

John 1:29-42

Behold, the Lamb of God

29 The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! **30** This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.' **31** I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel." **32** And John bore witness: "I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. **33** I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' **34** And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God."

Jesus Calls the First Disciples

35 The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, **36** and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" **37** The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. **38** Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, "What are you seeking?" And they said to him, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?" **39** He said to them, "Come and you will see." So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. **40** One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. **41** He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means Christ). **42** He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas" (which means Peter).

We tend to take for granted the knowledge that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah. We come to the story so late, we have not experienced the search in quite the same way that the people of Israel had.

Israel was occupied, the Jewish people were oppressed. Yet they had hope, the hope they had carried through all the centuries, that a descendent of David would come and save Israel. The prophecies had not yet found their fulfillment in Jesus, and so no one quite knew what to expect. It was not as though Jesus was being shown on the internet with leagues of theologians to explain that he was the anointed one. To the first disciples in particular, Jesus was an unknown teacher, and there were not yet rumors of the messiah.

These first disciples, John and Andrew, had not yet seen water turned to wine, they had not yet seen the blind see and the disabled walk. They had not yet seen the dead rise. Still, hearing the words of John the Baptist, and having an encounter with Jesus was enough to convince them that this man was the long-awaited Messiah.

We cannot imagine how joyous that news must have been. It is the relief of someone drowning who has just been tossed a life preserver. It is hope that comes when the doctors have found a new successful treatment plan. It is the sound of silence in a war zone or of chains falling to the floor. It's hearing that rescue is on the way when all seems lost.

John is a modest Gospel writer, and never names himself, but it is believed that it is he and Andrew in this passage. For these men, they had never lived in an independent Israel. John is believed to be a young man of 16 or 17 at this time and Andrew perhaps 35. Rome had occupied Israel for about sixty or so years prior to this. For their entire lives, they had not known freedom. More than just the idea of freedom, however, the Messiah would usher in a new relationship between God and humanity, a time of peace, a true reign of God. This was an incredible moment in time.

And what is the very first thing that Andrew does upon encountering the long-awaited Messiah who had come to change everything, to usher in the kingdom of God?

Andrew departs and goes to find his brother. He then brings his brother to Jesus, to show his brother Simon Peter what he had found. Having seen

the Messiah, having looked into his eyes, Andrew desired to share this discovery with his brother. We should be thankful he did, because his brother was Simon Peter, the disciple who would do so much for the Gospel and for the church, and for those of us believers who mess up again and again but can take comfort in that Peter was deeply loved and restored despite denying the Lord during his trial.

The nature of the Gospel is to spread, and this is the first thing Andrew does.

I hear from a lot of Christians these days who do not feel it is important to share their faith because they assume everyone has already heard of Jesus, and after all, it can be difficult and awkward to talk about one's faith. The other person might think us foolish, or might ask difficult questions we may not know the answer to, or the answer may not be liked by the person we are talking to. Having spent the last seven or so years in ministry, I will concede only two points. One, that most people have heard of Jesus in the US, and that it can be awkward. The rest is poppycock. Also, the fact that I just said poppycock is making wonder if I'm reading too much C.S Lewis and watching too much BBC.

It is true that many, if not most people in America have heard the name of Jesus. Unfortunately, that doesn't mean they've actually heard the gospel. I'll give you an example.

I was out to dinner with a friend and our children and our conversation turned to religion. I don't remember how exactly we got there, but she made a statement about Jesus being the son of God and basically a nice guy, but not divine. I was surprised and explained that Christians believe that Jesus was God, as was the father, God in three person, blessed trinity. See, hymns are important.

She replied that maybe my particular corner of Christianity thought that but no one else did. I explained again that no, pretty much all the Christians think that going back to at least the early hundreds and it is well attested in the Bible. I repeated, God in three persons blessed trinity.

It was at this point her 10 year old son decided to school me in theology. He explained that God was here, but Jesus was down here, and no one really thought that Jesus was God, and he would know although he's never

cracked a bible or step foot in a church. With the confidence only a ten year old boy can muster, he rejected my argument of having spent ten years studying to become a pastor and reading the Bible in all three original languages. I really wish I could have that kind of confidence. And please don't think I'm disparaging him. He's a cute-y.

People may know about Jesus, but popular culture, the media, and yes, even our churches, have not done well at teaching the truth of the Gospel and of Jesus. If Jesus is just a nice guy, there's no reason for me to change my life, and no reason to upset my neighbors by speaking of my faith. If Jesus was just a nice guy, I doubt very much Andrew would have been so keen to bring his brother to Jesus.

But Jesus is not just a nice man. He is the son of God, fully divine and fully human, he calls us to follow him fully, with all of our being, and he does not give us the option of going half way. When we get to the end of our lives, there will be nothing more important than our relationship with God. There are no greater words to hear than well done my good and faithful servant. We belong to no one else but God. Even our lives are not our own, but belong to God. This is what Andrew believed, and he responded by sharing his faith with others.

Friends, I know it can be hard. Sometimes, it can even be frustrating like arguing with a ten-year-old. But having found the messiah we can do no less. John, the gospel writer would later have a disciple named Polycarp. Polycarp would be martyred for his faith, and when given the opportunity to escape death he said "Eighty six years I have served Him, and He never did me any injury: how then can I blaspheme my King and my Saviour?"

We do not face martyrdom, only annoying discussions and some funny looks, an invitation to church declined. Jesus has never done us any injury, how can we stay silent, especially with so little to lose?

This week I invite you to pray. Perhaps imagine that you were there and you saw Jesus pass by, heard John the Baptist words, and discovered the Messiah. Ask God to show you who you should go and find, who you might tell of this discovery, who you might share it with, and then do it. There are plenty of people who know little if anything of the gospel, who need to find the savior, who need a community of believers to walk

alongside them. We have found the Messiah, now it is time that we go and find our brothers and sisters.

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