

“Learning Discipleship from the Disciples”

Andrew: Bringing Folks to Jesus

John 1:35-42

John Breon

Andrew is the disciple we’re meeting today. He appears in all the lists of the twelve apostles and he’s always among the first four. He’s nearly always referred to as Simon Peter’s brother. Which is not a bad way to be identified. But, prominent as his brother Simon is, Andrew is a person in his own right. He is a good and faithful brother, but his character is different from Simon’s. The differences between Andrew and his brother, the differences among all the apostles, show us that Christ calls all kinds of people, with various personalities and gifts. But each one plays an important part and contributes something to the mission. Andrew heard the same call that Peter did: “Come, follow me and I will make you fish for people.” Peter was more of a fisherman of the masses, of the crowds. Andrew was more a fisherman for individuals.

John’s Gospel is the only one that tells us more about Andrew than that he was Simon Peter’s brother and one of the Twelve. Three times John describes Andrew bringing people to Jesus.

But before Andrew could bring anyone to Jesus, he had to meet Jesus himself. In fact, Andrew was the first to follow Jesus, the first to be called, the first to announce that Jesus is the Messiah. He had been a disciple of John the Baptist. Then Jesus came on the scene and John said, “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” After John pointed out Jesus the Lamb of God again, Andrew and another disciple started to follow Jesus. This other disciple remains unnamed. Most assume he was John son of Zebedee, but it seems more natural to me that he was Philip, who plays an important part in the next section (At least one commentator supports this idea: J. Ramsey Michaels, *John A Good News Commentary* 20).

Andrew and this other disciple are following Jesus, who turns to them and asks, “What are you looking for?” That can mean simply, “What do you want?” But it has a deeper meaning also: “What are you searching for?” Do you know? Jesus gets to the heart of who we really are, what we really

need, and what we're really searching for beneath all our other wants and desires.

Andrew and the other disciple reply, "Teacher, where are you staying?" Now, they've already started following Jesus. That's what disciples do. If we hear Jesus' question at the deeper level of "what are you really seeking?", we can hear the disciples' response at a deeper level too. The word "stay" is important in John's Gospel, especially when it means "dwell" or "abide." Maybe Andrew and his friend are asking how they can remain or abide with Jesus. That's another key part of being a disciple of Jesus.

Jesus invites them, "Come and see." To come to Jesus is to believe in him. To see Jesus with perception is to have faith in him. Jesus invites them to know him, to be with him as disciples. Andrew stayed with Jesus for a day, and, as it turned out, stayed with him for the rest of his life.

We can't share what we don't know. Who introduced you to Jesus and a life of faith in him? When did that happen for you? How did it happen? Has it happened? Have you met Jesus? Have you become his follower? Hear his invitation: "Come and see." Come to Jesus and see who he is and what he can do. A decision to say yes to Jesus, a commitment to be with Jesus, an intention to follow Jesus is where we begin. A prayer that says, "Yes, Lord," is how we start.

Andrew met Jesus, followed him and stayed with him. Then, the first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah." And he brought his brother to Jesus.

Granville McQueen was an older man in the church where I grew up. Thinking about him now, I believe he was kind of like Andrew. He told some of us once about when he was a young man he responded to the invitation and went forward at a revival meeting to kneel and pray to receive Christ. He was becoming a follower of Jesus. What made that experience even more special was after he prayed he looked up and saw that his two brothers had followed him.

Life is relational and God uses our relationships to influence us and for us to be a positive influence on others. The gospel travels best along the networks of relationships. The good news is communicated in conversation.

If we want to follow Andrew's example of bringing people to Jesus, we start with the people closest to us. But that can be tough. Family relationships can get all tangled up. It ought to be most natural for us to share something good with those closest to us, but it doesn't always work that way. Sometimes it's harder to reach out to our relatives.

