

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Master's Men Part 1: Andrew, James the son of Zebedee, and John

Scripture: Matthew 10:2

Code: 2272

Open your Bible, if you will, with me and let's turn to Matthew chapter 10, Matthew chapter 10. As we continue to progress through the gospel of Matthew, and Matthew unfolds to us the majesty of the King, the Lord Jesus Christ, we find ourselves in chapter 10 getting acquainted with the disciples. By the time we reach the tenth chapter of Matthew, our Lord is now appointing and sending the 12 to assist Him in the ministry of preaching the Kingdom of God. You remember as chapter 9 concluded, the Lord looked out over the multitude; He saw them in their spiritual lost-ness, their pain, their frustration, their sorrow. He realized that there were so many to reach, and so few laborers. At that point, in fact, it was Him and Him alone. And so, He asked the disciples to pray at the end of chapter 9. And then, in the opening verse of chapter 10 He called them to be the answer to their own prayer. And He sent them out to be His sent ones, for that is what apostle in verse 2 means. They started out as disciples; that means learner. They were sent as apostles. They became the ambassadors of the King, His representatives in the world, His laborers to reach and warn the harvest of coming judgment and of how they could escape by entrance into His glorious Kingdom.

Now, we've been focusing, then, as we have begun to look at chapter 10, on the training of the 12. The Lord's methods, techniques, principles, as He calls, trains, develops, sends out His apostles. This, in chapter 10, is really their first sending. Their final and official sending comes after the resurrection and the ascension. This is a preliminary sending which basically is an internship for them. They go out but not very far, and not alone but rather two by two. He hovers over them as a mother eagle would hover over eagles learning to fly. They go out a little while and they come back to Him, and they learn in the process of field experience, later to be sent individually after He has already gone. And they ask the right questions when they come back and their training becomes more intense in the months that follow this, their internship.

Now, as we look at the sending out that occurs in chapter 10 and as we see if we can't develop the principles of discipleship which our Lord gives us, we first of all are introduced to the individuals involved. And if you look at verses 2 through 4 you find the names of the 12 apostles: Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Lebbaeus, who was also known as Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot. Verse 5 says: "These 12 Jesus sent forth." Verse 6 says He told them to go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Verse 7 says that as you go, preach the Kingdom. So, these were the workers, the associates, the ambassadors of the King Himself.

Now, as we noted last week, their leader was Peter. That is why it says in verse 2, "The first, Simon who is called Peter." He is not the first one called. The first one called was John and associated with him Andrew in that initial encounter in John 1. Peter was not the first one called. He is first in this sense, it is the same word used in this statement by Paul. "I am the chief of sinners." It means the foremost one, the primary one, the chief one. Peter was the leader. He was the out front, up front man. And so, last time we studied Peter and his leadership ability and how the Lord refined and developed Peter into a leader that was useful.

Now, for our study this morning we want to come to the remaining three in the first group. Remember, I told you there are always three groups in every list of the apostles. There are four lists, Matthew, Mark, Luke and Acts, and always in all four lists, they're the same three groups with the same four names in each group. And so, we're looking at group one. And it is the most intimate group, group two is the next most intimate, and group three is the least intimate of the 12. The Lord Himself could not get close to even 12 men, but He could get close to four and out of the four, particularly three. And so, we're looking at this most intimate group, all came from the same town, all have the same profession, and all were in the first group called to Christ.

And we ask ourselves this question, and I want you to keep asking it as we look at these three names this morning: what kind of people can God use? That's the issue. What kind of people can God use in His ministry? What kind of people can change the world? What kind of people can preach the gospel of the Kingdom so that souls are saved? What kind of people does God ordain for His purposes? Now, usually when we think about Peter, Andrew, James and John we have that view of stained glass saints. People who are on a completely different plane than we are. And to make it worse we call them Saint Paul, and we name cities after them: Saint Peter, or Saint Petersburg, or Saint Andrews which is a city in Scotland, or Saint James, which is a common name for cities, or Jamestown or whatever. And do you know that there are more people in the United States named John than any other name? It's a wonderful name. And Peter and James and Andrew, we name people after those names with great respect because these are respected individuals. Cathedrals are named after these individuals. And we think of these particular four as something other than ourselves, in a different dimension of time and space, in another world. They have an aura about them.

Frankly, that's really not the way it ought to be. They are very common men with a very uncommon calling. But they're very much like we are, and they demonstrate to us the kind of people God uses. See if you find yourself among them.

