

Andrew, the Forgotten Disciple

Lord, we thank You for Your faithfulness. Even though the names of the speakers may change, Your work continues. You always give something for us to learn and grow each week, and I am grateful that you are willing to ride this donkey to spread Your word, for You are eager to work with us no matter what talent we are given. We pray that many will accept Your kind and generous invitation. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

One Talent Servants

When I read the parable of the talents in Matthew 25, I get the feeling that those who have been given five or two talents know what they are doing. It is the one talent servants who seem to have a problem in staying motivated to carry out their assignment. Perhaps those given one talent consider that their contribution is too small, too insignificant, and it would not make any difference in the total outcome. Therefore, they are facing the continual temptation to quit and sit on the sidelines. I wish Matthew had included another one talent person whose cooperation would find the acceptance of the Master. Since Matthew chose not to do that, I thought that I might find some answers from another one talent servant whose name is Andrew.

Andrew is one of Jesus's earliest disciples. Despite his seniority, Andrew remains a forgotten disciple because the Bible hardly mentions his name. Poor Andrew is so overshadowed by his famous brother, Simon Peter. If Andrew were to attend a party and introduced himself as Andrew, most likely people would not recognize his name. "Who is this guy?" But if Andrew mentioned the fact that he was the brother of Peter, then people would respond: "Oh, I know Peter; I have heard of Peter."

Do we have the same problem in recognizing his name? The Bible frequently refers to Andrew as Simon Peter's brother. The other gospel writers mention his name only in connection with other disciples. However, John records three incidences to show us that Andrew does have a passion in bringing people to Jesus. That is his one talent.

Andrew Finds His Brother

The first picture of Andrew painted by John can be found in John 1. After Andrew found Jesus, he immediately brought his brother Simon to Jesus. The second picture of Andrew is in John chapter 6. Andrew found a little boy with five loaves and two fish with which Jesus fed a multitude of five thousand. The third picture is in John chapter 12 where a group of Greeks desired to see Jesus. Again, Andrew was involved in bringing them to Jesus. Therefore, Andrew is known among the disciples as the one who knows how to bring people to Jesus, and that is all we know about Andrew from the Bible. So let's see what we can learn from these pictures of Andrew.

John 1:35 says, "Again, the next day John stood with two of his disciples. And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, 'Behold the Lamb of God.'" The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. Then Jesus turned, and seeing them following, said to them, 'What do you seek?' They said to Him, 'Rabbii' (which is to say, when translated, Teacher, where are You staying?)"

Verse 40: "One of the two who heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah' (which is translated, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus."

From the text which we just read, one of the two disciples was Andrew. Andrew was a pious Jew who had already repented and attached himself to the kingdom program of God by following John the Baptist, the last Old Testament prophet. One day Jesus appeared on the scene, and John the Baptist declared that He is the One we have been waiting for. Here is the Lamb of God. Andrew immediately leaves John the Baptist and begins following Jesus. In the text it says that Jesus heard and asked these two disciples: "What do you want out of me? What are you looking for?" And these two disciples in turn asked Him a question: "Teacher, where are You staying?" In other words, these two disciples are saying, "We do not have an agenda. We are not looking for things or benefits. We just want to know You better. Teacher, where are You staying? We want to pay You a visit. We want to spend some time with You. We want to have fellowship with You."

So it is not the blessing; it is the Blessor Himself whom these two disciples had their hearts set upon. They just wanted to have fellowship with Jesus. They wanted to know Him better. And after this meeting, Andrew is convinced that Jesus is the Messiah. The Bible also says, "Andrew brought the first person to Jesus, and it turns out to be his own brother. By following Jesus, Andrew is given the opportunity to be himself, to be independent and free."

Now once he introduced Simon to Jesus, you know what will happen next. Andrew again will be pushed into the shadow by Simon. Still Andrew goes ahead with the introduction. Andrew is a humble man. Not only is he humble, his action speaks of priority. You remember in Luke, chapter 8, Jesus healed a person who was demon possessed, and after this man was healed he wanted to follow Jesus. And Jesus told him: "Go home and tell your family about Me. Tell them what the Lord has done for you." But Jesus did not need to tell Andrew that evangelism starts at home because Andrew had already done that. He first found his brother who was also seeking the Messiah.

