Sought Out by God

One of the great truths of our faith, and one that never ceases to amaze me, is this: we do not find God—God finds us. From the very beginning of the Bible to its very end, the story is not primarily about humanity's search for God, but about God's search for humanity.

Think of the very first chapters of Genesis. Adam and Eve hide in the garden after they have eaten the fruit, ashamed and afraid. And what happens? God comes walking in the cool of the evening and calls out, "Where are you?" It is God who goes seeking, even when his creatures are hiding.

That cry—"Where are you?"—has echoed down through history. It is the cry of a God who never gives up on his people.

We often talk about people "finding faith," as though it were a treasure hunt and we suddenly stumbled on the prize. But if we look closely, most of us would admit that it wasn't quite like that.

Sometimes it was a friend's invitation, a word spoken at just the right moment, or a sense of God's presence that crept up on us. Sometimes it was in the quiet of prayer, or in the beauty of music, or in a kindness we didn't expect. However it came, it was usually less about us finding God, and more about God finding us.

The truth is, God is the seeker. God is the one who notices when we are lost, who calls us by name, who draws us back to himself.

When I think of being sought out by God, I think of the many stories of faith I've heard over the years.

I remember speaking to someone who came back to church after decades away. They told me, "I thought I'd given up on God, but it turns out he never gave up on me."

Another said that in the midst of grief, when life felt unbearable, they found themselves walking into a church one afternoon, sitting down in the silence, and realising they weren't alone.

These are stories not of people searching hard and eventually finding what they wanted, but of God seeking, nudging, whispering, and gently leading them home.

For many of us here, faith has been part of life for as long as we can remember. Some of you were brought to church as children, confirmed as teenagers, and have been part of the life of the church ever since.

And yet, even for lifelong Christians, there are times when God's seeking love makes itself known afresh. Times when our prayer has gone dry, and then—unexpectedly—we are touched again by God's Spirit. Times when we have felt overlooked by others, but discovered that God has not forgotten us.

Sometimes in later life we can feel that our part in the church's mission has finished. But God still seeks us out, not only to comfort us, but also to call us into service—perhaps in quieter ways now, but no less valuable. A kind word, a listening ear, a prayer faithfully offered—these, too, are part of God's seeking love at work in the world.

Of course, the greatest expression of God's seeking comes in Jesus Christ. The Son of God entered our world, took on our flesh, and came to us—not waiting for us to climb up to him, but coming down to meet us.

Jesus said, "The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." That is who he is: the God who comes looking. He sought out the fishermen by the lakeside, the tax collectors at their booths, the blind man by the roadside, the woman drawing water at the well. He sought out those whom others ignored, those whom society rejected, those who thought they were beyond hope.

And he seeks us still—through his Spirit, through his word, through his people.

So what do we do with this truth—that God is the one who seeks us out?

First, we can take comfort. However far we wander, however hidden we feel, God does not stop looking for us. His love is relentless, patient, and determined.

Second, we can live with gratitude. If we are here tonight, if faith is alive in us at all, it is not because we have been especially clever or determined, but because God has found us. That should fill our hearts with thankfulness.

And third, we can allow God's seeking love to shape how we see others. There are people all around us—on our streets, in our families, in the shops and cafés of this town—who may feel far from God. And yet God is already seeking them, already calling their name. Perhaps he is even nudging them towards us, that we might be the ones to show a little of his love.

So as we gather this evening, let us rejoice in the God who seeks us out. The God who walked in the garden and called, "Where are you?" The God who came in Christ to seek and to save the lost. The God whose Spirit is still at work, still whispering, still calling each one of us by name.

And let us pray that we, too, might be seekers—not because God is hiding, but because he invites us to share in his search. To notice those who feel overlooked, to offer kindness to the lonely, to speak words of hope to the weary.

For we are all here tonight because God has sought us out. And he will never stop until, at last, he gathers us into his kingdom, where all the lost are found, and all the found rejoice.

Amen.