

11.26.2017 Trinity 24 (John 1:35-42)

When speaking with you a couple of weeks ago, I mentioned that there are times it seems the most difficult part of writing a sermon for Sunday morning is figuring out how to begin. As I sat down to gather a few thoughts to share with you today, once again I found myself struggling with where to start, but as the puzzle pieces began to fall into place, not knowing where to begin seemed very ironic, because the common theme in every piece of that puzzle was: a beginning. Every aspect of our service today shares a common thread of beginning.

Consider how this theme is present in all things this morning. Our second lesson paints a vivid picture of John the Baptist preaching and teaching; and when he sees Jesus, he points out to all who would listen, “*the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world*” (John 1:29). Jesus Christ, the Infinite and Almighty Son of God, who already was before time began, “*has come to seek and to save that which was lost*” (Luke 19:10), and this passage is one that marks the beginning of a chapter in the story of our Salvation.

This day was also a beginning for St. Andrew. Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptist, he was a man who not only heard that “*voice of one crying in the wilderness*” (John 1:23), but listened, and he was standing with John on that day. The moment that John the Baptist identified our Lord as the promised Messiah was a beginning for Andrew. He would spend the rest of that day with Jesus, and would later leave the safety and security of the life he knew behind. No longer would he be a fisherman, but as a disciple of Jesus Christ, he would become a fisher of men (Matthew 4:18).

This morning we also recognize this common thread of beginning in the feast we celebrate, the Feast of St. Andrew. Because Advent Sunday (the beginning of the Church year) is always the nearest Sunday to the Feast of St. Andrew, for centuries this feast has marked a beginning. The end of one year in the Church, and the beginning of another. We should also recognize that this feast is celebrated on the day of St. Andrew’s martyrdom. The day that St. Andrew suffered death on this earth marks the beginning of a larger life, a life of peaceful, perfect service in God’s heavenly kingdom.

So, our lesson speaks of a beginning in the story of our Salvation and a beginning for Andrew. The feast we celebrate today marks a beginning for the Church and the beginning of a saints heavenly reward, and the institution of a new Rector is a beginning at St. Andrew's. As we look forward to the future of St. Andrew's on this day filled with beginnings, it seems appropriate to consider Andrew's example of faithful discipleship as a model for the people who gather in the church that bears his name. There are ancient sources that provide information about Andrew, but this morning we will only consider what we read about him in the New Testament, for the small amount of information we find there is more than enough to help us model our lives, and certain aspects of the future of St. Andrew's, after a genuine disciple of Jesus Christ.

The first lesson we may learn from Andrew is this: He was a man whose heart longed for Christ. Andrew, like his brother Peter, was a fisherman by trade, but as a disciple of John the Baptist, his hope was rooted in the coming Messiah and he was preparing for His arrival. This longing, hope, and preparation all came to fruition on the day that John the Baptist looked at Jesus and declared: "*Behold the Lamb of God!*" (John 1:36). Andrew heard the Baptist's cry, saw the promised Messiah, and believed. By the grace of God, he was the first of the Apostles to be called, and as he and another disciple began to follow Jesus, Jesus turned to them and said, "*What do you seek?*" (John 1:38).

We've established the fact that today is a beginning, and quite appropriately, these are the first words spoken by Jesus in the Gospel according to John: "*What do you seek?*" This is the first question that the Son of God asks all who turn to follow Him, and this is the first question we must ask at the beginning of this new chapter at St. Andrew's. As we turn to follow Christ, as we live with one another in this Christian community, what do we seek? Are we looking for a Savior to spend an hour with on Sunday morning, or is our desire to have Jesus be the Lord of our life? Are we searching for comfort, or are we willing to sacrifice? Are we just trying to make ends meet and keep the church doors open for the next generation, or are we taking steps to transform this generation through the love of God manifest by His Son on the Cross at Calvary? As members of St. Andrew's, by following Christ, what do we seek?

We can be certain what Andrew sought. He sought what only Christ can give: peace with God and life eternal in His heavenly kingdom. Andrew sought and found the strait gate and narrow way that leads to eternal life, and when he found the Savior of the World, he couldn't wait to share the Good News. That's another lesson we may learn from him: The importance and urgency in evangelism. When Andrew spent that day with Jesus he came to know God, and immediately went to find his brother Peter and said, "*We have found the Messiah*" (John 1:41). Andrew looked for his brother with such urgency because he realized, like St. Paul writes, "*now is the day of Salvation*" (2 Corinthians 6:2). John 3:16 declares that God "*gave His only-begotten Son, to the end that all that believe in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*" The Scripture doesn't say that we "will have" everlasting life, but that we "*have*" everlasting life. Now is the day of Salvation, the kingdom of God is at hand, eternal life has begun! Andrew went first to find his brother Peter because he recognized Jesus as the One with the authority to say today, "*shalt thou be with Me in paradise*" (Luke 23:43).

We know that Andrew's heart longed for Christ, and as a fisher of men he shared the Gospel with everyone he could. In closing, consider another lesson we may learn from him: Andrew didn't want comfort and convenience, he wanted to follow Jesus, and he was willing to sacrifice, to take up his cross daily as a genuine disciple of Jesus Christ. Our culture would have us take an easier road. It would have us believe that Jesus is just another great teacher, just another man with a few words of wisdom, but this lie stands in sharp contrast to the example of St. Andrew. The self-sacrificing life he led and the martyr's death he suffered on what is known as a St. Andrew's cross is heart-breaking evidence that God did not send His Son into this world to offer some good advice. God sent His Son for our Salvation.

Christianity is not about good advice, it's about transformation. Andrew's life was transformed the day he turned to follow Christ. He experienced personally the God who walked on water and calmed raging storms, who made the blind see, the lame walk, and the deaf hear, who healed the sick and raised the dead. When we truly turn to follow Christ and live in union with Him, when He is no longer a Sunday sermon or a favorite Bible verse, but the

Lord of our life, our lives will be transformed as well, and the world will witness the power of God at work in us.

What do we seek? At St. Andrew's we seek hearts that long for Christ and want to share His Good News with the world He gave His life to save. We seek lives that are transformed because Jesus Christ is our Savior, and the Lord of our life. We seek to do God's will, and by grace through faith to receive what He wills for us: Life eternal in His heavenly kingdom.