

## Everyone is Looking for Jesus



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There is an old story about a preacher who always tried to dazzle his congregation with his eloquent sermons. He used a host of impressive theological terms, most of which the congregation didn't understand. He often quoted Hebrew, Greek, German and Latin words that meant nothing to his people. He spoke about the professors he had studied under and the obscure books that he had read. He dramatically gestured and raised and lowered the volume of his pulpit voice. It was quite a show! But, one Sunday as he stepped into the pulpit, he found a note left there by one of the members. It simply said, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." That is the most constructive criticism anyone could offer and something that every preacher needs to remember. People don't attend worship to be dazzled by the preacher. They come to see Jesus.

In Mark 6 we see a typical day in the life of Jesus. It began in the synagogue of Capernaum. Jesus taught the people, and they were amazed because He taught them as one who had authority. A man with an evil spirit disrupted the service shrieking, "What do You want with us? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy one of God." With a powerful command, Jesus set the man free. Once again the people were amazed. From there He went to Peter's house, where Peter's mother-in-law was in bed with a raging fever. Jesus healed her. That evening when the Sabbath was over the whole town gathered at the door, looking for Jesus. They brought the sick and demon possessed and He healed them all. It was quite a day!

Very early the next morning, before dawn, Jesus went off to a solitary place to pray. His disciples went to look for Him, and when they found Him they exclaimed, "Everyone is looking for you!"

Do you think it's true today? Is everyone looking for Jesus?

Only 51% of the people of Iowa claim to be members of a church. Of those who do claim church membership only about 30% are in worship on Sunday mornings. That would seem to mean that only 16% of Iowans are actually looking for Jesus.

Many wouldn't think of looking for Him during the good times...but in times of economic crisis, when their lives are a mess and their futures are uncertain...might this be the time when some of them begin to look? Like prodigal sons and daughters...might this be the time when some of them who have turned away will take another look?

Some are looking...but they don't know what or who they are looking for.

They are unhappy with their lives...bored... restless. They look from fad to fad...religion to religion... church to church. A young man was overwhelmed by the circumstances and problems of his life. He turned to his closest friend and said, "I don't know where to turn for help. I've looked everywhere." His friend suggested, "Have you tried looking up?" Their hearts will always be restless until they look to Jesus.

Some are looking for Jesus...but they don't know where to find Him. They seek Him through the Law...by trying to strictly obey the commandments and live a good life. They will never find Him there. Every time we look into the perfect Law of God we see ourselves...our failures, our sin, our guilt...and we are driven to despair. It's like "looking for love in all the wrong places." Look as long as you can, on your own, you will never see Jesus.

Jesus said He "came to seek and to save what was lost" (Luke 19:10). He came to look for the restless, the troubled, the hopeless, the unhappy, the sinful. He came to look for you!

If you want to see Jesus, look to the cross. That is where you will find everything you are looking for. You will find the love you are looking for, the forgiveness you are looking for, the salvation you are looking for. See Jesus on His cross. That's the message of the season of Lent. That's the message that pastors are to proclaim, Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

Everyone is looking for Jesus.

The disciples wanted Jesus to return to Capernaum. Jesus had other plans. "Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come."

"Let us go." With these words Jesus enlisted Simon and his companions...and every one of us who would follow Him...in the work of taking the Gospel to others...helping others see Jesus.

Let us go to those who are looking for Jesus because they know they need Him...the sinful, the guilty, the repentant...to those who are looking for everlasting life. Let us go to those who are looking but don't know Who they are looking for...the unhappy, the restless. Let us go to those who are looking in all the wrong places...beaten down by the Law's demands. Let us go to those who are facing crises in their lives...the sick, the suffering, the sorrowful, the fearful, and those who have made a mess of their lives. Let us go to those



of others by contributing to the development of resources and facilities of Synodical camps, congregations, and other service agencies.



*Doug Kading and Lori Gamble of Camp Okoboji in Milford, Iowa attended the Servant Events Leadership Conference in November 2008. Camp Okoboji will host "Junior Joy Camp" from June 26 to July 2.*

Visit LCMS Servant Events online at [www.lcms.org/youth](http://www.lcms.org/youth) for a complete listing of events and to search by type, date, and region of the country. For a free DVD about LCMS Servant Events, contact the LCMS Youth Ministry Office at [youth.ministry@lcms.org](mailto:youth.ministry@lcms.org) or 1.800.248.1930 x1155.

### Older Adult Ministry

by Rev. Dennis Angland, pastoral advisor, Older Adult Ministry Committee

Merle Freitag, President of the Lutheran Church Extension Fund, will be the featured speaker at the Leading into the Future retreat to be held at St Paul Lutheran Church in Ankeny, IA from 6pm, Monday, May 4th through 12 noon, Tuesday, May 5th. Mr. Freitag is a gifted speaker. He has been the president of LCEF since 1998. Previously he served as Vice President of Finance for the American Red Cross, Comptroller of the Army and director of the Army budget. In addition to presentations made by Mr. Freitag, the retreat features time to relax and socialize. A limited number of rooms have been set aside at a lower rate at the Ankeny Heartland Inn, 201 SE Delaware Ave., Ankeny, IA 50021, phone number 515 964 8202. To receive the lower rate reservations must be made before April 4th. The retreat is sponsored by the Iowa District West Older Adult Ministry Committee.

### ILSTO raises ...

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awarded to those with the greatest need from throughout IDE and IDW.

The school officials and program directors are to be commended for their work on

the tuition organization. "They worked very hard and spent a lot of time and effort on this project," Torkelson said. "And once they reached their own goals, they still worked to get donations in an attempt to achieve the whole goal."

Lois mentioned that 167 donors contributed to the ILSTO in 2008 up from 44 donors in 2007. Gifts ranged from two at \$50 to one of \$45,000. The most popular gift was \$1,000, with 56 donors contributing that amount. The second most frequent gift was \$2,000, with 17 donors gifting that number. In all, 83 donors contributed between \$1,000 and \$2,000, which made up 50 percent of the total donors. The third most popular gift was the \$500 range, 36 of them. "Gifts of all size make this program successful," Warnholz said.

Money raised in the 2007 fundraising campaign was used to fund tuition grants for 176 families representing 290 students in the current academic year to the tune of more than \$142,000. Every student who qualified to receive money, about 20 percent of the Lutheran student population, received a grant.

Torkelson mentioned that while the state law requires that they award 90 percent of the funds raised, we attempt to reach the 100 percent mark. This can be accomplished through Thrivent Matching Gift and Employee/Corporation matching gift programs. Over \$14,400 was raised in this manner.

Warnholz pointed out that almost \$165,000 more was raised this year, which is an increase of 116 percent. That means that over one quarter of a million dollars will be available for tuition assistance in the next academic year. She also stated that 75% of the 2007 donors contributed in 2008 with increased donations of 36 percent.

"Our goal is to help those who have the greatest need," added Torkelson. Information regarding the application process for ILSTO Funds will appear soon. The application deadline for these funds for the 2009-2010 school year will be April 1, 2009.

### Everyone is Looking for Jesus

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who are not looking for Jesus...the unfaithful members, the unchurched, the lost.

"Let us go." With these words Jesus invites us into His mission. Let us go somewhere else...to nearby villages and towns, to those in distant lands. Let us go where we can...in our homes, among our families, friends and neighbors...because everyone is looking for Jesus!

The Gospel assures us...Jesus is looking for everyone!