Last time we learned that God uses people like Simon: impulsive, dynamic, impetuous, strong, initiators, bold, who very often talk a better game than they play, the dynamic kind. Oh, He uses those kind. But let's meet the second on the list: Andrew, his brother; Andrew, Peter's brother. By the way,

his name means manly. He too was a native of Bethsaida, that little village in Galilee. And he like his brother was a fisherman. In fact, in Matthew 4 he was down at the sea when Jesus came along, he had already met Jesus, he had already believed in Jesus, he had already affirmed Him as the Messiah, but after going back to his fishing, now the Lord appears again to him at the shore, and calls him permanently to follow and He will make him a fisher of men.

Prior to coming to follow Jesus Christ he had been a pious Jew, he had been a godly Jew, he had been a God-fearing Jew. He had also been a disciple of John the Baptist. In fact, it was one day at the message of John the Baptist that his life was changed. For John the Baptist saw Jesus in John 1 and said: "Behold, the Lamb of God." And Andrew was there that day, along with John who was also a fisherman, and surely an acquaintance as well as was James. And he and John heard John the Baptist say that, and they followed after Jesus immediately. And Jesus turned and said to them, "What seek ye?" And they replied, "Where do You dwell?" And they went where Jesus dwelt, and they spent the entire day with Him, and those hours were the crisis in their spiritual history. And when they came out of that day spent with the Lamb of God, immediately it says that Andrew opened his mouth and said these first words, "We have found the Messiah." No sooner did Andrew discover the reality of Jesus Christ for himself, than that he announced to his brother Peter that very phrase, "We have found the Messiah."

Peter and Andrew lived together, it says in Mark 1:29, and no doubt they shared everything. And especially did Andrew want to share with him the Messiah. And so, from this very beginning he becomes a part of that intimate four. In fact, if you study through the New Testament, it's James, and Peter, and John; and Peter, James, and John; and John, and Peter, and James. They're always the inner circle and nobody is ever let into that inner circle except when Andrew gets in and it's Peter, James, John and Andrew. He was in the most intimate four but he never quite cracked that inside three. But he was greatly respected. In fact, Philip, who was in group two, a little less intimate with the Lord, one time had some Greeks come to him and say, "We want to see Jesus." And you know where Philip took them? He took them to Andrew. Why? Because I guess Philip thought that if you want to get to Jesus, all you've got to do is get to Andrew. Andrew was intimate with Jesus. And Andrew was respected.

And even yet he isn't in the inner three. But all of a sudden in the fourth gospel, the gospel of John, Andrew begins to emerge from the background. And we see Andrew three times in the gospel of John, and all three times Andrew is doing the same thing. It's easy to characterize him. The first time is in John chapter 1 verse 40, which I just reported to you. It says in John 1:40, "One of the two who heard John the Baptist speak," and that would be John and Andrew, "followed Him and he was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother." And by the way, Andrew is always called Simon Peter's brother with, I think, one or two exceptions, maybe just one. That's always how he's identified. "And he first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, 'We have found the Messiah,'" which is being interpreted the Christ, the anointed one, "and he brought him to Jesus." Now, if you want to know how to

characterize the life of Andrew, it's very simple: he is the one who was always bringing people to Jesus.

The second time we see him is in the sixth chapter of John and the eighth and ninth verse. A vast multitude of people are gathered, Jesus is teaching, it's late in the day, the crowd is hungry. There's not enough food, and Andrew brings to Jesus this time a little boy. And the little boy has five loaves and two fish. It doesn't mean five big loaves of bread; it means five little flat barley crackers and two fish. And they would take those fish and they would pickle them and then they would eat them with the crackers. So, he brought a little fellow with five barley crackers and two pickled fish. He brought him to Jesus. I guess Andrew must have thought the Lord could make a whole lot out of a very little.

The third time we meet him is in John 12. And I've already alluded to that incident. And in John chapter 12 and verse 20, Philip is approached by the Greeks, or the Gentiles, and they want to see Jesus. And Philip tells Andrew, and together they went to Jesus. The assumption being that they took the folks there too.

And so, whenever you see Andrew he is involved in finding Jesus so that Jesus can meet someone, bringing people to Jesus. I guess maybe he didn't think there was anybody that Jesus didn't want to see, or there was anything Jesus couldn't respond to, or there was any problem Jesus couldn't solve. Because he's characterized as the one who brought men to Christ.

