

# EVERYDAY HEROES: THE YOUNGER BROTHER

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First Presbyterian Church of Marion, Iowa  
Text: John 1:35-42

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## SCRIPTURE

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The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!"

The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi" (which translated means Teacher), "where are you staying?" He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon. One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated Anointed). He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter).

The Word of the Lord

**Thanks be to God!**

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## SERMON

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This morning we are continuing our sermon series on Everyday Heroes of the Bible. We have looked at some Old Testament figures, Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, Rahab, the "other" woman of Jericho. Last week, Pastor Beth told us about Judge Deborah. As she said, "Before there was Ruth Ginsburg and before there was Judge Judy, there was Judge Deborah." Today we are shifting in to the New Testament and looking at Andrew, who I am calling the younger brother. This is because he is the brother of Simon Peter, and whenever the two are mentioned together Peter is always mentioned first. This seems to suggest that Peter was the older of the two. And while Peter goes on to do great things and become the head of the church after Jesus leaves this earth, Andrew fades into the background.

I will get into more of what we know about Andrew in just a moment, but first I would like you to do something. I would like you to turn to someone nearby and tell them one reason why you like this church and keep coming back. If today is your first time here, then it can be why you decided to come this morning. But most of you have been here before, so what is one thing you like about First Presbyterian Church of Marion, IA that motivates you to get out of bed on a chilly Sunday morning and come to this place? Take two minutes and share that with someone now...

Thank you, for indulging me on this, and I wish we had the time to hear a bunch of these reasons why you like this church. I am certain there are many different responses to that question. What is meaningful to one person may not be as important to someone else. So perhaps, you heard something new, something that might have surprised you, or even something you never thought of before.

This Tuesday is Halloween, of course, the holiday when we have some fun with things that scare us. So this morning I want to talk about something that is truly terrifying for many in the church today, and that is the word "evangelism". (Oooh... SCARY!) But the word "evangelism" comes from a Greek word that literally means "good message." So what you just did, telling someone a reason why you like this church, that is evangelism. You had a good message. Yet very few of us are comfortable with the idea of evangelism. This is probably because we have been on the receiving end of someone else's evangelistic efforts. Maybe it has been someone knocking on your door asking, "If you were to die tonight, where would you spend eternity?" or maybe it has been that domineering in-law at every family gathering who is always telling everyone they need to accept

Jesus into their hearts. But regardless, too many think of evangelism as something manipulative, coercive or even threatening. And we don't want to be like that.

Yet when we look at the Bible, especially in the interaction between Jesus and others, we never see anything that is in any way manipulative or threatening. We can see this in our story this morning of Andrew. We do not know a lot about Andrew. In the other three gospels, he is first mentioned with his brother Simon Peter, as well as the other set of brothers, James and John. All four are fishermen, mending their nets beside the sea of Galilee, when Jesus comes along and invites them to follow him and they will be fishing for people rather than fish. The interesting thing is that after this Peter, James and John, become an inner circle with Jesus. He takes those three up to the mountain of transfiguration, and Jesus asks those three to stay awake with him and pray in the Garden of Gethsemane. So Andrew appears left out, and we really do not know why. Was it Andrew's preference, was he one who would rather stay in the background, or was he somehow lacking something that was present in the other three? We don't know.

What we do know is that Andrew seemed to be good at bringing people to Jesus. All four gospels tell the story of Jesus feeding the five thousand, but the Gospel of John mentions that the five loaves and two fish belonged to a little boy and it was Andrew who brought this boy to Jesus. Then there is an interesting little story over in John 12 where some Greeks were interested in talking to Jesus. They first go to Philip, who introduces them to Andrew. Then Andrew is the one who brings them to Jesus. But the best example of Andrew's skill is our story for this morning, where he brings his big brother, Simon Peter, to meet the Savior. This is evangelism as it is supposed to be. It is not manipulative. It is not threatening in any way. It is not all that scary. There are three basic steps that Andrew follows. Let's take a look and see what happens.

