

“ANDREW, NETWORKER EXTRAORDINAIRE”

Do you have a favorite number? If not, let me suggest the number “12”. The number 12 is a magical number—it is divisible by 2—by 3—(I’m saying this slowing for you non-math majors)—divisible by 4, and by 6.

- There are 12 hours on a clock
- There are 12 months in a year
- There are 12 tones in a musical scale
- 12 Knights of the Roundtable
- 12 signs of the zodiac
- 12 in a dozen
- 12 inches in one foot
- 12 members of a jury
- and one day Jesus went out and got himself 12 Disciples.



But the great news is that Jesus of Nazareth did not just call 12 Disciples. He calls every one of us here today to be His Disciples. As a matter of fact there is a movement sweeping the church today to discover a new way of looking at the Christian life in which we live every day as Disciples of Jesus.

For the longest time in the church we’ve been content to put on ourselves the label “Christian”—opposed to Buddhist or Hindu—or a follower of Islam or some other religion. In fact, in some hospital chaplaincy offices – as pastors we look in the box or on the list labeled “Christian”.

The only problem is—this label “Christian” only appears **3** times in the New Testament—and the word that appears **269** times is the word “Disciple.”

The first thing Jesus did when He began his ministry was He called 12 Disciples. The last thing Jesus did at the end of his ministry 3 years later was that he sent those Disciples out and told them to *“go make more Disciples out of all the people in the world.”*

You and I are alive and in this church to be a Disciple of Jesus Christ. Over the coming weeks we are going to see that it’s not an easy life. We’re going to get to know 12 ordinary men who accepted Jesus’ invitation to travel the road less traveled. The road that still makes all the difference.

The first thing we learn about this adventure is: it comes to ordinary people and on ordinary days and amidst ordinary conversations.

As you heard from the Bible reading (and hopefully you still have those pew Bibles open so that you can follow the story this morning)— we are stepping into a very ordinary and humdrum conversation and chitchat between a fisherman and a carpenter. We wonder if anything very important is happening in this conversation.

But you see, John does this by design—he wants us to see the power of Christ from very small beginnings. There is no such things as a trivial moment in the life of a disciple of Jesus.

In fact, you could have a very trivial conversation with someone this morning or this week over coffee or lunch that God could use to shape the world.

Is there anyone here this morning whose name is Andrew? Do you have Andrew in your name? Or even Andrea? Is your last name Andrews? I have a son named Andrew, but he's in another city and state this morning.

Well, who was Andrew? Even though we have indirect information about Andrew in the Gospels, there is a very distinctive picture with Andrew's personality. First of all we know that Andrew was a fisherman—in fact, we're told in Mark and Matthew that Andrew was called by Jesus as his disciple one day as he was on the Sea of Galilee in his boat mending his net.

Now think about this passage we have before us this morning—if you're looking over this text in the pew Bible you will see that this passage was not the calling of Andrew.

This was actually a conversation preceding Andrew's call to be a disciple. You see, John's Gospel was written after Matthew, Mark and Luke—and what John is seeking to do is to make sure we don't mis-interpret the Gospels—and what he wants us to know right here this morning is to help us understand the correct story.

If we had just read Matthew and Mark—we would say—*“Oh my goodness Jesus just walked right up one day to total strangers on the Sea of Galilee and fearlessly said **“Follow Me!”** And these mesmerized like zombies just drop everything and they just follow Jesus up over the hillside.”* And John tells us – it was not that way at all.

Jesus got to know them first—He spent time with them. In other words friends—Jesus doesn't zap us—he woos us. He says, *“come, let's spend some time”*—he says to us as he said to Andrew – *“**come and see.**”*

There is magic in those words **“come and see”**. Our Lord Jesus is a master marketer—and he says to us, “Come and see—come and live inside my world—come and live in my presence and see if this isn’t the very dream you’ve always had.

And friends, just like any other advertisement and marketer – there is no risk free way to come and see Jesus—because He is very upfront—he wants our hands, our arms, He’ll take our hearts, our legs, our heads—He wants every part of us every day. I love the fact that Jesus does not want robotic followers. Jesus wants helpers.

The second lesson we learn that discipleship is an allegiance to the person of Jesus. We can live in his world today and be his helpers. The word disciples means: apprentice or student. When we become disciples of Jesus we enroll in “Jesus University” – we can get decals for our cars and tee shirts “Jesus U”. Our curriculum is the “Mind of Christ”, our teacher is the Holy Spirit, the colors are blood red and pure white, our mascot is a donkey or a lamb, and the fight song is **“Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus”**—and friends above all we each have to go to class. And that is what makes it difficult, because our professor is always on the move. Sometimes we have to run to keep up with him. And we have to leave things behind, and travel with only the bare essentials. The Disciples often had long stretches of time when they didn’t see their own loved ones, and Peter said one day, **“Lord, we left all to follow you.”**

We have to become people that other people would never dream of doing—like shrug off the injustices of other people, like take a prime week of vacation and fly to a third world country and sit on the ground of dirty faced little children who are starving and tell them the stories of Jesus, like being the one who does the heavy lifting in a relationship to try to keep it alive when it seems the other person doesn’t even seem to care, to speak well of our enemies—to think our best about everyone—to be people of faith and hope and love.

