

Andrew's Model
John 1:35-42
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St. John United Methodist Church
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David Beckett, D.Min.

United Methodists are good at many things. We respond to disasters through the United Methodist Committee on Relief and often stay when other agencies pack up and leave. We started colleges for African-American students that are still going strong. We send countless volunteer in mission teams to help other communities in need.

One thing we do not do very well is invite others to church where they can meet Jesus. In her sermon last month Rose told us that the average United Methodist will invite a neighbor or friend to church once every 37 years! When was the last time you invited someone to St. John? If we are to take the Bible seriously we cannot avoid the subject of evangelism.

On the day after he had baptized Jesus, John was standing with two of his disciples, Andrew and John. He was telling them about the messiah when suddenly Jesus walked by. John was excited and said in so many words, "There he is! Right there! The Lamb of God!" Andrew and John heard John's words and looked and immediately began to follow him down the road. Jesus sensed that someone was following him and he turned and asked, "What are you looking for?" The two men replied, "Rabbi, where are you staying?"

It was about four o'clock in the afternoon and they spent the rest of the day with him. We have no idea what they talked about. Whatever it was, it was enough to convince Andrew that Jesus was the real deal.

The first thing Andrew did after his encounter with Jesus was to go to his brother, Simon Peter at their home in Bethsaida, over 80 miles away. When he arrived Andrew announced to his brother, "We have found the messiah." He then brought Simon Peter to where Jesus was staying and introduced him.

Here we see Andrew as the first Christian evangelist. The word evangelist comes from the Greek word which means good news. An evangelist is someone who is a "bringer of good news." Today when people hear the word "evangelist" they often think of evangelists associated with television ministries.

Doug Peterson, a writer for *The Door*, a Christian satire magazine, sent letters to 29 televangelists asking for information on how to become a Christian. He received a reply from all of them. 21 of them put him on their mailing list to receive fundraising appeals. Peterson received 16 requests for donations from one evangelist.¹

If your image of an evangelist is the TV kind, you need an image adjustment. To see what an evangelist looks like you need only to look in the mirror. According to the Bible you are an evangelist. Let's take a look at what we can learn from Andrew. There are three truths to highlight.

First is that Andrew had an encounter with Jesus. Andrew was living out his life, hanging out with John, when suddenly Jesus walked by. "There he is! The Messiah!" Now, if Andrew and his friends had not been already talking about the coming

¹—Religion Watch, September 1997, 4-5.

messiah...if they had not been expecting him...they might have missed Jesus walking by.

The point is that if we are to have an encounter with Jesus we need to have the same expectations. Do we expect to see Jesus in the faces of the homeless in our city? Do we expect to hear the word of God when we read the Bible? Do we expect something to happen when we gather for worship?

I remember one church leader many years ago pointing to a printed worship liturgy and saying, "You know what this is, don't you? This order of worship with everything printed and neat and orderly is a guarantee that nothing else will ever happen in worship."

Is it possible that our desire for order and predictability keeps us from encountering Jesus? Do you put your heart into the liturgy; the hymns, anthems, and prayers, expecting to meet Jesus? There are times when God breaks through our defenses to grab our hearts even at the most unlikely times. But mostly we will get from God what we expect to get. And if we don't expect a real encounter we probably won't get one.

The second thing we learn from Andrew's story is a sense of urgency. Even though it meant an 80-mile 3 day journey Andrew was compelled to go to his brother, Simon Peter, to tell him about Jesus. He didn't say to himself, "Next time I see my brother I must remember to tell him this good news." He started his journey right away. Compared to everything else in Andrew's life this news was the highest priority.

Are you living according to your priorities? In other words are you using most of your resources; your time and money, on the people and things that matter most to you?