Now, in these three incidents, if I can just sort of draw some pictures for you, in these three incidents several things become clear. First of all, we see Andrew's openness. He knew that they were to go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. He knew that primarily it was the Jew first and then to the Gentile. And yet he also got the Spirit of our Lord, because the Lord originally had revealed His messiahship to a half-breed Samaritan woman, so Andrew was never choked by a hyper-Judaism. I mean, he didn't have any problem at all with bringing some Gentiles to Jesus. So, we sense a little bit of the openness of his heart. There just wasn't anybody outside; there wasn't anybody that he didn't think Jesus would not want to see.

We also see his faith. He had a simple faith. I don't know what he was thinking when he brought those five crackers and two fish with such a huge crowd. I don't know what he was trying to do, running around looking for whoever had a lunch. But he must have had some kind of faith to believe that the Lord could do something with that. After all, he had seen Jesus make wine. Why couldn't He make food?

A third thing we see is not only his openness and his faith, but we see his humility. I mean, he spent his whole life being known as Simon Peter's brother. You can believe it. And now, when he had found the Messiah, there might have been a temptation to say, "Boy, now I'm not telling Peter. This is my chance to be somebody." But no. No, he runs to get Peter, knowing full well that as soon as Peter

enters the group he will run the group, because that's Peter. And Andrew will be right back where he's always been as Simon Peter's brother. But he thought more of the work to be done than who was in charge. He thought more of the cause of the eternal virtue of the Kingdom than he did of his personal and petty problems. Sad to say, but there are some people who won't play in the band unless they can beat the big drum. James and John had that problem, didn't they? But not Andrew. I don't find Andrew fighting about whose going to get the glory in the Kingdom.

You see, Andrew is the picture of all those who labor quietly in humble places. Not with eye service as men pleasers but as servants of Christ doing the will of God from the heart. Andrew is not the pillar like Peter, James and John, he is a humbler stone. He could have anticipated the sentiment of the poet Christina Rossetti who wrote: "Give me the lowest place, not that I dare ask for that lowest place, but Thou hast died that I might live and share Thy glory by Thy side. Give me the lowest place so if for me the lowest place is too high, then make one more low where I may sit and see my God and love Him so." That's Andrew. I mean, after all, he was one of the original two called and yet he wasn't in the inner three, but it didn't seem to bother him. He was always Peter's brother.

He's one of those rare people who's willing to take second place. One of those rare people who wants to be in support. Or one of those rare people who doesn't mind being hidden as long as the work is done. He is the kind of man that all leaders depend on. He's the kind of person that everyone knows is the backbone of every ministry. The cause of Christ is dependent, beloved, on self-forgetting souls who are content to occupy a small sphere and an obscure place, free from self-seeking ambition, and yet he will sit on the throne judging the tribes of Israel.

Daniel McLean, a Scotsman, who has a special affection for Andrew, who has become the patron saint of Scotland, writes about his beloved apostle these words: "Gathering together the traces of character found in Scripture found about Andrew, we find neither the writer of an epistle, nor the founder of a church, nor a leading figure in the apostolic age, but simply an intimate disciple of Jesus Christ, ever anxious that others should know the spring of spiritual joy and share the blessing he so highly prized. A man of very moderate endowment, who scarcely redeemed his early promise, simple minded and sympathetic without either dramatic power or heroic spirit. Yet he had that clinging confidence in Christ that brought him into that inner circle of the 12. A man with deep religious feeling with little power of expression. He was more magnetic than he was electric. Better suited for the quiet walks of life than the stirring thoroughfares. Yes, Andrew is the apostle of the private life."

God uses people like that. And only God can calculate their value because sometimes it takes an Andrew to reach a Peter. There's an early Methodist preacher, and I found his biography in a very obscure book and I know no one has ever heard of him. His name was Thomas Mitchell. You never heard of him. I had never heard of him. But he was an Andrew. And he died, and the conference of ministers who ministered with him wrote his obituary, and this is what it said: "Thomas Mitchell, an old soldier of Jesus Christ, a man of slender abilities as a preacher, and who enjoyed only a very

defective education.” How’s that for an obituary? Slender abilities and a defective education. And yet one friend wrote this: “His earnest and loving work caused him to lead many people to Christ.” A man of slender abilities and defective education, yet he was the means in God’s hands of bringing to Christ one of the greatest of early preachers by the name of Thomas Olivers, the writer of the great hymn, “The God of Abraham Praised.” A man of slender abilities? That is the official record, and yet one of the strongest and most faithful souls who ever lived.