In other words, in the church today **we have got to be** people who have a personal allegiance to Jesus, and not simply people who want to get the benefit of what Jesus has done for us. We’ve got to be willing to not just say, “Jesus is my Savior” but somehow we’ve got to say, **“Jesus is my Lord, my Master whom I follow every moment of every day.”**

And dear people, if we’re going to say that in today’s world—to be in discipleship with Jesus is sometimes a very steep climb, a world that can be very lonely on the road less traveled, but that road makes all the difference.

Andrew will be known from here on out as Simon Peter’s brother—but even though he lived in the shadow of his older big brother, we also find that he can’t go anywhere without his older brother.

And so what is the first thing Andrew does – he goes and finds Simon and he brings him to Jesus. And instantly in this passage we see the greatness of Andrew, that he will use as

a disciple—his great gift—a networker of people. Because what he does with his brother, we see Andrew doing again and again with other people throughout the Gospel. It is Andrew who brings that little boy with the five loaves and two fish to Jesus and Jesus does that great miracle of feeding the five thousand because Andrew brought that boy to him. Andrew was a networker extraordinaire.

How many Andrews do we have here this morning? Are you an Andrew? Are you someone who just **delights** in connecting this person with that person and seeing the good things that happen when people get together? Brings out the best in everyone around you?

The Andrew Ministry is a powerful ministry today. I believe that the Andrew Disciple may be the most valuable disciple in the society in which we live today. Perhaps even more so than Simon Peter.

And so today Jesus begins His ministry and builds it on Andrew -- Simon Peter's brother. Also, Andrew is the one who brings us to the table this morning. How does he do that?

Andrew is the perfect embodiment of the 4th Beatitude which says: *“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness.”*

- Andrew hungered so much for righteousness that he became an ardent follower of that austere prophet John the Baptist;
- Andrew so much hungered for righteousness that he was willing to leave John the Baptist and follow after the true Messiah – Jesus of Nazareth;
- he was willing to leave the good in order to have the best.

You know dear people, many of us in this world—in this congregation—virtually all of us are living in what our society calls “the good life”. But how often does the good life keep us from the best life—discipleship with Jesus?

I want to ask you this morning, -- if suddenly as you were taking the holy bread and the holy cup—suddenly—instantly you were to be consecrated into the new level of life with Christ—what would that new level of life with Christ look like for you today?

Well, why don't we all enroll in Jesus University and strive for the Dean's List. Let's wear the colors; let's sing the fight song; and friends let's lift a toast to our Master Teacher and friend – the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen

PASTORAL PRAYER . . .

O Lord, you promise that you will do more than we will ask or even imagine according to your power at work within us. And so we ask that you to work in every country where injustice, starvation, death and violence overwhelm people each day and each night.

Bind the power of the evil one and those who exploit, and kill and enslave. Protect our men and women who are serving in the military, encourage chaplains who walk each day who fear for their lives and face the realities of death. May your words strengthen and equip them to be your faithful disciples. And may your words challenge and encourage each of us as we begin today our Lenten journey with the 12 disciples. Where we are afraid or hesitant to follow you meet us in our fears.

Thank you Lord that you go before every one of us as we walk into this next week. Thank you that no matter where we are in boardrooms, in class rooms, in hospital rooms, or dining rooms you will be present empowering us to make a difference.

Encourage us as we learn about ordinary people, who lived ordinary lives with extraordinary consequences.

Open our eyes to opportunities—opportunities to care, opportunities to simply talk about you.

Be at work in us and among us, as well as through us.

Lord, you know what is happening in each one of us. Where we may be grieving—comfort us, where we may be discouraged—encourage us, where we don't know what to do—give wisdom, where we feel hopeless—overwhelm us with hope—where we need healing—bring what only our great physician can bring. We pray especially for Pastor Judy Scheer as she faces surgery for her injury sustained in a fall this week. When things are falling apart—remind us that you hold all things together. Help us to trust you. Help us to walk with the confidence that we are known and loved and are being transformed to be like your Son Jesus.

Just as you were known to your disciples when you broke bread with them, make yourself known to us as we come to the Table together. Feed us that we might be prepared to follow you wherever you lead us.

May we live to honor and praise you our Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—for we pray in the name of Jesus, our Savior, our Lord and our friend. Amen.

COMMUNION . . .

1. Bread is broken – share words about the bread
2. Serve ushers the bread
3. Ushers take the bread to the people
4. Ushers bring the bread back to the table
5. The Cup is poured and words shared about the cup

Ask congregation as they serve the person next to them speak the words: *“The Blood of Christ shed for you.”*

6. Ushers bring the cup back to table
7. Ushers are served the cup
8. Congregation partakes of the cup together

*“The blood of Christ poured out and shed for you.
Do this in remembrance of me.”*

COMMUNION WORDS:

All are welcome at God's table – at Christ's table – and at this table. People from near or far. Neighbors and strangers. Young and old. Rich and poor. In whatever way you know the Christ, know you are invited to eat and drink with him.

Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Happy are those who are called to his supper.

And Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life: he that comes to me shall never hunger; and he that believes in me shall never thirst."