

Second Sunday after Epiphany, January 15, 2023  
“The Five-Talent Disciple” (John 1:29-42)

When we think of Jesus’ disciples, there are a few names that immediately come to mind. We might think first of Simon Peter. He was the most outspoken in the group, the one others looked to for leadership. And he is prominent in a number of gospel stories. He is the one who wanted to build three tents and stay on the mountain at Jesus’ transfiguration. He’s the one who saw Jesus walking on the water and wanted to go to him, but began sinking because of his doubt. He’s also the disciple Jesus named the Rock on which he would build his church, and the one who vowed to never deny Jesus, but did that very thing.

Perhaps we would think of brothers, James and John, known as the Sons of Thunder. John was the one who took responsibility for Mary when Jesus was crucified, and the one who penned the gospel bearing his name. Peter, James and John were the three disciples who formed Jesus’ inner circle. They were with him on the Mount of Transfiguration and nearby in the Garden of Gethsemane. They were the big three.

Or we might think of Matthew, the tax collector, hated by his own people for being a traitor, but called and loved by Jesus. Thomas may also come to mind. He was the one who doubted the resurrection until he could put his hands in the nail prints of Jesus’ hands and feet. And then there is Judas, the one who betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver.

But how often do we think of Andrew? Andrew was always known as Simon Peter’s brother. However, unlike Peter, there were no great moments that would bring him to the top of our disciple list. Still, it is Andrew I want us to consider this morning. Andrew is the person we see every day. He’s the one who delivers our mail, fills our prescriptions, or serves our food at our favorite restaurant. If Andrew was one of the servants in Jesus’ parable of the talents, he would not be the two-talent person at the bottom of the heap. Nor would be the ten-talent person at the top. He’s more like the five-talent guy. He is not the one who gets noticed for his efforts, but works quietly doing his best, offering himself in whatever ways he can. Andrew, therefore, is absolutely essential to make the world work. And he is essential to make the church work. Without the Andrews of life, neither the world nor the church would work very well. The world and the church need Andrews.

So, what do we know about Andrew? Let’s take a look at this lesser known disciple. The first thing that can be said about Andrew is that he was Simon Peter’s kid brother, who probably lived most of his life in his big brother’s shadow. As kids, when the brothers would play games, Simon Peter is probably the one who chose the games. As adults, Simon Peter most likely was the one who took the lead and made decisions regarding the brothers’ fishing business. Andrew was probably always in the shadow of his older brother, always playing second fiddle.

We even see that within the group of the disciples. There were two sets of brothers: James and John, and Peter and Andrew. However, the big three disciples were Peter, James and John. Where was Andrew at the Transfiguration? Where was Andrew in the Garden of Gethsemane. He was not there with Jesus and the other three. Why? Because Andrew was a five-talent kind of guy, faithfully carrying out his work behind the scenes.

But Andrew was an essential part of the twelve. Three stories from his life illustrate this. The first comes from today's gospel reading. Andrew was originally a disciple of John the Baptist. One day, after Jesus had been baptized by John and had been tempted in the wilderness, John saw Jesus walking in the distance. He pointed to Jesus and said to his two disciples, one of which was Andrew, *There is the one, right over there. The one walking this way is the Lamb of God, who will change the whole world. I know this because of what I witnessed when I baptized him. He's the One who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.* This was John's way of giving Andrew permission to abandon following him and to go and follow Jesus.

When Andrew and the other disciple approached Jesus, Jesus turned and asked, *What are you looking for?* But this was not just a casual question. In John's gospel, everything has a double meaning. Jesus was asking Andrew, *What are you really looking for in life? What do you really want out of life?* Jesus seemed to look into his soul.

Andrew responded with a question of his own: *Where are you staying?* But he wasn't asking where Jesus was lodging. His question meant *Where are you living, Jesus? What lives inside of you? What is it that gives you such life?* And Jesus answered, *Come and see.* The Greek word Jesus used for *see* does not mean physical sight, but spiritual insight. Jesus was saying to him, *Come and see what you are really looking for.*

So Andrew went and spent the day with Jesus. During that time spent in the presence of the holy One, something happened inside of Andrew. He was transformed and became a disciple of Jesus. And what was the first thing he did afterward? He went and found his big brother, the brother to whom he had played second string. *Simon, we have found the Messiah.* Then what did he do? He brought Simon to Jesus. He didn't try to convince or convert his brother. He simply brought him to Jesus. He knew that if he brought Simon Peter into the presence of Jesus, then his brother, too, would be transformed by Christ. And that's exactly what happened. Simon Peter gave his life to Jesus.

So, what we find out in this story is that Andrew – the five-talent disciple – had a gift of introducing people to Jesus. And the first person he introduced was his brother. In a second story, he did the same thing. One day two people of Greek nationality were in the crowd listening to Jesus preach. They were so moved that, after the sermon, they approached the disciple Phillip, who had a Greek name, and said, *We would like to meet Jesus.* And what did Phillip do? He took the two Greeks to Andrew. Andrew then took them and introduced them to Jesus and they became followers.

There seems to be a theme here. Andrew was that person who introduced people to Jesus. Let's look at a third story. Jesus had been very busy doing ministry. He needed some time away from the crowds, time to be alone with God. So he set sail for the other side of the Galilean Lake. The crowd, however, learned of his destination and walked around the lake to where Jesus was going. When he came ashore, there was another large crowd waiting for him. And Jesus did not disappoint. He taught them about the kingdom of God and healed their sick until late in the day. Before they knew it, it was dinner time, and there was nothing for the crowd to eat.

But, if you'll remember the story, there was a small boy with five loaves and two fish. Jesus took the boy's meager lunch, blessed and broke it, and everyone ate until they were satisfied. And there were even leftovers. So, how was it that Jesus learned of this little boy and his lunch? It was Andrew who brought the boy to Jesus. And Jesus transformed not only the boy's lunch, but, no doubt, his life, as well.

So the sermon for today is not about Peter, who preached a great sermon where 3,000 were converted in one day. It's not about James, who became the great leader of the church in Jerusalem. And it's not about John, the man who wrote the gospel that has touched billions of people. It's about this five-talent disciple who introduced people to Jesus. It's about the people we encounter every day – people just like us – who don't do the extraordinary things in life, but quietly work to make the world and the church a better place.

This sermon is to help us see how essential the Andrews are and, hopefully, to encourage us to be more like him – the disciple who introduces people to Christ. And this is something we all can do: in the workplace, at a backyard BBQ, at a ball game, or wherever we might be. And it is something we can do through the ministries of our congregation.

Our mission statement is: *A family of grace, growing in faith, sharing God's love. Sharing God's love* is a part of this statement because we want others to experience the love of God – just as we have – and be transformed by that love. We want them to know the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world so that they, too, might become his disciples.

This morning, may we all be encouraged and challenged to be an Andrew for Reformation. We don't have to have extraordinary gifts. We must simply be willing to use the gifts we do have in supporting the ministries of our congregation so that we can fulfill our mission in making disciples for Christ. Ministry teams are now being formed for 2023. The council requested at its last meeting that a sign-up sheet be placed on the bulletin board. That sheet is currently on the board. The council and I encourage you to prayerfully consider your gifts and how they might be used in the various ministries of our church. We encourage you to ask yourself, *What can I do to help introduce people to Jesus?* Then volunteer to serve on a ministry team. Say yes and ask God to use you in that area. It will make a difference in your life, in the life of our church, and in the life of our community

Yes, Andrew was a five-talent disciple, but he is the disciple best known for bringing people to Jesus. Will you be an Andrew for Christ? Amen.