It was he who went to the little village of Wrangle in Lincolnshire, and arose at 5:00 in the mornings to preach the gospel in the open air. And so fiery was his preaching that he was arrested. And in the midst of his arrest a mob attacked him. He was taken to the public house and the curate of the village was consulted as to what to do with him. They said don’t let him go, and so they decided they’d put him in the pond. They took him to a pond which was full of filth and they threw him in. He tried to get out, and seven times they threw him back in. Then, he was taken again to the public house, having been in the meantime painted from his head to foot with white paint. Then, they didn’t know what to do with him, so they decided to drown him. They dragged him to a railed in small lake outside the village, which was at least ten feet deep, and they took him in their arms and threw him into the water. He sank to the bottom, and when he came up to the surface and man in the crowd with a long pole and a hook on the end, played with him as if he were a fish. They brought him out more dead than alive, and he was taken to a little house in the village where he was looked after by a pious lady. But when the mob found that he was recovering, they sought him out and went to the house and to his bedside, and said they would rend him limb from limb unless he promised never to preach again. To which he said, I can promise no such thing.

And somehow or other he got away from the place and he made this record of the whole incident. He wrote, “All the time, God kept me in perfect peace and I was able to pray for my enemies.” It doesn’t sound like a man of slender abilities to me. No one knows about him. No one ever heard of him. He ministered in obscurity. He was a faithful man. God needs Thomas Mitchells. God needs Andrews, people who quietly obscurely bring others to Jesus.

There’s a third name in the first group: James the son of Zebedee. In two lists, out of the four lists of the 12, he is next to Peter. Yet, we know very little about him. In fact, note this: he never appears alive in the gospels apart from John his brother in any incident. They’re inseparable in the gospels. Now, I believe it’s important to note that he’s always mentioned before John. And it probably not only indicates that he was older, but that he was the leader of this rather dynamic duo. He is the strength. He is the zeal. He is the passion. Now, these brothers, James and John, were also fishermen, and their father was Zebedee, and Zebedee was a fairly well-to-do man because he employed hired servants in his business. So, they had a pretty good fishing business going up there on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee. And James fits into this first group because he was in the early calling. John and Andrew were the first two, and certainly James would be so close to John that he worked his way into that intimacy.

Now, as you look at the Bible in terms of incidents, James appears more as a silhouette than a photograph, and so you have to kind of get an imagery just without all of the fullness of what might have happened. But I think the best way to look at James is to consider what the Lord named him and his brother John. In Mark 3:17 Jesus gave them a name, He called them Boanerges, which means sons of thunder, sons of thunder. If James is the leader, and that is indicated by the fact that he appears first, then he was a son of thunder. Now, he must have been a passionate, zealous, fervent, wild-eyed, ambitious, aggressive guy. To give you a classic reason why, in Acts, Herod decided to vex the church, and the first guy he went after was James, and he chopped off his head, and they took Peter and put him in jail. Which indicates that Peter was not as big a problem as James. I mean, when you capture James and Peter, and kill James, and let Peter live, that says something about the kind of man James must have been. Strong man, zealous man; he was perhaps the New Testament counterpart of Jehu, who said come see my zeal for the Lord, and then uprooted the house of Ahab and swept all the Baal worshippers out of the land. This guy made enemies fast. 14 years, he was dead. I mean, he was the first disciple to be martyred. They got rid of him quick. He was a real problem, thunderous individual. And he must have had his zeal fed daily by the one who said the zeal of thine house has eaten me up. I mean, I can just see him when the Lord takes out a whip, you know, do it, Lord, do it, you know. Give it to him. Just zealous, you know.

Zeal is a great virtue. You love someone who is aggressive and who's charged up and who wants to get the job done, but very often coming along with zeal comes a lack of wisdom. And sometimes, you're shooting off your mouth and your guns are blazing before you've really thought the thing through. You say, can God use somebody like that? Well, yes, He did as a matter of fact.

Several incidents stand out and I'll show you where James is mentioned and the way he acts. Luke 9, Luke 9 verse 51: "It came to pass when the time was come that Jesus should be received up," it's time to move toward the Passion Week, "he set his face to go to Jerusalem. And sent messengers before his face." The messengers are going now into Samaria to prepare the way, "And they entered into a village of Samaria to make ready for him." They wanted the Samaritans to hear the message, Christ was coming; the Messiah was coming. "And they didn't receive him because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem." Listen, Samaritans just hated the Jews and Jerusalem. They had their own place of worship, Mount Gerizim. They probably chased these messengers out with curses and stones. They probably threw stones at them. And so, the messengers come back and say they're not going to receive You in such and such a village. And then, verse 54 we meet the sons of thunder: "And when His disciples James and John saw that, they said, Lord, wilt Thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, even as Elijah did." Lord, let's just burn them up, burn them up. Great missionary heart. Just get all the unsaved and consume them Lord, just like Elijah did.

