

Matt Henry
John 12:20-36
14 March 2018

“Man of the Hour”

Grace and peace...

So Andrew is the man of the hour. Well, he’s at least the man of the 45-minute Lenten service. I could start this message by telling you what he did. But it’s more telling to say what he didn’t do. As far as we know, Andrew never preached to the multitudes or founded any churches. He never wrote an epistle. He isn’t mentioned in the book of Acts or in any of the epistles. Andrew has been described as “more of a silhouette than a portrait on the pages of Scripture” (p. 74). Silhouette is an appropriate image, because when Peter is your brother, you’re used to being overshadowed! Remember with the Twelve, we have two sets or brothers, James and John and Simon Peter and Andrew. Peter, James and John form the inner circle which means Andrew is kinda left out. I think it’s more a reflection on his personality than his position.

Andrew’s rather quiet and thoughtful. He’s not flashy, not obsessed with the headline or the credit. Never the one for drama, he is laid back and actually helpful. “Whenever Andrew speaks—which is rare in Scripture—he always says the right thing, not the wrong thing. Whenever he acts apart from other disciples, he does what is right. Scripture never attaches any dishonor to Andrew’s actions when it mentions him by name” (p. 63-64). No dishonor! That’s better than five stars on Amazon!

His main claim to fame is that Andrew is the first disciple Jesus called. I don’t know about you, but I might have been tempted to play that to my advantage. One day Andrew might have said, “O Lord, I have an idea. Instead of the twelve of us going by our names, could

we—I don't know—go by the number in which we were called?" "No, Andrew." "OK, you're right Lord. Tell you what, I'll just settle for alphabetical order then."

Andrew could have pushed the claim of being the #1 disciple even further because he was originally a disciple of John the Baptist. But Andrew never played that card, even though he could have. He wasn't the kind of guy to say "Hey, look at me!" That speaks to his character and virtue as a man and brother. Andrew introduced Peter to Jesus even though he knew once his brother was on the scene, Andrew would be in the supporting actor role, not the star. For Andrew, that was just fine. He didn't want the spotlight.

Maybe you can relate to this role. You like working in the one-on-one. This is where you thrive. Again, MacArthur says, "Thank God for people like Andrew. They're the quiet individuals laboring faithfully but inconspicuously, giving [quiet yet] sacrificial gifts, who accomplish the most for the Lord. They don't receive much recognition, but they don't seek it" (p. 75). They know what counts most.

This kind of behavior demonstrates to me that Andrew was secure in his relationship with the Lord. He didn't have anything to hide or prove. That freed him to be more aware of people around him, even a single individual, even a child. In the feeding of the 5,000, Andrew is the one who notices one boy with five loaves and two fish. He is aware of the individual. Instead of focusing on the problem, he can see at least part of the solution. Where Andrew shined was in the one-on-one. He was the master of introductions and connecting people. He could minister and actually invest in the lives of other people.

That's what I see going on in John 12, where the out-of-towners are in town. That is to say, the Greeks are in Jerusalem and this is during the Passover celebration week. Of the

Twelve, they approach Philip, I think because Philip is a Greek name. They are looking for an “in”, for someone like them or someone that could represent their request well. And they say, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” Philip doesn’t know what to make of their request, so he tells Andrew, which is also a Greek name. Andrew and Philip were both from the same hometown of Bethsaida. Philip knows Andrew is good at this people stuff. Philip—well, he’s up next week, but he’s not really the people person. Andrew is. And isn’t that true to life? People are different. Some people would love to just meet and greet. Others aren’t comfortable with it and don’t like the making introductions. But Andrew loves this connecting stuff. He can’t help himself. So when Philip tells him of the situation, it’s only natural to help make this connection. They want to see Jesus. He knows how to connect them.

Just that word “connecting” made me think of Boise traffic. Because, at least judging by the traffic reports, people don’t really call it I-184. They call it “the connector”. If you want to get to downtown and the heart of it all, you take the connector and it’s easy and direct. Andrew is like that connector because he makes it easy, he establishes a direct way from the way of the world to the Master. He connected his brother to Jesus. Here he seeks to connect the Greeks to Jesus. That’s a big deal theologically because they’re Gentiles right? You could even say that these Greeks represent the world. The world has come and wishes to see Jesus. Would he receive them? I think this is why Philip hesitated and got Andrew to back him up. This is a significant request. It’s not a matter of time of the schedule, it’s more a matter of “Do they belong?” So at the moment when the Jewish authorities are turning against Jesus, these Gentiles clamor for his attention. What will Jesus do?

Now we don't know if that connection ever happens but it doesn't matter!

“Theologically speaking, the point is irrelevant (and therefore omitted) because even if they met with Jesus at this point there is a sense in which they could not yet ‘see’ him, they could not yet belong to him, until the ‘hour’ is over and Jesus has been lifted up from the earth” (The Gospel According to John, Carson, John 12:32). In other words, Jesus shows Himself to them and to the world by being lifted up from the earth on the cross. That’s what He wants to be seen—as the Savior of the world. This is the ultimate and supreme manifestation.

What’s so dramatic about this moment is that up until now in John’s gospel, “the hour” has always been in the future.

John 2:4, at the wedding feast, Jesus says, “My hour has not yet come.”

John 7:30, the authorities are seeking to arrest Jesus, but no one laid a hand on him, “because his hour had not yet come.”

John 8:20, no one arrests him in the temple “because his hour had not yet come.” But now in John 12, the hour has come and that means the cross.

Jesus uses the image of grain of wheat to convey life for many through the death of one. Jesus is that grain who was received in the earth and planted. He is the seed that is sown. And from Him springs up much fruit—life itself for you and for me! We say dying and rising. We can also say sowing and reaping.

Bobbi Cofer’s mother Diane Paulson died yesterday. She worshiped with us, I know many of you know her. They’ll have a service for Diane at 11 am on Saturday, March 24 at Trinity, Rupert. They will gather, pray, sing, be comforted by the Gospel, and then there will come a point at the committal when her body will be lowered into the earth. Her body will be

buried. Paul says in Cor. 15, “What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And what you sow is not the body that is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or some other grain” (1 Cor. 15:26-27). Isn’t that an amazing connection to what Jesus said to Andrew? **This is how God farms!** He sows the body in the earth along with the expectation of the springtime of the resurrection. God has planted people all across the earth with the intent of a final harvest.

Jesus tells Andrew and Philip, who are just trying to see if Jesus wants to take this 2:15 appointment with the Greeks, “Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor Him.” I think Jesus is upping their offer. “So they want to see me? If they see me, they’ll also see the Father.”

“Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour? But for this purpose have I come to this hour. Father, glorify your name!” Jesus is the man of the hour and Andrew would want it just like that. It’s all about the cross.

Andrew, like most of the Twelve, would become one more seed sown as a martyr. The earliest accounts say Andrew was lashed, instead of nailed to an X-shaped cross. That way he suffered longer. Still, as he hung on a cross for two days, tradition records that Andrew exhorted those who passed by to come to faith in Jesus. Isn’t that something? In his dying, as in his living, Andrew was always making connections between people and His Savior. Andrew models for us a humble, intentional way of following Jesus...building relationships, connecting people, one person at a time. Sometimes all that is needed for the Holy Spirit to really go to work is a good introduction.

In Jesus’ name, Amen.