

PREYING

The stand finally settled in the way the brochure said it would. After taking a few months to cure away its fresh Gander Mountain bargain scent, everything was ready for deer season. Perched high and set within a dense thicket that overlooked a small salt lick clearing named 'Sister Sarah', the out-of-town hunter waited breathlessly.

And sure enough after a couple hours of scanning and daydreaming, a massive buck silently strutted to the edge of his view, meandering and grazing between bark and bramble. Whatever fateful tranquility brought those two together was soon shattered by the deep crack of a sonic boom-kick. Everything went quiet again - then a soft thud - and the hunter grinned.

Nailing a 16-point buck is no small achievement. But if he comes, no matter how well prepared a hunter is, no matter how skilled they are, there's always a degree of chance that you can't rub away.

In a similar story found in the first chapter of John's account of Jesus' life, Jesus found himself being stalked by a couple of hunters. After looking back with his peripheral vision, Jesus turned prior to their pouncing and said, "What are you looking for?" Goodness, what a chest-piercing question that is.

To look for one thing, is to want another. Misplacing keys somewhere in your house, you would look hither and thither because you want to go grocery shopping. To look for a new dress at the mall is to want to look beautiful at the wedding shower for your sister in a few weeks. To look for a new job is often a diamond of desire, cut and filled with many different angles. But Jesus is a different kind of prey.

Unlike looking for deer or a nice fat snipe (for the snarky ones amongst us who know what that is), hunting for Jesus comes with the guarantee of a catch. Not only that we will find him, but more importantly that he will find us.

His question to the two former disciples of his cousin John was a penetrating one. It wasn't a 'why' line of inquiry. It got down to their core, to the meat of their motivation. And Jesus' turning 'gotcha' question is meant for us just the same.

So how would you answer him? What are you looking for? What do you want with him?

What guidance do you want for that professional move? What clarity do you want on your marriage? What healing do you want for a heart and soul that's been deeply wounded? What companionship do you want to fill those too quiet days?

Jesus' question isn't designed to elicit a quick response. He asks it of each of us, because he wants to have a deep and real conversation about our true desires for him.

His desire is for us to wrestle with him and open ourselves to a transformative experience where our souls grow in their affection and devotion to God. Where the predators become prey in the hunt for the ultimate 16-point buck prize - becoming not only devoted to Jesus but also the new creations we were redeemed to be. The stakes could not be higher or more valuable. So happy hunting my friends.

Pastor Mike