You see, you can identify with who James' heroes were. "And so, Jesus turned and rebuked them and said, You don't know what manner of spirit you have." This is not the spirit for now. Elijah's spirit

does not apply now. This is not a time for judgment on an ungodly heretical nation. This is time for the proclamation of a new covenant. You're out of sync, guys. I mean, your basic character is leaking through, burn them up, that isn't the idea. "For the Son of Man isn't come to destroy men's lives but to save them. So, they just went to another village." Jesus rebuked them strongly. They were hateful. They were intolerant. James had so much zeal and so little sensitivity. I mean, what kind of an evangelist would he make? And yet, I have to admit there's a touch of nobility in it. I'm glad that he got mad when the Lord was dishonored. I would hate to have seen him pass without a reaction at all. He was zealous. He was explosive. He was fervent. He was passionate. I mean, he didn't just sit and watch it happen.

Look at another incident in Matthew 20. Very often, zealous people are also ambitious people. They're very goal oriented, very task oriented. And so, this is the incident that we looked at in reference to the disciples in general a couple of weeks ago, but just a reminder. "Then, came to Him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons," and they're dragging along on her skirt tails, and they wanted some, they and, "And so she says to the Lord, 'Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on the right hand the other on the left, in Thy Kingdom.'" Would You put my boys on the two thrones next to You? I mean, the implication is: it's obvious to You that they're the cream of the crop, isn't it? A mother, right? My children are gifted. Isn't it apparent? I mean, we can see it, Zebedee and I. I mean, and they're the ones that have the zeal. You say, What about Peter? Listen, Peter had a lot of zeal but he also had some problems. I mean, he would deny and bail out. James didn't seem to have that same problem. Peter faltered here and there, but it seems as though James was just resolute, he just, I mean, he was dead in 14 years. I mean, they got rid of him fast. He didn't knuckle under at all. He didn't equivocate. He didn't compromise. And, boy, he could see his ambition. I'm going all the way for the Kingdom, man, and not only to the Kingdom, but right to the right hand.

And Jesus said, "You don't even know what you're asking. Can you drink the cup that I'm going to drink?" Oh, sure we can. All right, you will. And verse 24, the fever pitch was reached and the argument over who was going to get what in the Kingdom. They all started arguing. And Jesus went into a little lecture on what real leadership is.

But they were ambitious. James was ambitious. This is a terrible thing for them to do, to arouse the spirit of rivalry, to clamor for honor from the Lord. These who were the persecutors of the Samaritans are now ambitious, self-seeking, place-hunters, stalking the favor of the Lord as if He were some despotic ruler who could dispense his patronage on some kind of principle of favoritism. They were demeaning Christ and His Kingdom. Well, James had zeal, he had great fervor and he knew the Lord's special interest in him, he was in the inside group. He felt he ought to have an equal reward for all of his capability. And the Lord reminded him, you'll get a reward, James, but it won't be what you think. Before you get your throne, you're going to get a cup and, you're going to drink it all the way. And the cup is suffering, because the way to the throne is always the way of the cross. And James, as I said, 14 years later got his request. He wanted a crown; Jesus gave him a cup. He wanted

power; Jesus gave him servanthood. He wanted to rule; Jesus gave him a martyr's grave.

Look at the one incident in the Bible where he appears alone, Acts 12. "Now, about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church." And when Herod wanted to attack the church, he went right for the main guy, "And he killed James the brother of John with the sword." That's who you go for first, and he put Peter in prison. And apparently, he didn't even think about Peter until he was told that it would please the Jews if he did that. It was James he was after: the son of thunder. He was filled with zeal. He was filled with ambition. He was filled with strong and intolerant feelings. He didn't like things outside his own sympathy. And Christ had to harness all of that and make all of that into something useful, and make him a pillar in the church. What kind of people does God use? Well, He uses the great leaders like Peter. He uses the quiet, behind-the-scenes, obscure, faithful people like Andrew. And He also can use the brash, courageous, ambitious, zealous, sometimes loveless, insensitive, selfish people like James. 'Cause Christ brought his temper under control. He bridled his tongue. He directed his zeal. And He taught him to seek no revenge, and to desire no honor for himself. And it finally came to the place where James was willing to die for Jesus. So, both the brothers drank the cup. For John, the cup was a long life of rejection and a death in exile. For James, it was a short flame and martyrdom.