It may have been especially difficult with a brother like Simon Peter. He was dynamic, vigorous, outgoing—the kind of person who could easily put you in the shade. Andrew seems more quiet and to prefer to be behind the scenes. Do you think Andrew ever got tired of being introduced as “Simon Peter's brother”? My brother is nine years older than me, and I still was called “Steve” from time to time and there are places where I'm introduced as Steve's brother. But Andrew doesn't seem to have resented Peter. Though sometimes it must have been tempting to say, “Hey, you wouldn't even know Jesus if I hadn't introduced you. You wouldn't be where you are without me.” But we don't see that in the Gospels. Andrew might be surprised if we suggested it. “*Resent him? He's my brother*” (Ellsworth Kalas, *The Thirteen Apostles* 7).

And Andrew knew that Jesus could do wonderful things with Simon. Who are some people you're close to that you'd like to see Jesus do something wonderful in their lives? You don't have to be up in front of a crowd. You can work behind the scenes. You don't have to be dramatic or flashy or overpowering. You can just talk to people. Jesus and Andrew had a conversation. I imagine Andrew and Peter had a conversation on the way to Jesus. In our relationships with people, we find all kinds of opportunities to talk and pray and help them come to Jesus. It may mean asking a question and doing more listening than talking. But at some point, we talk about who Jesus is, what he's done for us and what he can do for someone else.

Years ago, I heard a story about an African woman who wanted to witness, to share Christ with others. But she was blind. The only Bible she had was in French and she didn't speak French. But she got someone to mark some passages in her Bible. Then she would wait outside a school and as the students came out, she would ask, “Does anyone speak French?” Wanting to show off their newly acquired knowledge, some of them would

stop. She would open the Bible to the marked passages and ask, "Can you translate this for me?" And they would read verses like John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." Then she would ask, "Can I tell you what that means to me?" Reportedly, many of those students she talked to became followers of Christ.

If a blind woman who couldn't speak French could use a French Bible to bring people to Christ, what can we do? One pastor recently reported that of people who become Christians, new followers of Jesus, 1% do because of some kind of crowd event, 3% because of church activities, 6% because of a pastor's ministry. But 78% of people who come to Christ do so because of a friend or relative who invites them (Chris Buskirk, "Real Disciples—Andrew" 1/13/13 www.buzzsprout.com/7343/72666-disciples-andrew). Somebody's waiting to hear it from you.

Later, in John 6, Jesus is teaching the crowd on the hillside near Lake Galilee. Jesus asks Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" Philip said, "Eight months wages wouldn't buy enough bread for everybody to have a bite!" The other Gospels report that the disciples said to Jesus, "Send them away so they can get food." Send them away. The need is too great. We can't handle it. Send them away. But Jesus says, "You give them something to eat." The disciples are stunned. How can we do that?

But Andrew has been talking with a young boy. Andrew was in the crowd instead of in front of the crowd. He'd rather hang out with a friend or notice an individual. We can imagine him talking with this boy. "What are you doing for lunch?" "Oh, my mom sent a lunch with me. I have some barley loaves and a couple of fish." "Really? I'm a fisherman. Where'd you catch those? Or did your mom buy them at the market?"

Then Andrew notices Jesus and the other disciples talking about how to feed this crowd. And he brings the boy to Jesus. He says, "Here's a little boy with five barley loaves and two fish." Then, realizing how stupid that must sound, he backpedals, "But what is that among so many?"

But Jesus takes what the little boy has to offer. He blesses it and breaks and gives it. The crowd is fed and there are twelve baskets full of leftovers.

Who notices a little boy or a little girl and helps them come to Jesus? Someone like Andrew. Who encourages a child to give what they have to Jesus to see what he can make of it? Someone like Andrew. We need a lot more disciples like Andrew. Could you help in children's Sunday School—navigating a group or teaching for a few weeks? In Durant, we've just spent a week telling children about Jesus and bringing them to him. We'll be doing that later this summer in Caddo. What are other ways you can befriend someone and help them come and see Jesus?

