

## NEW TESTAMENT PERSONALITIES

### "II. Andrew"

#### INTRODUCTION

The four Gospels are unanimous in their witness that close to the start of his ministry, Jesus selected twelve men as his companions - as his cabinet, you might say. They were not at all the sort that you and I would become enthusiastic about if we were on the admissions committee of a theological school or the commissioning body of a missionary board of the Christian Church. They had no education. They were not outstandingly successful in the work they had been doing. They were not of even temper or sparkling personality. They did not stand out as men of great character or noticeable piety.

Even after months in the company of our Lord, their records were spotty. So far from the mind of Christ, they could not grasp it when he talked to them about the necessity of the Cross. So far from the humility of Christ, they were arguing as to who was the greatest among them on the eve of the crucifixion. So far from the courage of Christ, they scattered in every direction when their Master marched up a hill to face a Cross.

Yet these were they whom Jesus chose as his constant companions and as the human instruments upon which he would stake the future of his way and his words.

#### ANDREW

One of the least conspicuous of the twelve disciples was Andrew. My concordance lists six appearances of his name in the Gospels, as compared with more than fifty for his more famous brother, Simon Peter. So far as I can discover, he is quoted only twice, and even then his words do not appear to have been very significant. He never did anything which marked him as a great leader or a daring pioneer. I know of no books that have been written about him, or any poems that sing his praises. He seems to have been a very ordinary man, and yet when we look closely at the few pictures we have of Andrew, we know how surely Jesus needed him as one of the twelve.

#### TWO CANDID CAMERA VIEWS

I want us to study two candid camera views of Andrew that we have in the New Testament - both in the Gospel according to John. The first of them portrays the calling of Andrew and John as the first disciples. There were two sets of brothers who were fisherman on the Sea of Galilee - Andrew and Simon Peter, James and John. One from each set Andrew and John - were first attracted by the preaching of John the Baptist, and one imagines that as often as they could they would slip away to hear this man who was calling Israel to repentance. One day, as they were with John the Baptist, they saw Jesus and heard the Baptist pay him tribute as one "Who ranks before me". The next day the same thing happened, and the two fisherman were so impressed that they followed Jesus and spent the better part of the day with Him. That was it. They had found the Master. And the very first thing that Andrew did was to find his brother, Simon Peter. Andrew, although impressed by John the Baptist, had never felt any compulsion like he now felt. "He first found his brother Simon, and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah'". One imagines that Simon was pretty sceptical about the whole affair, but he came along. You can

almost picture the scene - Andrew, awkward, and shy, stumbling through an introduction, "Jesus - I want you to meet my brother Simon", and Jesus looking long and steadily at the big fisherman and saying, "You are Simon.....from now on your name is Cephas" (that is Peter - meaning "a rock"). Here then is our first glimpse of Andrew as an admirer of John the Baptist, who became a disciple of Jesus, and whose immediate concern was to find his brother Peter and bring him to Jesus.

The second picture of Andrew occurs in the account of the feeding of the multitude. This was at the height of the popularity of Jesus. A great crowd, estimated at five thousand, had followed Jesus into the hills. The disciples were greatly and understandably concerned about the problem of feeding such a crowd. Some of them became increasingly excited, wringing their hands and crying, "What are we going to do about it?" Then it was that Andrew stepped forth and in his quiet manner said, "There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish". You wonder how it was that Andrew had this bit of information. Was it that Andrew was the kind of person that children instinctively trusted? Had Andrew been talking to this boy about fishing and nets and knots, until the lad had just naturally offered to share with Andrew the lunch his mother had put up for him? However, it was - here is Andrew - in his humble way, putting forth a suggestion that was to prove the key to the problem.

Each of these two pictures reveals a quality of discipleship that Jesus must have loved and admired. Stay with that second picture for a moment and ponder the person that it portrays. There is something almost symbolic in the fact that it was Andrew who brought forth the boy with the loaves and the fish. The food wasn't very much, but it made a difference. Andrew's talents were not very great - but they made a difference. I can't help but wonder if Andrew was not overshadowed by his brother. Certain it is that while they were disciples, Simon stands out as the leader - the speaker - the healer - and Andrew is always in the background.

Yet, evidently here was a man with a willingness to use one or two talents well, and in a moment of confusion and uncertainty, he used that talent in a positive fashion. "There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish". He knew it wasn't much. In fact, he didn't see how it could be of much help - but at least it was a beginning. And somehow Jesus used that beginning and before he was finished, there was more than enough and the people were satisfied.

Have you ever noticed Andrew in some group of people that is called together to discuss a problem - in school or community or church? You do not notice him at first because he does not say very much. He sits quietly in the background. Others are acutely and articulately aware of the difficulties to be faced. It may be a leak in the roof, or a room to be painted, the lack of funds, the dismal economic picture. "What are we going to do?" Then at length Andrew stands up with an offer of his time and talent and a simple statement of faith in the cause for which they have gathered, and the atmosphere is changed and the work is tackled. This is Andrew at work, and how our hearts are lifted by concern and action. It may not seem like much at first, but little by little, because of the quiet, steadying influence of one person, things get done. Have you

ever seen Andrew in the midst of some community disaster or emergency? People stand around telling each other how terrible it is, and Andrew begins to do something, however small and insignificant it may seem at first.