The Romans had a coin years ago, and on the coin was an ox. And the ox was facing an altar and a plow. And under the ox, it said, "Ready for either." And that's how it is in service for Christ, and that's how it was for the sons of thunder. There is the moment dramatic sacrifice on the altar; that was James. And there is the long furrow of the plow; that was John. But both of them drank the cup. James had to learn sensitivity. He had to learn to quiet his ambition, but he did, and God used him.

You know, a lack of sensitivity can just destroy a ministry. There are many people who try to serve Christ who are utterly insensitive to their congregations, to their families, to the people around them. One such man was a Norwegian pastor. His story is very interesting. He had a motto; his motto was "All or nothing." All or nothing. And he went around preaching and hurling out lightnings, and screaming thunders on everybody. He was stern, and strong, and powerful, and compromising, and insensitive. I mean, they said that his people in the church didn't even care for him because he didn't care for them. He was so ambitious. He wanted to advance the Kingdom. He wanted to uphold the standard of God. And he was just blind to anybody else. It came down to his own family. And he had a little girl, just a little tiny girl who was ill. And the doctor said you must take her out of the Norwegian cold where she can come to a warmer climate so she can regain her strength or she will die. To which he answered, "All or nothing." And stayed. And she died. And when she died, the mother was so distraught, and so shattered, she found no love in her husband but had doted all of her love on this little life, that she would sit for hours in a chair holding the clothes of the little baby, and fondling them, feeding her starved heart on those empty garments.

This didn't go on for many days until her husband took them all out of her hand and gave them to a poor woman in the street. But his wife had tucked underneath her a little bonnet which she kept as the last vestige of a memory. He found that and gave that away too, and gave her a speech on all or nothing. And in months, she died of grief.

What stupid insensitivity. That kind of thing unmellowed is only tragic. You can be insensitive to the people around you in a tragic way. I think of Billy Sunday, the great evangelist, all of his children died in unbelief, all of them. Utterly insensitive to the ones around him while he was winning the world. There are many pastors, and evangelists, and Christian people who aren't even listening to what's going on in their own house and the people around them, who are so oriented to task that they miss the people. Zeal with insensitivity is so cruel. And James had to be refined. I mean, he had to get from the place where he said, "Just burn them up, Lord, if they don't cooperate, burn them up," to the place where he cared.

Now, if you're going to ask me, you're going to force me to the corner and ask me to choose, I'll take a man of a flaming, burning, intolerant, passionate, enthusiasm with a potential for failure rather than a cold, compromising, milquetoast about which his brother John said, God would spew him out of His mouth. Give me a fiery heart, give me a flaming heart because those people will set the world on fire, but give me one with sensitivity.

What kind of men does God use? What kind of women does God use? What kind of people fit into the plan? Dynamic people like Peter, leaders who can get everybody to do it. Humble people like Andrew who just do it quietly behind the scenes. And James, who don't really need other people to do it, they just do it with zeal and passion. You say, you mean the Lord can use all those kinds of people? You don't have to be born with a halo? You don't have to be on a stained glass? You can just be a person-person? Yes, these are very common people, because He can transform all of those things.

Finally, the last individual, and we're not going to spend much time on him, we'll see him. He intersects the story throughout the New Testament because of the fact that he wrote the gospel of John; 1, 2, and 3 John and Revelation. But I want to have you at least briefly meet John, his brother, James' brother.

Now, may I hasten to add, we think about John, we think about some meek, mild, pale-skinned, effeminate guy lying around with his head on Jesus' shoulder, sort of looking up with a dove-eyed stare, with little skinny arms, you know. And you've missed it, folks, if that's what you think. He was in all those incidents about James that I just read you. And he was one of the sons of thunder. He was intolerant, burn them up, Lord, he was ambitious. I want the seat on your right and left. He was zealous, he was explosive, but I think not quite as much as James. James seems to be the prominent one, and John does seem to have a side to him. I mean, at least John lasted. He lived to, till nearly the year 100. He outlived everybody. He was explosive too.

Now, it's interesting to note that the only time he appears alone by name, you know what he's doing? He's mad at somebody. That's right, John. Who's he mad at? Some guy who was casting out demons in Mark 9. Why was he mad? He said to Jesus, he said: "There is a man casting out demons and he's not in our group." He's not in our group. "I forbade him to do that." I told him, Listen, fellow, cool it. You're not in our group. He was sectarian. I mean, he was narrow-minded.