The first thing is that Andrew noticed something. Well, actually it is John the Baptizer who first notices something, but Andrew follows up on it. John says, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!" Apparently Andrew and another unnamed individual have been hanging around with John, learning what they can about what God is doing. When John tells them to look, they do just that. They look. What they see captures their attention and they want to know more. So they follow Jesus, until he turns around and asks them, "What are you looking for?" Or perhaps what Jesus was asking was, "What did you notice?"

There is a story from the mid 1800s about a Dutch settler in what is today South Africa trying to scratch out a living on a poor dirt farm. He made a valiant attempt but had an extremely difficult time because the soil was so rocky. There were stones everywhere and he just couldn't clear any of his fields of them. The more he dug, the more came up. Finally, he gave up and sold his land for a fraction of what he paid for it. Those who bought his land noticed something about these stones. They were different from ones found in other parts of South Africa. In 1869, they had one particular stone checked out by a geologist. It turned out to be a very large diamond, that weighed over 83 carats. This poor farm became the location of the famous Kimberley diamond mine, that over the years has yielded millions of diamonds; all because someone noticed what these strange stones really were.

That is the first step to evangelism. What have you noticed? What have you noticed God is doing in your life? In this church? In the world? Where have you seen God's love making a difference? Or the other way, where have you noticed God is needed? What have you noticed God is doing in places of tragedy or despair? So many times God is indeed doing something right in front of us, but we miss it. We are standing in a field of diamonds, but we are completely oblivious to the wealth at our feet. We are too busy thinking about some other problem, some other issue and we don't look and see what is happening. We need to notice.

The second thing that Andrew did was that he shared with his brother what he had noticed. He went to Peter and said to him, "We have found the Messiah!" That is the second part of evangelism, simply sharing what you have noticed. Now, if I say evangelism is "sharing your faith" many of us will get nervous. Again, we think of pushy obnoxious people coming to our door and trying to get us to read their little booklet. But notice, I did not say, share some sort of belief or doctrine or requirements. I said, share what you have noticed. I realize we

need to work on that, to practice doing it. That is why I had you do that little exercise at the beginning, sharing one reason why you keep coming to this church. If you worship here on a regular basis, there are some things you have noticed about our church that you must like. What are they and who should you tell about them? Actually almost every conversation we have is about sharing something we have noticed. It doesn't really matter the topic.

If you are talking about yesterday's football game, or your last visit with your grandchild, you are talking about something you have noticed. And the better the experience, the more you want to share. If you are a Hawkeye or a Cyclone fan and they made an amazing play in yesterday's game, you are dying to talk to someone about it. If you were visiting your granddaughter and she took her first few steps, you are telling everyone about it, and showing them the video on your cell phone. Well, I have heard that some grandparents do this, anyway. I, for one, am just not comfortable sharing something so personal as my absolutely wonderful granddaughters with other people. I prefer to keep such matters private. I mean, after all they are MY granddaughters and it is just better to keep how fantastic they are to myself.

Do you hear how dumb that sounds? When we notice something good and exciting, we want to share it with others. We can't hold it in. That is the way Andrew felt about spending the day with Jesus. It was a fantastic experience and he wanted to tell someone about it. Who better than his big brother, Simon Peter? When we notice that God has done something good and exciting we want to share it with others.

Evangelism is noticing. Evangelism is sharing, but there is a third part, the third thing that Andrew did. The text says, "He brought Simon to Jesus." The third part is inviting. Again, at first we feel uncomfortable about this. It seems intrusive, plus if you make an invitation then you are committed. You need to follow through and be involved. But again when you think about it, we invite others to things we enjoy all the time. If you are a golfer and there is a particular course you like to play; when you are talk to another golfer and discover they have never played that course you are eager for them to come and play with you. If you belong to a book club and you discover a good friend likes the same kind of books you read at that book club, you are excited about inviting them to come and enjoy your club. If you have been in a support group that has helped you through a particularly difficult time, and you learn that a coworker is going through the same struggle, you become anxious to get them the support that was so important to you. So what is it about our church that you enjoy the most? Or, what about our church has been most helpful to you? Once you can answer that question, who do you know who might also enjoy this, or need this kind of help? When you think of it this way, it may not be as hard as it seems.