Sometimes it is difficult to bring the gospel to our families, to the ones who are closest to us and know us best. There is no guaranteed success. Andrew probably picked up the most unlikely and unpromising prospect because Peter is known for his loose tongue, his hot temper, his changeable disposition. Peter is also known for his cursing, his swearing. If I were Andrew I would have picked a user-friendly prospect for a starter, but not so with Andrew. The Bible says, "He first found his own brother, Simon, and brought him to Jesus." We share the gospel with our family members because they too need the Lord.

Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand

John 6:4-5: "Now the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was near. Then Jesus lifted his eyes, and seeing a great multitude coming toward Him, He said to Philip, 'Where shall we find bread that these may eat?'

Verses 8-10a: "One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, 'There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two small fish, but what are they among so many? Then Jesus said, 'Make the people sit down.'"

In this instance, even though the crowd came with different motives, Jesus was not indifferent to their physical needs. Both Matthew and Mark tell us that Jesus was moved with compassion toward the hungry crowd. Initially Jesus asked Philip to find food for the crowd. I do not know how long it would have taken for Phillip to come up with an estimate to feed thousands. But during this period Andrew had already combed through the crowd and found a boy with five loaves and two fish. Furthermore, Andrew was able to talk to this little boy encouraging him to share his lunch with strangers. While Philip sounded pessimistic about his estimate, Andrew is ready to bring the boy to see Jesus.

Now brothers and sisters, the disciples at this point are not naïve about Jesus' ability to perform miracles because they had been with Him for two years and had witnessed Jesus performing miracles on numerous occasions. Yet, applying what

they knew was a different story. While Jesus the problem-Solver is standing next to the disciples, none of the disciples came forward to ask Him for a solution. Now before you blame the disciples, we often do the same thing when handling problems. Isn't that true? It is as if our Lord is not big enough for our situation. The disciples were still thinking in their old ways to see whether they could solve the problem or not. They came to the conclusion that this assignment of finding food for thousands was simply too much. They just did not have the resources to feed a crowd of this size. Andrew was not believing that the little boy's lunch was sufficient to feed the crowd. He was thinking that perhaps Jesus could make this small amount of food into something more. But I believe his action got interrupted. The other disciples began to make fun of him. "Come on, Andrew, be serious. We are talking about five thousand hungry men out there."

It is similar to the time Peter walked on the water. His fellow fishermen shouted to him: "Peter, you are walking on the water." Instead of keeping his eyes on the Storm-Walker, he stared at the stormy sea and started questioning himself: "I am not supposed to walk on water, am I?" And Peter sank like a brick. It seems that our natural response is to focus on the impossibility rather than the possibility.

At the beginning Andrew had a little bit of faith by taking the little boy's lunch to Jesus. Then he saw Peter and the other disciples falling over laughing. Unfortunately, unbelief is contagious. Andrew began to change his mind and his tune and ended up saying, "Oh well, I guess you guys were right all along. What is this for all these many hungry people?" This shows that Andrew is not the in-charge type of person. Otherwise, he would have pushed his idea through the business meeting. Instead, he resigned to the fact: "I am sorry I even mentioned that."

Let's look at the situation again. What Andrew has is indeed very small, but whatever little faith was in him he managed to put the little boy's lunch into Jesus' hands. Andrew discovered that the Lord does not need much to make things happen. The Lord simply gave thanks for the food and multiplied the food in His hands and fed the multitude of five thousand men. As we can see Andrew's little contribution once placed in the Lord's hands did make a difference in the final outcome.

The same is true with Andrew for bringing his brother Simon to Jesus. He had no idea at the time that the Lord Jesus could convert Simon Peter into a preacher who would one day bring three thousand people to Christ in a single day.

The same is also true, if we can jump ahead momentarily, when Andrew brought a group of Greeks to Jesus in John, chapter 12. Andrew had no clue that one among these Greeks, according to the Jewish history, was a fellow named Luke.

Dr. Luke writes two important books in the New Testament which must have blessed millions of people.

As I was preparing for this talk one thought kept coming back to me. According to the Bible men are rather ordinary; it is our God who is extra-ordinary, and it is God's delight to use men in the extra-ordinary way. God often uses the seemingly nobodies, including the one talent servants, people like Andrew, people like you and me.

The Greeks want to See Jesus

John 12:20-22: "Now there were certain Greeks among those who came up to worship at the feast. Then they came to Philip who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying, 'Sir, we wish to see Jesus.' Philip came and told Andrew, and in turn Andrew and Philip told Jesus."

