

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

Common Men, Uncommon Calling: Andrew and James

Scripture: Luke 6:14

Code: 42-75

Open your Bible, if you will, to Luke 6. We continue in our study of the Apostles, common men with an uncommon calling. In the history of the life of Jesus which Luke records, he brings us in chapter 6 verses 12 to 16 to the official listing of the Twelve Apostles. Let me read this text for you.

"It was at this time when He went off to the mountain to pray and He spent the whole night in prayer to God, and when day came He called His disciples to Him and chose twelve of them whom He also named as Apostles: Simon, whom He also named Peter, and Andrew his brother, and James and John and Philip and Bartholomew and Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot, Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot who became a traitor."

Now here we are meeting the Twelve for the first time officially. We have met some of them before because the Lord has been calling them to Himself, first to believe in Him, then to follow Him as disciples. But now out of this large group of disciples, several hundred, no doubt, some of whom He personally called, others who came on their own, He selects these twelve, not to be disciples but now to become Apostles or messengers, or sent ones. They are then taken to a personal level of training with the Lord. As I reminded you last week, Mark says they were drawn to Him, near to Him. He pulled these twelve in close for special training among His disciples to be sent to proclaim the gospel to the world. It is a small group of very common men.

All are Galileans but one, that being Judas Iscariot. They come from the common area, the area of ignoble life, I guess you could say, an uneducated life. They are chosen by God from among the common to a very uncommon task of proclaiming the gospel to change the world.

This brings up a wonderful account in my memory from 1 Samuel 13 and 14, you don't have to look it up, but I'll comment on it. In 1 Samuel 13 and 14 you have one of those very difficult times in Israel's history when Israel was in conflict with the Philistines. The Philistines were, of course, the occupants of the land of Israel when the Jewish people came in to receive it as their promised land, and in the process of dispossessing the Philistines, they were very often in conflict with them.

On this particular occasion, Saul was the king but he had been discredited, he was the first king, as you remember in Israel, he had been discredited, disqualified as leader and king and so the army of the Jews was without a commander. They were also overwhelmed by the numbers and the power of the Philistines on this occasion, and 1 Samuel 13 says they didn't have adequate weapons. So they

were in a very difficult situation. They had no leader or general for their army, they were outnumbered and they had no weapons to fight the battle.

How then could they ever hope to defeat the Philistines? Well they did. Essentially through one man, Jonathan, the son of Saul, famous for his aide to David. Jonathan and his armor bearer literally were used by God to defeat the entire Philistine army. The strategy was quite unique. Jonathan and his armor bearer had courage and trust in God, the rest of the Israelites were hiding in various places from the Philistines. Jonathan and his armor bearer determined that they would enter the camp, go right straight into the military camp of the Philistines which would appear to the Philistines to be a defection, it would look like this very prominent son of the king was defecting from Israel under the fear of the Philistine power, was coming over to their side. And so they just walked into the camp and it all looked innocent enough to the Philistines and the first half acre entering the camp, the Scripture says, Jonathan slew twenty Philistines.

At that time, God shook the earth, which added a divine element to the occasion. And the Philistines panicked. The panic of the Philistines caused some of the hiding Israelites to pop out of their places of hiding and to join the fight, and the Philistines were routed that day, fleeing in terror for their lives. Really an amazing strategy. One man with his armor bearer who is encumbered carrying the paraphernalia, walking into the enemy camp. The faith of Jonathan is basically stated in 1 Samuel 14:6, a famous verse. "It may be...says Jonathan...that the Lord will work for us, for nothing restrains the Lord from saving by many or by few." Great statement, nothing restrains the Lord from saving by many or by few. On that occasion He saved the nation Israel by few, Jonathan and his armor bearer.

Here in the New Testament he sets about, as it were, to save the world by twelve. On that day, one man changed the course of Israel's history and in the New Testament, twelve men changed the course of the world's history. Twelve seems like a meager amount, especially given the kind of men they were. None of any stature, none of any prominence economically, politically or religiously and yet they were used by the Lord to literally change the world, proclaiming the gospel, establishing the church, overseeing and actually writing the New Testament. Our faith today is based upon the foundation of the Apostles and the prophets and the truth which they taught which became the doctrine of the New Testament.

As we meet these twelve and here is their official naming, they have been following Jesus, they've been in the midst of all the disciples. They are now pulled out to be specially trained and run through an internship of something less than two years to be prepared to carry on when the Lord Jesus goes back to heaven. We've already met the first of them, verse 14, Simon whom He also named Peter. He was the protos, according to Matthew 10:2, the leader, the chief, the main one. That's clear throughout the New Testament. It took us several weeks to get through all of the information about Peter because of his prominence.

