



Who Is Seeking God?

Traveling in what is called the roof of the world, I watched a man on a busy highway prostrate himself while facing a distant temple. He then stood up, moved the width of his body and bowed down again. He would do this until he reached the temple, a journey through winter and summer that might take more than two years. I wanted to believe that he was seeking God.

The term “seeker” is a powerful way to signify those who are on a highway to God. The Lord said through the prophet Jeremiah, “You will seek me and find me *when you seek me with all your heart*” (Jer. 29:13, emphasis added). No one who seeks Him will fail to find Him. This is so encouraging for those who want to announce Christ and His redemption. There are those who are waiting and wanting to hear truth. Moreover, we might imagine that all are seeking, so announcing the gospel would mean letting all people know, whoever they are, that they are on a pathway to truth, on a pathway to God.

“You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.”

However, Jeremiah inserted the word “when.” Such a troublesome word—when—for it indicates the presence of a fence dividing the populace of the world. There are those who seek but also those who do not seek.

This is hard to accept. It dispels what I want to imagine. Is not everyone on a spiritual journey to God? In addition, is it not our job to simply help them identify where they are on that journey and point

them to the next step—the right step? If only it were true. Sadly, many are not on a spiritual journey to the true and living God. In fact, the last thing they desire is to meet the God who raised Jesus from the dead. They are so determined not to meet Him that they will employ any number of strategies to avoid this meeting.

Some use strategies of denial: *The Church invented the story of Jesus, or If there is a God, He wouldn't let bad things happen.* Arguments like these—and there are many—may stand for years as a bulwark against divine encounter. But sometimes, unexpectedly, the heart opens, the person truly begins to seek truth and these arguments are soon faced with honesty. Difficult questions can be answered as the mind opens. This is why we must practice what Peter called *giving an answer*; we must always show the truth clearly to throw down the stronghold of falsehood.

Others may use their religious background to fend off God. It is so tempting to think of the religions of the world as spiritual search engines capable of leading adherents for-

ward toward the true God—the rituals, the works and even the teachings of the religion being like hotlinks to the deeper truth of Christ. After all, is this not what Paul spoke of in Acts 17 when he told the Athenians that he would declare to them the unknown God?

We would not deny that there are truths found in every religious tradition. In Athens, Paul perceived a tradition, perhaps a memory, of a God who is invisible and unknown. He would declare this God as the Creator who had come to us in Jesus Christ. In Christ, God had become known and should be followed.

As for the thousands of other gods whose temples crowded the marketplace, they in their limitedness stood in contrast to the infinity and all-powerfulness of the Creator. Paul abruptly dismissed them. The seekers weren't pointed to the true God. Paul did not see bridges from the false gods to the true God, for the false gods do not exist; they are in a zone of untruth. People who are not seekers are comfortable there, for it is a buffer between them and the God who holds them accountable to a standard of justice. This is why, when Paul spoke of the Resurrection, many laughed.

They still laugh, hoping perhaps that laughter will muffle the tread of the Hound of Heaven. For ultimately, while some people seek Him, God, in a great reversal, seeks all people. It is His seeking that creates in all people a longing for Him. All sense the longing, taste the desire for the divine, but not all allow it to become the desire of their hearts, the quest of their lives. This decision creates the fence between those who seek and those who do not.

To those who do turn their face to Him, the declaration that the eternal God offers them everlasting life through the cross of Jesus Christ comes as a light in a cave. On the other hand, to those who are seeking only to hide from God, as were many of the intelligentsia of Athens, this news is to be treated as a joke.

I don't know what is really in the heart of the man who prostrated himself on that lonely highway. But he must hear the news of Jesus. Those who are hiding must hear. Paul himself was hiding, but at a point he began to seek. Those who are seeking most certainly must hear, for Jesus and Jesus only is the object of their desire.

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