

Good morning! Thank you for welcoming me into your congregation this week! INTRO.....

Now, you probably think from hearing that Gospel story this morning that I plan to talk about John the Baptist. Well that would make sense, but actually I want to point out something I found very interesting, and I think you will too. When you think of the twelve disciples, what are some of the names that you think of?

- Peter, James, John (in Gethsemane, close friends)
- Matthew, the tax collector.
- Thomas, the doubter.
- Judas. Not many of us have named our children, Judas.

Did anybody think of the name, Andrew? Andrew is always called “Simon Peter’s brother”. We don’t hear too much about Andrew. He was a fisherman. Andrew is one of those quiet disciples that fades into the background a bit. He does not go for the center of attention. He would not be the one posing coyly in the front of a group photo. He

would be the one in the back with half his face covered by someone's head. But rest assured, he is there.

You see people like Andrew every day. A modern day equivalent would be Andrew the bus driver; Andrew sitting next to you at a stoplight on your way home from work, listening to music; Andrew bagging groceries at the Safeway; Andrew the housekeeping person who whizzes through your hospital room once in a while to sweep up the floor; Andrew who takes your deposit at the bank. ...In other words, at the point at which he was called to follow Jesus, Andrew was just an ordinary guy. Maybe if we are honest, we identify more with someone like Andrew than with some of the more famous, more glorious, more dramatic disciples.

Also if we pay close attention, we would realize that if you don't have the Andrews of life, *the world* does not work very well. If the church does not have the Andrews of life, *the church* does not work very well. Why do I say this?.....well there are other stories about Andrew in the New Testament. In John chapter 12, we hear one such story. At this

time in history, people from all over the world were going through Jerusalem on the way to Rome or on the way to Egypt. It was a major thoroughfare. It so happened that two Greeks were passing through and were listening to Jesus preach. They came up after the sermon and said, “We would like to meet Jesus.” And guess who introduced them?.....Andrew! Sounds simple enough. Andrew introduces people to Jesus who want to meet him.

Here is another one.....in John chapter 6, we hear the story of Jesus feeding the five thousand. That is a familiar one to most of you. A huge crowd had gathered to hear Jesus and Jesus realized they were getting hungry. As the disciples began to panic about how they would feed all these people, it says that “Andrew spoke up”. He had noticed a boy with a loaf of bread and some fishes and he brought that little boy to Jesus who solved the problem.....and then some!.....so so far we have Andrew making an introduction and speaking up with a good idea.

The final story I would look at more closely with you is that which we read today in the first chapter of John. Andrew was a disciple of John

the Baptist. He had known enough to be among the crowd that followed John out into the wilderness to see what he would say and do. And Jesus had shown up to receive baptism by John the Baptist himself. Andrew approached Jesus and Jesus spoke his very first words of this gospel. The words were not casting out demons or performing a miracle. Not yet. All Jesus spoke was a question. He turned to Andrew and asked him ***“What are you looking for?”*** Andrew could have said anything. He could have said what many of us might long to ask God: I am looking for the meaning of life. I am looking for peace. I am looking for healing. I am looking for the answer to why bad things happen to good people..... Andrew did not say any of these things. He returned a question for a question. He asked Jesus “Where are you staying?” and Jesus did not tell him. He said ***“Come and See”***.

Jesus’ first interaction with anyone at the start of his ministry in the gospel of John is this relationship---this invitation. The Greek word used here when Jesus says to Andrew “Come and SEE” is not “blepo” which means come and physically see. But the Greek word used is

“orapo”.....not physical sight but spiritual insight. Jesus was saying, “Come and see what you are REALLY looking for.” Come and see for yourself and live into a true loving relationship with God in the world. And Andrew did just that! And not only that, but the first thing Andrew did the next morning was to go find his brother Peter and bring him to Jesus. This is his thing.....Andrew’s gift, his THING is not necessarily to preach great sermons. It is not to dazzle the crowds with his healing powers. He follows Jesus simply by accepting Jesus’ invitation and then inviting others to come and see him, come and meet him FOR THEMSELVES.

What can we learn from Andrew this morning? Andrew the average Joe.....Andrew who is so easy to forget but who makes a point to make sure people get to know someone who will make an impact on them.....Andrew has the gift of hospitality. It sounds like kind of a lame gift. Many people when they think of hospitality imagine setting out the coffee and donuts after church. But hospitality was significant in the time Jesus lived. Hospitality was everything. If someone showed up

at your doorstep, you would take pains to make them comfortable. You would even go so far as to wash their dirty, dusty feet. If someone showed up at your doorstep, your reputation might count on how graciously you hosted them.

Jesus' hospitality was even more radical than that! Jesus did not wait for people to show up on his doorstep. He sought them out. He invited everyone he met into relationship with him, even people that no one else would EVER want darkening their doorstep. He invited prostitutes, despised swindlers, greedy crooks and condemned killers to "come and see" what this discipleship thing was all about. Jesus knew the divisions enforced by social rules of His day and He paid them no mind. Jesus responded to everyone with open arms to send a message to the world that it is not in the world's rules and boundaries that we will "find what we are looking for" as he said in the gospel today. We worship a God with downright offensive hospitality! And aren't we lucky because we too are invited into intimate relationship with that God every day of our lives!

So you see we can welcome because we too have been welcomed. We can invite because we ourselves have received this extravagant invitation. We better be ready to be surprised at who else is sitting at the dinner table with Jesus, at who else wanted to “come and see”. There may be people we thought were shallow, foolish, offensive.....there may be people we would never have invited ourselves. But God’s hospitality knows no limits.

We too can reflect this extraordinary hospitality in every day ways. A great parallel to Jesus and his life is the great Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King. He did not buy into the world’s current definition of who was “in” and who was “out”. He fought for racial equality, for equality among all peoples of every nation. AND just like our visionary Lord Jesus had the support of an average guy like Andrew, Dr. King also had support from everyday people who propelled his vision forward. The “Andrew” of his day could have been someone like Ms. Rosa Parks who on December 1, 1955, after a long day of work at Montgomery Fair department store, boarded the bus home and refused the driver's demand to give up her

seat to a white passenger. Her solitary act provoked the Montgomery bus boycott, thus energizing a nation-wide movement for peace and justice. Did she plan it that way? She said in her memoir that she didn't. She was only forty-two years old, a seamstress, and she was just "tired of giving in" so she saw an opportunity and took it.

So you see, our own faithfulness and discipleship does not have to be glittery or dramatic. It can be simple and every day. It can be as simple as waking up each morning, no matter what yesterday was like, and accepting Jesus' invitation to "come and see". And when we do that, we can rest assured, God's spirit will move us to do the rest.

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.