And now having done that, we come to the list that follows the leader. And the first name, verse 14, to follow is Andrew, his brother. It's almost as if he had no identity of his own. He is a background-type person. Just to give you a little bit of background on him, because he was Peter's brother, we know that he was born where Peter was born, and that was in the village of Bethsaida. That is indicated in John 1:44, Andrew was from Bethsaida and so was his brother Peter.

Later on they had moved to Capernaum which was the fishing center on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee. They lived together. They operated a fishing business together there. Before Andrew met Jesus he was a devout Jew. And I think it's worth looking at that initial meeting. Turn to John's gospel, chapter 1, and verse 40.

We can't go into a lot of detail because we want to cover two of them this morning...John...or, James and Andrew, and we'll get to John next time. But in verse 40, "One of the two who heard John speak," John the Baptist, "and followed Him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother." Him being the Lord Jesus. What this is speaking about, if you go back a little bit, John the Baptist, verse 35, sees in verse 36 Jesus and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God. And the two disciples heard him speak and they followed Jesus. And Jesus turned and beheld them following and said to them, 'What do you seek?' And they said to Him, 'Rabbi,' which translated means teacher, 'where are You staying?' And He said to them, 'Come, and you shall see.' They came therefore and saw where He was staying and they stayed with Him that day, it was about the tenth hour...or four o'clock."

One of those two was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. So what we know about Andrew initially is that he was a follower of John the Baptist. That tells us that he was listening to John the Baptist preach. He was, no doubt, eager because the message of John the Baptist was that the Messiah was coming, he was eager for the Messiah's arrival. He would have been caught up in all that messianic expectation, all that thrill of the fact that the fulfillment of the Davidic and Abrahamic promise was near because Messiah was coming. That was the message of John the Baptist.

John was out at the Jordan, you'll remember, preaching as the forerunner of the Messiah. And here we find that Andrew is a follower of John the Baptist, initially. He is one of those among the Israelites who was looking for the consolation of Israel, looking for the coming of Messiah. No doubt, therefore, he's a devout Jew, no doubt hoping for the arrival of Messiah. And it's pretty evident from this passage that Peter also was hoping for the arrival of Messiah. That though Peter and Andrew were not prominent religiously, they were religious. They were committed to the worship of the true God and the coming of the Messiah and the fulfillment of covenant promise because Simon immediately upon finding out this is the Messiah, John points to Jesus, "Behold the Lamb of God, takes away the sin of the world," Andrew learns that, believes that and immediately rushes to find Peter to tell him that we have found the Messiah.

So from the very outset we can assume that both Simon Peter and Andrew were Jews who were true Jews, who believed in the true God, believed in the Old Testament promises and were hoping for the arrival of the Messiah. The text goes on to say that Andrew spent some time with Jesus, spent the rest of that day with Jesus, probably along with Peter, of course, because Peter identifies Peter for the first time here as Peter. He says, "You are Simon but you're going to be Peter," so here's the very first meeting. The Lord puts a new name on Peter and begins the process of shaping him into the rock that is to be the leader of the twelve and the great preacher of the first and early years of the church through the first half of the book of Acts.

So, Andrew and Peter meet Jesus. This is Andrew's first encounter. And we learn a little bit about him, a fisherman from Capernaum in Galilee who traveled all the way down the Jordan to hear John preach because he was living in the hope of the coming of Messiah.

After this initial meeting, Peter and Andrew went back to Galilee, went back to Capernaum and continued their fishing career. It is at a later time, months and months later, that Jesus comes to Galilee and He comes to Galilee after a ministry in the south around Jerusalem, Judea where He cleansed the temple and did some other things. He comes, it's probably a year later, to Galilee and He comes across these two brothers again. At the same time, He comes across two other brothers, James and John. All four of them are fishermen in the Sea of Galilee. And the record of that meeting is found in Matthew chapter 4. And in Matthew chapter 4 we read in verse 18, "And walking by the Sea of Galilee Jesus saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter," he was called Peter from the very beginning the first time Jesus had met him, "and Andrew his brother and they were casting a net into the sea for they were fishermen." Which indicates that after the original understanding that Jesus is the Messiah and following Him and spending a day with Him, and I don't know what it was like, you know, they went to where He was staying and spent a day and I'm sure that's the day when they really believed in Him that sealed their eternal destiny...they went back to fishing and that's what they were doing.

But now Jesus finds them again, verse 19, says, "Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men. And they immediately left their nets and followed Him and going on from there He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets and He called them and they immediately left the boat and their father and followed Him."

So here these four are the first four literally called by Jesus to be disciples, and they make up the intimate circle...Peter, James, John and Andrew, the sort of most intimate of all of the Twelve. So Andrew was very privileged to have met Jesus at the very day when Jesus was announced as the Messiah. He is right there at the very first day, along with Peter. And when Jesus first calls disciples to Himself, sovereignly pulling them to Him for purposes that unfold later, he, Andrew, is among the first two called and the first four, Peter, James and John. So he's greatly privileged.

