

Sermon for Morning Prayer St. Andrew the Apostle

Lessons:

The First Lesson: Here beginneth the fifty-fifth Chapter of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah.

“Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people. Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee because of the Lord thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee.”

Here endeth the First Lesson.

The Second Lesson: Here beginneth the thirty-fifth Verse of the first Chapter of the Gospel According to St. John.

“Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God! And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou? He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day: for it was about the tenth hour. One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas [KEYfass], which is by interpretation, A stone.”

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

Text:

From the Second Lesson: “Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother ... findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah [**Meh-SIGH-uss**], which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus.” In the Name of the Father, and of the † Son, and of the Holy Ghost. *Amen.*

Argument:

Most of us are at least somewhat familiar with St. Matthew’s account of St. Peter’s recognition of Our Lord as the Messiah:

“When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea [**Saysuh-REE-uh**] Philippi [**FILL-ipp-eye**], he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

This passage is regularly cited by Roman Catholics as support for their Communion’s unique doctrines regarding the Office and authority of the Bishop of Rome, doctrines which are based on the linked assumptions that, first, Christ conferred on St. Peter the leadership of the Christian Church as a sort of family heirloom and, second, that St. Peter left this special status not to the Bishop of Jerusalem, or to the Bishop of Cæsarea [**Says-uh-REE-uh**], or to the Bishop of Antioch, all of which are places identified in Scripture as locations where St. Peter actually demonstrated leadership as an aspect of his Apostolic ministry, but to the Bishop of Rome, a place in which Scripture is utterly silent as to St. Peter’s Apostolic activities.

In this customary Roman formulation, St. Matthew's account is extracted from the overall accounts in the Gospels so as to suggest that, only on that particular occasion, St. Peter was in ways that actually discovering Our Lord's identity with the long-sought Messiah and, it is further implied, St. Peter was the first of the Apostles to achieve this recognition. The suggestion is that it was as a reward for this perspicacity that Peter was given the special and overarching individual preëminence over the other Apostles that the Romans ascribe to him.

In actual fact, however, as today's Gospel Lesson from St. John makes clear, St. Peter neither came to this conclusion on his own nor was the first among the Apostles to recognize, and acknowledge, Our Lord as the Christ, the Anointed One, the Messiah.

When one thinks about it, it was completely natural and appropriate that it was St. John the Baptist, the Herald of Our Lord's coming and ministry, who first recognized Him as the Messiah. After all, it was precisely John's special vocation and task to announce that the Messiah had in fact come. Once John had announced that the Messiah was on His way, it was merely the completion of that task for John to point to the Person who was that Messiah and say, in effect, "Behold, the Man!"

There may have been several people who heard John make that identification but, again, it is perfectly natural that John's own disciples, who were normally in his company, would have been among them. We know for sure that two of these disciples did indeed hear their master make this declaration; the name of one was not recorded but the name of the other was Andrew, the same St. Andrew whom we commemorate today.

And it is fitting that we should commemorate him, even if he had never done anything more than what he did upon hearing John declare that Jesus was the Christ. For, like a good brother, the first thing Andrew did upon hearing this, literally, earth-shaking news was to find Jesus and become His disciple.

The second thing Andrew did, immediately after he arranged with Jesus to join Jesus's band of followers was to find his brother and business partner, Simon, a fisherman of Bethsaida [**Beth-SEH-ee-duh**] in Galilee [**GAL-ih-lea**], and tell him that not only had the Messiah come in their lifetimes but was, at that moment, visiting their home town! If the ancient Jews had possessed cameras, this could have been described as the celebrity photo-op of all time. As it was, Andrew was

the instrument of providence in bringing Simon, later called Peter, to Christ so Jesus could engage him, too, as one of His Apostles.

As it was, in this act Andrew demonstrated the single most important characteristic of an Apostle, which is to be a witness to the Messiah.

The next day, Bethsaida [**Beth-SEH-ee-duh**] witnessed another example of this same style of personal evangelism by witness, for it was there that Jesus called Philip into His service and Philip brought Nathanael [**Nuh-THAN-yull**] to Christ, thus confirming the pattern for the person - to- person evangelism that was originated by St. Andrew and that has, ever since, been the Church's single most significant form of outreach.

Philip's calling of Nathanael [**Nuh-THAN-yull**] is significant for another reason, namely that when Nathanael [**Nuh-THAN-yull**], at Philip's instigation, met Christ in person, Nathanael [**Nuh-THAN-yull**] became the second person who is recorded spontaneously to have recognized Jesus as the Messiah. And, whatever may have been Christ's actual intent in His conversation with St. Peter on the same topic, Nathanael [**Nuh-THAN-yull**], at least, was unquestionably given a special reward for this recognition. Jesus promised him that he would receive a special vision of the angels of God ascending and descending upon Him, a clear sign of His Messiahship.

Conclusion:

Where Our Lord expressly charged His followers to go out and convert the world, and where we number ourselves among those followers, that mission as evangelists to the world falls upon us, as the mantle of the prophet Elijah [**EE-lye-juh**] fell upon his successor Elisha [**EE-lye-shuh**].

Very few of us are equipped with the rhetorical skills or the charisma that would enable us to address mass meetings at which scores of unchurched people would be suddenly converted and then would rush to declare their acceptance of Jesus. For those of us who are not gifted as revivalists, we must look not to Billy Graham as our model but to Andrew and his fellow-townsmen, Philip.

It is their method of patient, respectful, individual, and painstaking one-on-one invitations to meet Christ that we can use with those we encounter whom we sense

not only need Christ in their lives – for all who are alive need Him – but in addition are open to Him. When it seems that our instincts are telling us that someone may be ready to hear what we have to say about Our Lord, as Andrew felt Simon was ready and Philip felt Nathanael [**Nuh-THAN-yull**] was ready, then more often than not it will not be just our own instincts that are guiding us but, instead, the nudging of Providence.

If we act at those moments, and extend to the one who seems ready our invitation to come and meet the Messiah, then we will be doing our part to spread the Gospel and save the world. Unfortunately, if at those moments we hang back and let them pass in silence, we will be guilty of the souls lost through our hesitation. To stand mute out of a fear of embarrassment is not only cowardice, it is the placing of self-love above love for our fellow men, it is the valuing of our own comfort above the salvation of others.

So go forth, and do as Andrew and Philip did, speaking the truth boldly and in real love.

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*The Rev'd Canon John A. Hollister
December 1, 2008.*

1 Psalms and Lessons for the Christian Year (1943), THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER x (PECUSA 1928), commonly called “the 1943 Lectionary”.

2 St. John 1:40b-41 (KJV).

3 St. Matthew 16:13-19 (KJV).

4 St. John 1:29-34; St. John 1:40-41.

5 St. John 1:37-39.

6 Cf. Acts 1:22b.

7 St. John 1:43-51.

8 St. John 1:49-50.

9 St. John 1:51.

10 St. Matthew 28:18-20.

11 2 Kings 2:13.

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13 Transferred from November 30, 2008 because that date was the First Sunday in Advent.