Do you think you don't have much to offer? Jesus can take and bless whatever you give. He can multiply it and use it to bless others. Can you imagine that little boy and the glow on his face when he realized he was as much a part of God's plan as anyone else, including the twelve apostles?

Now we move to a scene just a few days before Jesus' death. He enters Jerusalem and crowds come to see him and listen to him. John tells us that there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the Passover festival. They came to Philip. He has a Greek name and he's from Bethsaida in Galilee, so he may have had more contact with the Greek world. These Greeks, Gentiles, outsiders have a request, "Sir, we would like to see Jesus." Philip goes and tells Andrew. Andrew was a helpful person, the kind of person you go to when there's something to be done. If you want to see Jesus, someone like Andrew is good to talk to. Andrew and Philip then tell Jesus about the Greeks who want to see him—and, we can infer, they bring them to Jesus.

Can we see the people who don't fit in? Can you see the one who doesn't fit in? Do you have an eye for that kind of person? Andrew did. He knew how to treat seekers.

Some of us have been in church all our lives. The rhythms, the rituals, the songs, the vocabulary—everything about it is as familiar to us as our own home and family. But there are a lot of people who find it all very unfamiliar. Can you imagine what it's like for someone to come into a crowd of strangers like this for the first time? How do we treat them when

they come? Can you be a friendly face to them, simply smile at them? Then say, "Hello" to them?

Mike Wiley from the OK United Methodist Foundation was here last week to talk about financing our relocation project. But our finances are in good enough shape that Mike spent most of his time talking about preparing for new people. He travels all over and sees lots of churches. He says we need to move from being welcoming to being inviting. It's the difference between how we treat visitors and how we treat guests. A visitor may drop by your house and you might let them in and talk with them a bit. But you prepare for guests. You might cook a meal for them. You might even arrange for them to spend the night. A church filled with disciples like Andrew will look for ways to go to people, bring them in and treat them like guests.

What if the most potent conversations come after the sermon? Andrew might say something like, "Let Peter preach. I'd rather be among the listeners and talk with them. Did that touch you? What did you hear? How do you respond?" Mingling can be ministry.

Chris Buskirk asks, do you think Simon Peter baptized 3000 people on the day of Pentecost? There were 120 followers of Jesus who were filled with the Spirit and declared God's mighty acts. Each one could have spoken to twenty-five people and welcomed them into the fellowship of God's kingdom. Your role is crucial when you're not up front.

According to tradition, Andrew eventually left Jerusalem and traveled as a missionary-evangelist. It's possible that he went to what is now southern Russia. He also went to Greece where he was martyred. One story tells that his bones were taken to Scotland. The patron saint of Russia, Greece and Scotland is Andrew.

Our artist, Kenneth Wyatt, says that he wanted to portray Andrew as always busy, concentrating on the business of the moment. He shows him working with braids of rope. As a fisherman, Andrew would be familiar with using rope. But the rope is also symbolic. The accepted tradition is that Andrew was crucified by being tied to a cross that was in the shape of an "X." That kind of cross is still known as "St. Andrew's Cross."

Wyatt saw a man climbing into the cab of his pickup and decided he was his model for Andrew. Wyatt usually paid the models for posing, but this man refused the check, saying that if his likeness used in the painting would help evangelize any part of the world, that was reward enough (*The Apostles* 10). That sounds like Andrew, who was content to work behind the scenes with individuals. Andrew, though he was first to follow, shows us the joy of playing second fiddle.

I'm sure Andrew would want to invite each of us to come and see Jesus by faith right now. In a moment, I'll lead a prayer to help you do that if that's your need. Then we'll pray for others—our friends, relatives, acquaintances and neighbors. After we pray, we'll stand and sing our Invitation Hymn. If you need to reinforce openly what you've prayed privately, come and kneel. We won't embarrass you. But that act could be a concrete expression of your response to Christ's invitation.