Andrew noticed. Andrew shared. Andrew invited. He didn't argue or intimidate or try to convince anyone that he was right and they were wrong. He did not try to manipulate, and certainly did not threaten anyone. It was all rather simple and natural, but that is what evangelism should be. That is the way God works through everyday heroes, through simple and natural means. But God is able to do great things and change the world through these means.

Now if you are a member of this church, then you received a letter from us this week. Yes, it is that time again when we hear another scary word, "stewardship," as we start thinking about next year's finances. Included with the letter was a pledge card that we would like you to fill out and bring to worship in two weeks on November 12<sup>th</sup>. For the last few years we have been operating with a deficit budget. That is when we begin the year and project our anticipated expenses against income, the expense line is higher than the income line. The good news is that year after year things seem to work out. We are not in debt. We pay our staff a decent salary on time. We have been able to pay all our bills. We continue to give to various missions and charities that need our support.

There are a number of reasons for this. Sometimes our expenses are not as high as we thought they would be. Sometimes we get some unexpected income. And then for three years now, we have run a summer campaign, asking everyone to peel stickers off a poster and give a little extra to meet the deficit. All these factors have

kept us in the black. But if you read the letter, the session has voted not to do another of these sticker campaigns in the summer of 2018. We are hoping that if you have given extra to these summer campaigns you will be willing to add that extra into your pledge for this coming year. We would like everyone to increase their financial commitment. Some may only be able to make a small increase, but some could do much more. Now, why am I bringing up stewardship and finances while I am talking about evangelism? I bring it up because the motivation for both has to be the same. There are good reasons to support our church financially, and there are bad reasons. There are good reasons to share with others what you notice God is doing, and there are bad reasons. You know the bad reasons, things like guilt, or a sense of obligation, or fear that if you don't do these things our church will not survive and fade away. I would like you to forget all those bad reasons.

We support our church and we share with others because we have noticed what God has been doing. For 175 years God has been doing wonderful things through the First Presbyterian Church of Marion, Iowa. For 175 years, God has brought in dedicated, intelligent, and kindhearted pastors to preach the Word, administer the sacraments, and lead this church. For 175 years, God has raised up elders, deacons, teachers, and a great variety of volunteers to care for and nurture the members of this congregation. For 175 years, God has given skills and talent to musicians who lift our hearts in song and melody. God has opened our eyes to the needs of those in our community and around the world, and filled our hearts with compassion so that we long to do what we can to help.

For 175 years, God has blessed us with delightful children and youth that remind us of life and hope and laughter. (And by the way, children and youth are not the church of the future. They are the church today. Imagine how bleak and depressing this church would be without children. They are very much a part of who we are right now.) For 175 years, God has blessed us with wise members who have been around for decades and can tell us the stories of how God has been good to us. God has helped us to be patient and understanding with one another, so that while we may not agree all the time we are a congregation that is united, whole and healthy. God has answered our prayers in ways we never imagined.

Most important of all, for 175 years, God has loved us and through that love has enabled us to love one another, so that for many of us our very best friends sit with us in these pews week after week. Those are just some of the reasons why we keep coming back here Sunday after Sunday. Those are some of the reasons we should be willing to notice, share and invite others to come and check out our little part of God's beloved community. And those are some of the reasons why we do not have to, but really want to increase our financial support to the mission and ministry of this church.

Stewardship doesn't have to be scary. Evangelism doesn't have to be scary. Notice. Share. Invite. I would encourage you to give it a try. It doesn't take much. But God can take our weak, little attempts and use everyday heroes like Andrew and you and me and change the world.

Next week we will continue our Everyday Hero sermon series with the story of a little big man by the name of Zacchaeus. I hope you will be back, and maybe even invite someone to come along. In the meantime, may God bless and keep us all. In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.