew 7:7-8. In my devotion time with the preschool we have been singing #405 in the hymnal. Would y’all please grab your hymnal and sing the first verse of #405 with me now?

**(Sing #405 Seek Ye First)**

Church, for what are we searching? **(pause)** For what do we seek and long for most? **(pause)**

I am very grateful that my district superintendent met with me this past November. It’s an annual meeting, but I appreciate it because there are over 157 churches in this district with 114 unwieldy pastors. The district superintendent has her hands full and still she chose to meet with me. I appreciate that. You may not know this, but in the Methodist church district superintendents are pastors first. Even the bishops are pastors first. After our district superintendent’s stint as D.S. she will go back to being the pastor of a church somewhere. When I met with the D.S. she levelled her pastoral wisdom upon me with this quote from Eugene Peterson in his book, “The Contemplative Pastor.” Rev. Peterson said this, “**God is less concerned with what you are doing than with who you are.**” **(repeat x2).** **(pause)**

Ya know. I suddenly had A LOT to think about. I have had the privilege to be married to my wonderful wife, Karen, for going on TEN years. I have been blessed with four smart, imaginative, energetic and involved children. I have the privilege of being your pastor in this place and in this community. If you think about it I do a lot. I don’t do as much as Karen, but I do a lot. This quote the D.S. gave me was a reminder that when I get so busy doing it is easy to forget what God has called and created me to be. **(pause)** I know there is a lot of stuff to do and a lot of goals to meet. **(pause)** I know this because there are always a lot of goals to meet and stuff to get done. However, what stuff gets done and how the goals are accomplished are fundamentally changed by who I am, and what I am doing to take care of the person God made me to be. **(pause)** When I have not had enough sleep, and if I am not eating right, or getting enough exercise it shows. I become a real grump to my wife and kids. I become a much less than sympathetic husband, and I lose my patience with my children. When challenges arise at church I am much less likely to be patient, or to speak when something needs to be said. When I do speak it is often the wrong thing said in the wrong way. I don’t wanna be that guy. You don’t wanna be around that guy. So let’s not do that. If I do not spend time with God in prayer and study for myself – apart from sermon prep, or preparing for a Bible study then the sermons I offer become much more about what I know than about **Who** I know and **Who** knows me. **(pause)** As a pastor that’s pretty important – right? **(pause)** Disciples of Jesus Christ are supposed to do a better job of making God known than making

themselves known. Amen? **Amen.** Who we are and how we protect the person God made us to be is very important.

So who is Central? **(pause)** The three years before I was appointed to Central this church was kinda on auto pilot. A lot of old soldiers of the faith graduated onto the Church Triumphant. A new group of soldiers stepped up. Thank you. Thank you to those of you who stepped up. Those who stepped up were doers. They were doers who get stuff done! These doers saw stuff that needed to be done and saw it completed. Praise the Lord for the doers! **(pause)** The problem is, they burned out. They did so much to get things done, and sought out so much work to complete they burned out. Why? Why did they burn out? **(pause)** Perhaps, because there is always something else to get done. There is always something else to get done. What happens when there is always something else to do and doers do not take care of themselves? They burn out. Church, have you ever seen what happens when volunteers burn out? **(pause)** I have. The volunteers become surly; grumpy, and take a negative attitude toward any kind of service. Do you know why? For the burned out service becomes painful; too little work for too little reward. When leaders burn out they lead by charisma and the force of will. Pretty soon, force of will becomes how things get done. **(pause)** Church, is that how things get done at Central? Is that how y'all want things to be done at Central? **(pause)** Central, is that the kind of church God would have us to be?

Ya know. There is a story about Martin Luther. Martin Luther started the Protestant Reformation by nailing his 95 theses to the door of Wittenberg Castle Church. The church leaders wanted to shut him up so they gave him four times more work than he could possibly complete. So Martin Luther did the remarkable. Martin Luther spent four times more time in prayer. Let all of the doers in the room shake in their boots. **(pause)** He did what? **(pause)** Martin Luther didn't try to do more. Martin Luther prayed more. A couple of years ago I would have been very tempted in that situation to peddle that much harder; to accomplish that much more. Martin Luther prayed more. Do you know what happened? **(pause)** Every day Martin Luther accomplished all the work he was assigned.

In the three years I have been appointed here we have taken the church off of auto pilot and started doing wonderful things. We are at a place where it is good for the Church to ask, are we who and what God would have us to be? Are we working on our relationship with God so we can fruitfully be the hands and feet of Christ? Are we seeking God like Simeon and Anna? Are we like that first group of people who came to John Wesley eagerly seeking to "flee the wrath to come"? Sisters and brothers there is not enough steam in this room to accomplish all that needs to be done. So let me offer this challenge for 2019. Let 2019 become the year we work on our relationship with God. Let 2019 be the year when God builds us up and shapes our hearts for what is next at Central. Wonderful things are coming for our church. We have a long and fruitful journey ahead of us. However, if we are to run this marathon of ministry we have to care for who God made us to be. We have to do the work of building up this body of believers to be faithful disciples to work with God to make faithful disciples. That is A LOT of work! We need to follow Martin Luther's example to pray more. We need to participate in a Bible study to be more open to God's Word. We need to look at our worship with new eyes. Sisters and brothers to accomplish all of the work that needs to be done we need to seek God in new ways, and be more attentive to what God is trying to tell us. 2019 can be a wonderful year, but we have got to do our part to seek God first.

Please, Father God, show us the paths You would have us to walk, and then show us how you would have us to walk them.

In the name of Jesus Christ,  
Amen