A couple of weeks ago a series was done in a school in our country. And the title of the series was "The Heresy of MacArthurism." And so, I found out about this and I asked somebody, "What is the heresy?" And they said, "Well, they asked the source involved and they said that it was that you're not a member of their group, therefore you must be wrong." And that was the bottom line. Well, that's a strange view. They should read Mark 9, 9:39 and 40 and John says, "Lord, I told them to be quiet because he wasn't in our group." Now, wait a minute, that's unbending, that's narrow; that is ridiculous intolerance. Well, that was John.

But you know something? That became a strength in his character. Because he also had a tremendous capacity for love. And you show me a man who has a great capacity for love, and no sense of the truth and no limits, and no guidelines, and no strong convictions, and I'll show you a disaster of tolerance and sentimentality. So, God knew that the greatest source of truth in the New Testament, as far as a human author is concerned, about love would have to be a man who was also strong and uncompromising, or his love would take him down the road of sentimentalism. And if he was to speak the truth in love, he had to be as much committed to the truth as he was to love. And so, you find two things that stand out in John's life: the word love, and the word witness. 80 times he uses the word love. 70-some times the word witness in one form or another. He was always the witness to the truth and always the teacher of love. And so, he is the personification of speaking the truth in love. It's so good that his love was controlled by his witness, by his truth. He was a truth seeker. He wanted to know the truth. He was a discoverer. He was a visionary. He it was, who first recognized the Lord at the lakeside of Galilee. He it was to whom God revealed the future in the apocalypse. He was the seer, the visionary, the truth seeker. The reason he was hanging around Christ's breast was not some kind of sloppy, sickening sentimentalism, what it was, was his heart literally hungered for the truth, as well as the deep affection for Christ. He wanted to gather every word that came out of his Lord's lips as well as bask in the light of His love.

So, he became a lover, but a lover whose love was controlled by the truth. And that control was born out of that tremendous zeal he had in his personality, that passion, that strength, that fiery character. And in case you don't think he is, you try reading 1, 2, and 3 John and see how he denounces those who are antichrist, and those who will stand up in church to twist and pervert. He's firm, he's strong. You read the gospel of John and see how he sets the people of God against the people of Satan, the redeemed against the lost. How he talks about the judgment of the righteous and the unrighteous. The man knew where the lines were drawn and his love is never sentimentalism.

But he is characterized by love. You just don't see much about him in the other gospels unless it's with James, as I showed you, or in the list of the group. But where he emerges is in his own gospel, and he appears in his own gospel several times, always the same way. How? Listen, John 13:23: "Now, there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved." Whom Jesus loved, the disciple that Jesus loved, that's John. He never uses His name. He calls himself the disciple whom Jesus loved. Now, listen, the man had a heart of love, and a man who has a heart of love understands love and has a great capacity to give and receive love. People who can love greatly can be loved greatly because they understand. And John literally took in the love of Christ and gave out the love of Christ, so he called himself the disciple whom Jesus loved. That's the only thing he ever called him.

In the 19th chapter and the 26th verse, he appears again. "Jesus saw His mother and the disciple standing by, whom He loved." Same disciple whom Jesus loved. Chapter 20 verse 2: "Then runs and comes to Simon Peter," Mary Magdalene does, "and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved." Chapter 21 verse 7, same thing: "Therefore the disciple, whom Jesus loved, said to Peter." Verse 20: "Peter turning about sees the disciple, whom Jesus loved." Verse 24: "This is the disciple who testifies these things." It is the disciple, whom Jesus loved, that wrote the gospel of John, that's what he says. He literally was in awe that Jesus loved him. And it wasn't a sickly sentimentalism, it wasn't that he said, "Oh, I'm so wonderful, the Lord loves me so much, I just want you to know I'm the disciple He loved." No, no, no. It was the very opposite: I, the one who wanted to burn up all the Samaritans; I, the one who wanted Jesus to give me the place I didn't even deserve; I am one whom He loves. It's a celebration of grace.

Jesus never had to ask John if he loved Him, but He did have to ask Peter that. Jesus never had to ask John to follow Him, but He did have to ask Peter that. And when it came down to passing out the work, He said to Peter, "Feed My sheep." He said to John, "Take care of My mother." There was something special about John. Tradition tells us that John never left the city of Jerusalem until Mary, the mother of Jesus died, because he kept his vow to the Lord.

