

## A Prayer

Loving God, who inspired the apostle Andrew to hear and obey the call to follow your Son Jesus Christ and brought his brother with him: Give us grace to follow him without delay and inspire us to bring those near to us to knowledge of your love, through Jesus Our Lord. Amen.

## A Text

*John 1: 40-41 "One of the two who heard John speak and followed [Jesus] was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his brother Simon, and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah'."*

Andrew rates a mention just three times in John's Gospel and each time it's because he's instrumental in bringing someone to meet the Saviour. It's Andrew – aware that people have physical as well as spiritual needs – who finds a lad with five barley loaves and two fish and 5000 are fed (John 6: 8-10). Then John records how Andrew introduces a number of Greeks and our Lord uses an allusion from Greek literature to bring home the meaning and purpose of his impending death (John 12: 20-22). But right at the beginning Andrew tells his brother Simon Peter the startling news that the Messiah has come and brings him to Jesus.

So it's not surprising that Andrew has become an inspiration for individuals and communities committed to personal evangelism. Andrew's brother Peter was destined for leadership and public ministry. On the Day of Pentecost thousands listened to Peter and three thousand believed. Andrew reminds us that while God may call ones to the task of winning thousands, he also calls thousands to the task of winning ones.

I'd like to suggest that the story of Andrew bringing Peter to Jesus offers us three helpful pointers for the way to go about the business of personal evangelism.

First, I suggest that personal evangelism grows out of being in community. Andrew tells his brother, verse 10, "We have found the Messiah". Andrew's conviction of the ultimate significance of Jesus grew out of a process experienced in community. Clearly he had been impressed with John the Baptist and may even have been one of his disciples. Throwing in his lot with Jesus was something Andrew did in the company of others. He joined the Jesus Movement as part of a group. It was through being with Jesus and reflecting together with others that Andrew comes to recognise that Jesus is the long-expected one. We have found the Messiah. A point to ponder: would someone who might encounter the church community I belong to make this discovery?

Second, I suggest that personal evangelism requires us to take context seriously. When Andrew says, "We have found the Messiah" there's no shadow of a doubt that Peter understood what he meant. Peter was a Jew. To speak of Messiah was to speak in code of all the longings of a people waiting for God to break into their national experience and deliver them.

Two decades on, if Andrew had been commending Jesus in a city like Antioch, a place of Hellenistic high culture, 'Messiah' would have sounded strange and carried little conviction. Jewish Christians in Antioch found that if the story of Jesus was to take root in Hellenistic soil it needed translation into Hellenistic thought forms. So instead of speaking of Jesus as Messiah they identified him as logos, a term well known in Hellenistic wisdom that could be used to express the self-disclosure of the eternal God.

In every generation, in almost every situation, there is a challenge to tell the story of Jesus in a way that speaks meaningfully into a culture that's different from the culture of the teller. It's here that the challenge of coming to terms with context comes to the fore.

Thirdly, I suggest that personal evangelism must always involve a call to commitment. Andrew followed (Verse 40). Before we start thinking about calling others to commitment there's the task to be committed ourselves. Personal evangelism grows out of a life of discipleship, being committed to be with Jesus, being ready and willing to learn from him day by day. Andrew learnt to know his Lord well enough to understand that something seemingly insignificant as a boy and his picnic lunch could be important. Andrew learnt to appreciate that Jesus would embrace some Greeks on the edge of the crowd just as much as those who pressed to the front.

Andrew reminds us of at least one more principle: if we have family we have a ready-made opportunity to share our faith. Statistics on how people come to faith point out that it is through family that the great majority of people discover for themselves who Jesus is. But there's the rub. And yet as we all know, it's family members who are our sternest critics. Families know better than anyone else how to wind us up. There is no other audience on earth where the depth and generosity of our faith is so transparent.

It would be wrong to leave the story of Andrew implying that he was simply a back room boy within the community of disciples. The early church honours his memory as one who took the Gospel to Asia Minor and Scythia and along the Black Sea as far as the Volga. His life and work is commemorated by his being patron saint of Russia and Romania as well as Scotland.

Tradition tells us that he became Bishop of Byzantium, to whom the Patriarch of Constantinople, leader of the Eastern Orthodox Church, claims succession. For Andrew the cost of discipleship meant suffering crucifixion at Patras (modern-day Greece) on a cross of the form called *Crux decussata* (X-shaped cross). It is this form of cross that is the inspiration of the St Andrew's Cross - the Scottish Saltire.

Community, context and commitment. Andrew invites us to a healthy practice of personal evangelism that grows out of being in community. It will take the social and cultural context seriously. And it will always be about commitment – being a disciple of Jesus and inviting others to make that commitment too.

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