

TWO BROTHERS WHO WALKED WITH JESUS

John 1:35-42

John 21:1-8,15-20

2/21/10

In the first century, twelve men living in a small insignificant country changed the world. They were the disciples of Jesus, who after a year and a half to three years with Jesus, carried the evangel or the good news of Jesus Christ to the world. During Lent we will become better acquainted with those 12 who founded the Christian Church and spread the message of Jesus.

We begin today with the first disciple Jesus called, Andrew. **Andrew was a spiritual seeker.** Just like many in society today, his spiritual quest led him outside of institutional religion, to special persons of spiritual vitality. Andrew became a disciple of a prominent wilderness preacher, John the Baptist. John predicted that God's messiah was on his way. One day when John saw Jesus, he pointed him out to his disciples and Andrew followed after Jesus from that point on. He found in Jesus the God he had been seeking.

There are many of us here today who are seeking God. We can't settle for the beliefs of our parents or creeds of a church or the pat answers of others. We need to find our own truth and find our own way. If that describes us, then we can identify with the disciple Andrew.

Andrew is not only given the title of the first disciple of Jesus, but also the first evangelist for Jesus. Upon becoming convinced that Jesus was the messiah, Andrew told his brother Simon all about Jesus, and took him to meet Jesus. As a result Andrew's brother, Simon, became a disciple of Jesus too.

Years ago our denomination had an evangelism program called the Order of Andrew. The program was given Andrew's name because he had given us an example by sharing with his brother the wonderful knowledge of Jesus. Would we all take a lesson from Andrew to share the good news of the love and hope that we have found in Jesus Christ. The church grew because the disciples shared the gospel with others - the same is true today. When people share Christ with others, lives are saved and the church grows in strength and outreach.

Church tradition tells us that Andrew went to Scythia to bring the gospel. Ancient Scythia, is part of modern Russia. Andrew became the patron saint of Russia. He also preached in **Greece, and became the patron saint of Greece.** Golfers know the name, **St. Andrews, the oldest**

golf course and site of the British Open. There is no evidence that Andrew played golf, but he was honored as the patron saint of Scotland.

Legend says that Andrew was **executed in Greece** for converting the governor's wife to Christianity. He was bound to an X-shaped cross, and hence such a cross that appears to be on its side is known as the **cross of St. Andrew**. That cross is in the red chalice the symbol of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

It is said that **while Andrew died on the cross**, he told those who passed by of the saving message of Jesus. His last words were, *"Would, Father, that I had time to teach truth to my murderers."* He was an evangelist to the end, convinced that the gospel of Jesus was the message that could save the world.

Thanks to his brother Andrew, Simon Peter became a disciple of Jesus. Peter is mentioned more in the Bible than any other disciple. He was a part of the inner circle of disciples, along with Andrew, James and John and upon Jesus' death was the leader of the Apostles. Simon was a fisherman from Bethsaida, on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee. Later he moved to Capernum, which also became the headquarters of Jesus and the 12.

His name was Simon bar Jonah, (Simon son of Jonah), but Jesus gave him a nick name, Cephas (in Aramaic), Petros in the Greek. The name means stone or rock. It is not really clear why Jesus named Simon, Rock. It obviously was not because Peter was rock solid in his faith, for we see in the gospels how Simon's faith wavered. And yet in Matthew 16, Peter stated that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of the Living God. Jesus was pleased by Peter's understanding and he said, *"Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom..."*

Some have interpreted Jesus' words to Peter to be the establishment of Peter as the head of the church and thus the rock upon which the church was built. Another way to look at it however is that the confession of faith on Peter's lips was confession of all in the church and thus the very foundation or rock upon which the church was built. One of the reasons I think the confession rather than Peter, is the rock upon which the church was built is that immediately following that confession of Peter in Matthew 16, Jesus told the disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer at the hands of the religious leaders, be killed and be raised from the dead. Peter pulled Jesus aside as if to say, "Jesus, what has gotten into you. Stop this crazy talk! This will never happen." Jesus responded to the Rock, *"Get behind me,*

Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.” One minute Jesus is giving him the keys to the kingdom, the next he is calling him Satan, and telling him to get out of his way. Such was the pattern we see repeatedly with Peter.

One night the disciples were crossing the lake in a boat. Jesus came to them, walking on water. Peter, always the impetus disciple, asked Jesus to empower him to walk on water to him. Peter stepped out of the boat and indication of his great faith in Jesus, but when he got outside the boat and saw the waves around him he panicked and began to sink. Jesus reached out to Peter and said, *“You of little faith. Why did you doubt?”* Haven’t we all been there, during the storms of life when we lost our faith and were sinking, only to have Jesus lift us up to safety?

The greatest failure that we all know about is Peter’s denial of Jesus. During the last supper Jesus told the disciples that they would all desert him. Peter vehemently denied he would desert Jesus, he promised the he would give is life for him. After Jesus’ arrest, Peter followed Jesus and his captors to the high priest, and there in the courtyard, Peter was identified as one of Jesus’ disciples, and three times Peter denied being a follower of Jesus.

We can only imagine how his denial and abandonment of Jesus weighed upon Peter’s conscience. He had denied even knowing the man he had professed to be the messiah, the Son of the Living God. He had let Jesus down. He had let himself down.

After the resurrection, Peter and some of the disciples were going back to their old life of fishing. After a night of empty nets, Jesus appeared on the beach and told them to cast their nets on the right side of the boat. They did and the net quickly filled with fish. With the miraculous catch, Peter recognized it was Jesus on the shore, and being the impetus man of action, dove into the water and swam to Jesus. Face to face with his Lord whom he had denied, Peter was humbled and ashamed, but Jesus said nothing of Peter’s denial. He asked him three times if he loved him, as if giving him the opportunity to erase his three denials of Jesus. Three times Peter said, *“Lord you know I love you.”* Jesus told him, *“Then feed my sheep.”* Jesus hadn’t given up on Peter because of his failures. Jesus believed Peter’s life could be redeemed and be used for a significant purpose, to bring the gospel of God’s grace to the others.

My friends we worship a God of grace and redemption. We like Peter have failed Jesus. We too have denied Jesus. At times we have acted more like heathens than Christians. Nevertheless, **the grace of God is greater than the power of sin over our lives.** And Jesus is able to lift us up when

we are sinking in doubt, sin and failure, and redeem our lives for the great purposes of God. So Jesus says to each one of us, "*Do you love me?*" And if we say yes, then he gives us our task, "*Then feed my sheep.*"