So, John was a son of thunder but he was a tender, loving man who would never compromise his convictions. He taught on love. You can summarize the theology of John about love into ten statements. He taught that God is a God of love. He taught that God loved His Son, that God loved the disciples, that God loves all men, that God is loved by Christ, that Christ loved the disciples in general, that Christ loved individuals, that Christ expected all men to love Him, that Christ taught that we should love one another and that Christ emphasized that love is the fulfilling of the whole law. And those themes run through all his writings.

And you can also see the truth there too. You hear the word witness again, and again, and again, and again, as he affirms the witness, the witness, the witness of the truth. He speaks of the witness of

John the Baptist, the witness of the Scripture, the witness of the Father, the witness of Christ, the witness of the miracles, the witness of the Holy Spirit and the witness of the apostles. Always speaking truth, speaking truth in love. And so, the Lord can use that kind of man. The man with a great love. There are the James who just live their life on passion, zeal, fervor, fire, sparks flying everywhere. And there are the Johns who can harness the truth in love. And they'll last and attract people to Christ. And God uses all kinds, a fiery lover whose love was a passionate devotion to the truth. He lived to be an old man, but he was always the son of thunder.

Let me close with this. So, what kind of people does He use? What kind of people does He draw into intimacy with Him? Who are these stained glass saints? What do you have to be to get really close to Jesus? Think of this now: when God came into the world and walked in this world, God the God of the universe, the living, eternal, almighty, holy God, when He walked in this world, He picked out four people to be close to Him, four men to be close to Him, four men to be His intimates. One was dynamic, strong, bold, a leader like Peter, who took charge, who initiated, who planned, who strategized, who confronted, who commanded people to Christ. And very often blew it. Another was humble, gentle, inconspicuous; Andrew, who didn't see the crowds, but saw the individuals in the crowds. And while he never attracted a mob, he kept bringing people to Jesus. And then, He picked a man who was zealous, passionate, uncompromising, insensitive at first, ambitious, who could see a goal and go for it with all his might and die in the process, James. And then, there was sensitive, loving, believing, intimate John, every bit a truth-seeker, who spoke the truth in love so that he attracted people to himself.

And He made them into fishers of men, in spite of what they were. Peter was finally crucified upside down by his own request, while unwavering in his faith in Christ. Andrew, tradition tells us that Andrew had the privilege of preaching in a province and the governor's wife received Jesus Christ as her Savior, and the governor was so upset that he demanded that his wife reject Christ, and when she wouldn't he crucified Andrew. Tradition says he crucified him on an X, that's why X is the symbol of Andrew. An X-shaped cross and the traditional history tells us that he was on that cross for two days. And as he hung alive for all those two days, he preached without ceasing the gospel of Christ in the midst of his agony. Still trying to bring people to Jesus. Tradition tells us that James, when he was on a way to being beheaded by the Roman sword, had along the guard who had guarded him, and the guard was so impressed with his courage, and constancy, and zeal, that he repented of his sin and fell down at the apostle's feet, and asked if the apostle would forgive him for the part he had played in the rough treatment James received. At which point James lifted the man up, embraced him, kissed him and said, "Peace, my son, peace to thee and the pardon of thy faults." And tradition says immediately, the officer publicly confessed his surrender to Christ and was therefore beheaded alongside James. John, banished to the isle of Patmos after a long life, died around 98 AD during the reign of Trajan. And those who knew him best said the echo of a constant phrase was their reminder of John. And this was the phrase: "My little children, love one another." What a group. Ordinary, with all the struggles, all the strengths and weaknesses of men like us. Yet, in the power of Christ they

were transformed.

What kind of people does God use? Any kind. Listen to this now: it is not what you are, it is what you are willing to become that is the issue. See? The fishermen of Galilee did become fishers of men on a most extensive scale, and by the help of God they gathered many souls into the church. In a sense, they're casting their nets into the sea of the world still. And by the testimony to Jesus they gave in the gospel and the epistles, they are bringing multitudes to become disciples of Him among whose first followers they had the happy privilege to be numbered. Listen, Christ can take a very common person and make them a very uncommon apostle. Are you available for that? Shall we pray?

Thank You, Father, for a glimpse of these dear men: Peter, Andrew, James and John. How special, not what they were but what they were willing to become. We see ourselves in them, and it gives us hope that You can make us what you want us to be, and use us. We pray, Lord, that we might be available to be discipled. In Christ's name and for His glory, amen.

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