
Heart and Soul ... A Weekly Meditation

March 27, 2016

Andrew: The First Disciple

“One of the two disciples who heard what John said and followed Jesus was Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter. He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, ‘We have found the Messiah.’ He led him to Jesus.”

John 1:40-42a (Common English Bible)

John the Baptist was in the wilderness once again preaching that the Kingdom of God was drawing near. But this day would be different. On this day John sighted in the distance, Jesus. And when John’s eyes fell upon Jesus there was a spontaneous utterance of his thoughts, “Look! The Lamb of God!” This was all that Andrew, one of John’s followers, needed to hear. Instantly, Andrew realized that the object of his longing had now appeared. Andrew and another, unnamed person who was with him, left John and began to follow Jesus. Andrew became the first disciple of Jesus Christ.

Andrew was the first disciple to follow Christ but little is known about him. John’s Gospel tells us that Peter was his brother; the same Peter who would step-out of a boat upon stormy water to approach Jesus, the Peter that Jesus declared would be the rock upon which the church would be built, the Peter who would deny Jesus three times on the night of Jesus’ arrest. Yes, that Peter. The gospels provide considerable detail about Andrew’s brother, Peter. But of Andrew, we know little. Perhaps, for many ordinary followers of Jesus, Andrew’s story is a story of grace. Andrew was not a superstar disciple, not in the sense that he plays a major role in the story of Jesus. But it was Andrew who brought his brother, Peter, to Jesus. Without Andrew, there would be no story of Peter.

John’s Gospel only mentions Andrew two other times. On the occasion of Jesus teaching five thousand men, plus women and children, Jesus asks his disciples to provide a meal for the people. The suggestion of feeding so many exhausts the disciples; all the disciples except Andrew, that is. Andrew goes looking for what is available. Andrew simply trusts that anything is possible when Jesus is nearby. In this story, Andrew brings a child to Jesus with the child’s meager five loaves of bread and two fish. Then, the final story about Andrew occurs during the last week of Jesus’ life. Some Greeks are in town for Passover and are curious about Jesus. The Greeks made inquiry of Philip who introduced them to Andrew, who brought them to Jesus. What little we know of Andrew is enough. Andrew was always bringing people to Jesus.

What is remarkable about the story of Andrew is that there is no evidence that he was ever jealous of the other disciples. Andrew is only mentioned three times in the Gospel of John and in each instance, Andrew brings someone to Jesus and then steps back into the shadows. Andrew never sought, nor received, top billing in the unfolding story of Jesus Christ. It was enough to be used by God to introduce others to Jesus. And then Andrew demonstrated grace in being left behind as the drama of Jesus moved forward. Andrew understood that it wasn’t about him. In the end, that just may be the quality that made Andrew one of the greatest disciples.

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