Leslie Weatherhead tells of a boy who was carrying a basket of eggs. He tripped on the curbstone, dropped the basket and smashed the eggs. People gathered around, as people do. One said, "What a pity". Another said, "Poor little chap. I hope he doesn't get punished". Another said, "I'm sorry he is crying. Let's comfort him". Then one man stepped out of the crowd, put his hand into his pocket and said, "I care half a crown". Turning to his neighbor, he said, "How much do you care?" The next man replied, "I care a shilling". In a little time they raised enough to buy another basket of eggs. Andrew at work again.

The point is this - so many of us are Andrews - one and two talent people, often feeling inadequate and insignificant when we see the abilities and the achievements of our five and ten talent contemporaries. It's reassuring to know that in the original twelve disciples there was an Andrew - that he was needed and that oft-times he made a difference. It is wonderfully steady to remember that whoever we are, we have some talent, some endowment of energy, gift of influence that rightly used, can make a difference in the world. Remember the motto of the American Friend's Service Committee: IT IS BETTER TO LIGHT A CANDLE THAN TO CURSE THE DARKNESS. And so often, when one Andrew has lighted one small candle, it has been the start of some splendid burst of light.

#### ANDREW - THE INTRODUCER

But now it's to the first picture of Andrew that I would have us return. This picture of Andrew bringing his brother Simon to Jesus once prompted Peter Marshall to give him the title, "Andrew the Introducer". Almost immediately the introducer is overshadowed and outdistanced by the person that he introduced, but the Christian Church owes an unforgettable debt to Andrew for bringing his brother Simon Peter to Jesus for without him some of the most thrilling chapters in the history of the early church might not have been written.

What a fascinating study might be made of the great introducers of Christian history. There would be a woman by the name of Monica. The name would be meaningless except as it has been glorified by her son, Augustine. Never the scholarship of that 4th century saint, never the Christian insights and influence that have spread across the centuries, had it not been for the prayer, the example, the entreaties of his Christlike mother. There would be a Boston Sunday School teacher by the name of Edward Kimball. His name does not mean a thing to most of us except in biography of Dwight L. Moody - the great evangelist of another century. There you will come upon it, with this remembrance, "When I was in Boston, I used to attend a Sunday School class and one day, I recollect a Sabbath school teacher, Mr. Kimball, came around behind the counter of the shop I was to work in and put his hand on my shoulder and talked to me about Christ and my soul till then."

People who open the doors, who make the introductions - how much Christ still needs this kind of discipleship. Whom are we introducing to Christ? "Andrew found his brother Simon, and said to

his brother Simon, 'We have found the Messiah' and he brought him to Jesus". How long has it been since you brought someone to Jesus?

I think I know what some of you are thinking at this point - how in our time we have recoiled from those people who have not hesitancy, anywhere - "In holding us with glittering eye" and asking in a grave and dark tone, "Brother - have you been saved". Like the barber who offered salvation with every shave, while a man would lay reclining in the chair with towels over his face, the barber would stand there sharpening his razor and ask in a voice of doom, "Are you prepared to meet your God?"

We've said that we haven't wanted to be like that - forever charging in to talk about religion at the most inopportune moment, making people cringe with embarrassment. So we have resorted to silence, taking refuge in that tempting slogan, "Deeds - not words". Have you ever stopped to think about the way in which the four Gospels ends. In no instance did Jesus propose an elaborate organization for the promotion of the gospel. There were no committees appointed, no resolutions adopted, no conventions held, no future meetings scheduled. Just the reminder from the Master to his disciples, then and now, that they were entrusted with the living Word of God in their lives and on their lips, "You are my witnesses". With that as a charter, the Christian Church was launched.

And across the centuries it has depended on both words and deeds. A word without deed to match.....either without the other would be half a witness. You do not cross the bridge from the four Gospels into the Book of Acts without sensing that those early Christians took their commission seriously. They lived what they said, and they also said what they lived. And this is our task, our commission, too.

If the Christian faith means something that is dear and decisive to you, then you have known Andrew. Someone whose words and ways introduced you to a Person and a Power that have made a difference in your life. Maybe your Andrew was a parent, who held before you the ways of Christ with such appeal that you naturally grew up as a Christian. Or maybe Andrew for you was a teacher or a counsellor who one day said something that made you look up and see the Master. Maybe it was a friend who by his blending of deeds and words opened doors that you never knew were there. But - if we have known Andrew, then we are under orders to be an Andrew. "You are my witnesses". There's no manual on how to do it. We'll probably blunder, but better far to blunder than to miss a chance to speak a word that can lift a heart and turn a life. We know, too that wherever straight, honest talk about faith and the Gospel is supported by sincerity and directed by prayer, it cannot be wasted.

I have some find Scottish friends who sometimes mention their membership in the St. Andrew's Society. The more I learn about the original Andrew, the more I like the phrase, "St. Andrew's Society". It occurs to me that the real Society of Andrew is limited to no single clan or single century. It is made up of all those followers of Christ, who with gratitude for what he has meant to them, just naturally seek to bring another to meet the Master.

PRAYER

And now may that spirit that was in thy servant Andrew be also in us that we may be good disciples of Jesus Christ. Give us the courage to speak the word and to match it with the deed thus spreading the good news of Jesus Christ. For it is in his name we pray. Amen