The story is told of a prosperous, young banker who was driving a new BMW on a mountain road during a snow storm. As he veered around one sharp turn, he lost control and began sliding off the road toward a steep cliff. At the last moment he unbuckled his seat belt, flung open his door, and leaped from the car, which then plummeted to the bottom of the ravine and burst into a ball of flames. Although he had escaped with his life, somehow his arm had been caught near the hinge of the door as he jumped and had been torn off at the shoulder. A passing trucker saw the accident, pulled his rig to a halt and ran back to see if he could help. When he arrived at the scene, he found the banker standing at the roadside, looking down at the BMW burning in the ravine below. Incredibly the banker was oblivious to his injury and moaned, "*My BMW! My new BMW!*" The trucker pointed at the banker's shoulder and said, "*You've got bigger problems than that car. We've got to find your arm. Maybe the surgeons can sew it back on!*" The banker looked down where his arm had been, paused a moment, and groaned, "*Oh no! My new Rolex!*"

We don't know what else was on Andrew's to-do list the day he met Jesus. All we know is that he rearranged his priorities and felt a sense of urgency to go and tell Simon Peter the good news. In the midst of our daily lives we need to be able to rearrange our priorities at a moment's notice. We need to always be ready to be interrupted with the good news of the gospel.

The third thing we learn from Andrew is that he took the good news directly to his brother. He began with his family. Isn't that how it is with most families? When you hear good news the first people you want to tell is your family. When our oldest

daughter became engaged the first person she told was her sister. When she got her scholarship at seminary the first person she told was her father. That's the way it is with good news. You instinctively want to share it with those you love.

How are you doing with sharing the good news of the gospel with your family? Being a Christian at home is the hardest thing I have ever tried to do in my life. The reason is because of the GAP. You know about the GAP, don't you? It is the difference between how you act at church or at work and your behavior at home with your family. How big is your GAP? Is it a huge chasm or a tiny space? Living as a disciple of Christ is about narrowing this GAP. It is about being an authentic person of God.

Families are interesting greenhouses to grow Christian disciples. A family is a group of people where you feel safe to let down your guard, a place where you can be yourself. This means that family is where we can express the dark areas of our lives. At work or church or school we often have enough self-control to keep our selfish words and actions in check. At home we feel the freedom to let our self-centeredness flow out of our mouths and bodies, sometimes with explosive power.

It's somewhat like increasing air pressure in this balloon. On the way to a lunch meeting someone cuts you off. But a coworker is in the car with you. You don't show any external anger. But where do those feelings go? (Blow) The boss calls you to blame you for a problem. It's not really your fault but you don't say anything to defend yourself. (Blow) You find out that a colleague revealed something to others that you had said in confidence. You say something but it still is eating at you. You come home to find your child playing video games when you told him 5 times to do a simple chore. (Blow – candle)

I do believe one of the greatest problem our society faces today is male anger. Boys are not given the tools to help them cope with anger in healthy ways. Angry males are a significant factor in violent crimes, domestic violence, and broken relationships. Much of it can be attributed to the forces of our culture that do not give boys permission to pay attention to their feelings. Boys learn to act on their feelings without ever taking the time to talk about them.

Encounter with Jesus. Sense of urgency. Starting with our families. These are the lessons Andrew teaches us. Here's my challenge. I'd like us to designate a special Sunday we will call Andrew Sunday. It will be the Sunday after Easter, March 30. This will give us enough time for each one of us to think about being an Andrew for someone who doesn't have a church home.

The poet, Maya Angelou's Aunt Tee was a woman who worked 30 years as a maid and 30 years as a live-in housekeeper. On Saturdays, her day off, when she lived with a rich white couple in Bel-Air, she would cook pigs' feet, greens and fried chicken, then invite some of her friends over for the evening. The chauffeur and the other housekeeper and her husband would come to eat, drink, dance, laugh and play cards.

One night, during the middle of a big whist game, the rich white couple knocked on their housekeeper's door. They apologized for disturbing her, then got right to the point. Every Saturday night, they heard the joy and laughter coming from their housekeeper's quarters, and they wanted to be part of it. Would she please leave her

door ajar, they asked, so they could not only hear the joy, but see it, experience it, and feel it?²

You and I are the ones eating pigs' feet, greens, and fried chicken. We are playing cards, laughing and dancing at St. John. I don't know about playing cards, but we do a lot of laughing and even some dancing now and then. There are others who have not yet joined God's party in this place. They may be distracted by things or overwhelmed by life. They may not yet know that they desire to join our party. The good news of Jesus Christ is that they are included. They are invited into the house of God. And it's up to you and me to bring them here.

²—Carol M. Simpson, "How much is enough?" September 19, 1999, *American Church in Paris Web Site*, acparis.org.