In this instance, a group of Greeks came to ask Philip for permission to see Jesus. Philip probably hesitated because according to his understanding the gospel was for the Jews and these people were Greeks. So he probably told these Greeks: "You want to see Jesus? Just wait here; I know just the man who knows how to bring people to Jesus better than anybody else. You just wait here. I will go get him." As a result, Andrew and Philip bring the Greeks to Jesus. Actually, their leading the Greeks to the Lord was an important event. You see, we are coming down to the end of Jesus' public ministry. In less than a week our Lord will be crucified, but before He lays down His life His variety of glories must be witnessed to.

In John chapter 11 we are given the proof that Jesus is the Son of God as evident by His raising Lazarus from the dead. Then we witness the acknowledgement that Jesus is the Son of David. This happened in John chapter 12 just before the coming of the Greeks. The people lined the street and cheerfully shouted: "Hosanna, Hosanna, is the King of Israel." And He rode on a donkey into the city of Jerusalem. What we have now concerns Jesus as the Son of Man. As the Son of Man it must cover a wider territory. As the Son of David He is only related to Israel, but to be Son of man it must cover all nations, all people, and all languages. Here the Greeks represented the Gentiles, and they wanted to see Jesus. Please note that they did not ask to see Christ, but the Greeks wanted to see Jesus; therefore the Father sees to it that His beloved Son received this three-fold testimony before He gave His life on the cross for our sins.

The Second Fiddler

So far we have talked about Andrew's little contribution which was incorporated into God's purpose. At the same time, brothers and sisters, you will agree that God can accomplish the same project without our help at all. Perhaps God can do a better job without us getting in His way. Notice that throughout the Bible God often restrains His work until He has our participation. Have you ever wondered why God would purposely want us to be on His team, to be His teammates?

Let's take a basketball game for instance. There is a big difference between a player and a spectator. Only the player can score in the game. A spectator cannot, no matter how knowledgeable or how gifted an athlete he or she may be. So if your team wins the NBA championship, everybody on the team will receive a ring including the seldom used reserves. Why? Because they are on the same team. The Lord wants us to join His winning team. What grace this is that He wants us to be His teammate not as a spectator but as a player!

Leonard Bernstein, the late conductor of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra was having an interview on television. Toward the end an admirer asked him a question: "Mr. Bernstein, which instrument is the most difficult to play?" With his quick wit and without hesitation, Mr. Bernstein replied, "The second fiddle." He went on to explain. I have plenty of people who want to play the first violin, but to find someone with the same enthusiasm to play the second fiddle is a problem. And yet if no one plays the second fiddle, we have no harmony. I see both humor and wisdom in the maestro's words!

Come to think of it I think Jesus would make a perfect second fiddler in God's symphony of grace. Now He wants His disciples and us to play in His orchestra. Remember the story of feeding the five thousand. God does not expect us to multiply the food. That is His job. But He expects His disciples and us to distribute the food. Now you may protest because playing the second violin requires more dexterity than passing out the food. And you are right, I too can sometime use some words of encouragement, and this time I was reminded of something that you already know. *God does not always call the equipped, but He always equips the called.*

In order to play a musical instrument, you must be willing to practice. It is not something that you can acquire the skill for overnight. You need to practice, practice, and practice some more. So what is the point? In the process of practicing

we develop a relationship with our Teacher, the Master. We discover that our Lord is not our parole officer. As we spend time getting to know Him we find Him as our friend. As we walk with the Lord, we are happy to learn that the Lord actually enjoys our company and delights in shepherding us through life's narrow way. We become connected to Him and begin to appreciate that what He is doing in our lives is more important than what He does through us. But why is our relationship with the Lord so important?

Hidden Pipes Connected to the Lord Jesus

Our scientific society held the international meeting in Shanghai, China in 2011. So I returned to China for the first time after fifty plus years. As our plane was descending towards Pu-Dong airport on the east side of Shanghai. My colleagues asked me if I remembered anything of what we were seeing down below. I told them, "No." When I was living in Shanghai, this part of Shanghai namely Pu-Dong was a farmland with neither electricity nor running water. Now today, of course, this part of Shanghai has emerged into a modern city with clusters of the newest skyscrapers.

Many years ago, a farmer from Pu-Dong, which is on the east side of Shanghai, came to the established district of Shanghai. He was so impressed with the conveniences of city life that he just could not get over it. Whenever he turned on the tap, water would come out. Not only the water would come out at once, there also seemed to be an endless supply. Back in the countryside where he was from, they had to carry the water from the river at a distance or to draw water from a well at the speed of one bucket at a time. So the farmer bought a water faucet and took it home. He installed the water faucet on the wall, but no water came out. Perhaps he had picked up a defective one. So he carried it back to exchange for another one but still no water. Then he remembered that those slick city people always take advantage of the simple country folk. So this time he returned to the hardware store with a complaint. Finally, the salesman asked him how he installed the water faucet. The farmer replied: "Just like anybody else. I put it on the wall, but no water came out." It turns out that the poor farmer was not aware of the fact there were hidden pipes in the wall leading to the water supply. The water faucet that he attached on the wall served no good purpose.

Hopefully this serves as a reminder that it is only if we have our hidden pipes connected to the Lord Jesus that we can expect the Lord's power and peace to flow freely and abundantly into our lives. If we do not have a meaningful relationship

with the Lord it will be like building a sailboat without a keel. Once it heads out to the open waters it will tilt and sink.

When we are connected to the Lord and put our trust in the Lord, the Lord will gladly take the lead, and we can hum along with the harmony of “Amens”.

Keep Playing, Don't Quit

Ignacy Paderewski was a famous concert pianist from Poland a century ago. Since Mr. Paderewski came to perform in America several times, he was also popular with the American audience. The Polish people must adore their musicians because they made him their Prime Minister for a number of years. One time Mr. Paderewski was to give a concert, and a mother brought along her little boy who had just started taking piano lessons. The mother thought it would be helpful to her little boy by going to the concert.

After they were seated in the concert hall, the mother spotted a friend in the front row so she told her little boy to wait there while she went to say hello to her friend. After she was gone, the little boy started thinking that this might be a good opportunity for him to explore the theatre. So he eventually explored his way through a door which was marked no admittance. When the house light dimmed and the concert was about to begin, the mother returned to her seat and found the child missing. Then the curtain parted and the spotlight shined on the Steinway Piano on the stage. To her horror the mother saw her little boy sitting at the piano and innocently began to play with one finger the melody of “Twinkle, twinkle little star.”

At this moment the great pianist made his entrance. He quietly walked over to the little boy and whispered in his ear: “Keep praying, don't quit.” Then he stood behind the boy and stretched out his arms. To the right he added notes to the melody, to the left he added harmony, and together the old master and the young boy held the audience mesmerized. Many years later most of the people forgot what pieces Mr. Paderewski had played that evening, but all of them remembered that Mr. Paderewski had played “Twinkle, twinkle little star” with the little boy.

As we mentioned at the start, those who are given one talent are facing continual temptations to quit. Sometimes we feel like we are just wasting time in pecking out meaningless and inconsequential little tunes. We think our gifts are just too small for God to use in any meaningful way, and yet the Lord is telling us: “Keep playing; don't quit, don't stop!” with whatever talent you have been given. The Lord wants us to know His two hands are there, and He and we can play pretty

good music together. But then how do you know the Lord enjoys playing music with us? Honestly, I do not have the answer. I was only given a glimpse.

Preparing for the Big Concert

Many years ago my wife and I were babysitting our first grandchild who was about fifteen months old at the time. After we had played with all the toys in the family room, I thought about bringing her over to the living room to play the piano for a change. While we were playing our version of “Twinkle, twinkle little star” our granddaughter decided to leave the room. As it turned out she went back to the family room and returned with her toy piano. She sat on the floor at my feet and started banging on her piano. I felt that such a scenario can only exist in Charlie Brown’s cartoon book. Our granddaughter’s enthusiasm to play duet with her grandfather melted my heart. It was joy unspeakable.

It must be a delight to the Lord when we play the second fiddle at His feet. He wants us to keep playing, and He is preparing us to give a big concert before the heavenly Father. It is the Lord’s plan that we as His orchestra, as a team, will be able to hear the Father say to us at end of the concert, “Come up here and sit by Me; well done good and faithful servants of a few things. Come, enter into the joy of your Master.” Just remember our Lord can improvise music just like Mr. Pederewski. Actually, our Lord provides both the melody and the harmony, and just like Mr. Pederewski played the piano with the little boy, people can hear the music; they can hear the melody but they cannot hear our mistakes.

The world may choose to forget about the people like Andrew, but our Lord will never. He has our names inscribed on the palms of His hands. He wants us to join His winning team so that one day we can share the joy of the Lord and celebrate at His victory party.

Let’s pray:

Lord, we know that You can do everything by Yourself, and we do not need other people to tell us that our ability is rather limited, and yet You still want us to join Your winning team, to be Your teammates. Lord, help us to fill the seats reserved for second fiddlers in your symphony. Lord, we look forward to the day that we can make music with You and to celebrate at Your victory party. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.