By the way, as a footnote. The account of calling them, which I just read you in Matthew 4, is also recorded in Luke 5. We studied it a little while back. And in Luke chapter 5 you have that story of the fishing and the Lord tells them where the fish are and they catch the fish and He calls them to follow Him. Well that's the day He called Andrew, Peter, and James and John. But interestingly enough in Luke's gospel, everybody is mentioned by Andrew. It mentions James, it mentions John, it mentions Peter, but not Andrew. For Luke, Andrew is a shadow, Andrew is obscure. We know he was there because it's a parallel account to the Matthew account. Matthew mentions Andrew, Luke does not. That gives us a little hint that Andrew is in the shadows. He's in the first group of four, but it's really Peter, James and John. Andrew's a little bit in the background, he's a background guy, is Andrew...devout Jew, looking for the Messiah, wanting to know and serve the true and living God, embracing the Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, having the incredible privilege, along with Peter, of spending a day, or a portion of a day with Him in personal fellowship. Andrew has a remarkable privilege.

But Andrew really never gets out of the shadows, never really gets out of the shadows. In fact, he lived his whole life in the shadow of Peter. They lived together, according to Mark 1:29, so everywhere Andrew went, he was overshadowed by Peter. But what privilege was his, amazing privilege. He was a shadowy person, yes, but greatly respected, as we will see. He is the one who appears in the intimate circle in Mark 13:3 and 4 with Peter, James and John, asking a key question about the Second Coming which launched Jesus into that great discourse on His Second Coming. He was there when the question was asked...when are You coming and what will be the sign of Your coming?

But even though he was in that four and even though he was first introduced to the Lamb of God before Peter and before the others, even though he was first called even before James and John along with Peter, even though he was there with all the initial privileges, he doesn't stand out like the other three. There are numerous occasions where Peter, James and John are with Jesus, such as in the Mount of Transfiguration. It was Peter, James and John who saw the unveiled Christ...such as in the garden, Peter, James and John are pulled up into intimate prayer with Jesus while the rest are a distance away. He didn't enjoy the same privileges of intimacy. And there, as I mentioned to you, it's interesting to me that he isn't even...his name isn't even mentioned in the calling that was his calling, as recorded by Luke. John, of course, knew him well and John refers to him three times.

Let's go back to the text of John 1 for a moment, and let's look at the three times Andrew is mentioned. In this section it says that one of those who heard John the Baptist speak, verse 40, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. "And he first found his own brother, Simon, and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah. We have found the Messiah.'" The plural "we" indicates that he is saying we've been looking, we have found him.

The first time you read Andrew, he is bringing his brother. He first found his brother and brought him to Christ. Andrew is the missionary Apostle. He's bringing people to Jesus Christ. And for Andrew, missionary work began where missionary work always begins, at home. Having found the Messiah, he went to get his brother. Those who are looking to bring someone to Christ need to look where Andrew looked. Look at home.

The next time we see Andrew in John's gospel is in the sixth chapter. And the disciples have a dilemma here. There's a huge crowd, thousands and thousands of people gather, five thousand men which means another five thousand women and who knows two thousand children, maybe, huge crowd. And they're hungry and verse 5, "Jesus lifted up His eyes and seeing a great multitude was coming to Him, said to Philip, 'Where are we going to buy bread that these may eat?'" And He was really testing him because there wasn't any place to buy bread, there weren't any supermarkets, there weren't any bakeries. There's no place to get this kind of bread for this kind of crowd. He was just testing him, He knew what He was going to do.

"Philip said, 'Two hundred denarii,'" that's two hundred days wages, "worth of bread is not sufficient for everyone to receive a little." This is absolutely overwhelming. "One of His disciples, Andrew, said to Him, 'There's a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish. What are these for so many people?'" Andrew's already made connections in the crowd. I'm sure most of the Apostles were seeing the mass, Andrew was seeing the people. It was in the heart of Andrew to touch somebody and in the process of mingling with the people, he was always wanting to bring people to Jesus, he came across a boy. And he brought the boy out of this massive crowd to Jesus. And there's a bit of incredulity here, but it's mingled with some faith. "I found a boy with five barley loaves and two fish, I just don't know how that plays in a crowd like this."

Barley loaves were little biscuits. And the fish was a sort of pickled fish, or perhaps even dried fish that you just put on a biscuit...could be more like a fish and crackers. And here is Andrew bringing somebody to Christ that he believes maybe could be useful, always finding individuals, always mingling with the people, never seemingly caught away with the crowd but able to find somebody in the crowd. And he brings him to Jesus and he's exactly what Jesus needs. And from that little boy's lunch that his mother had prepared that morning, He feeds tens of thousands of people.

The third occasion is in the twelfth chapter of John. Passover time in Israel. Passover time, of course, focuses on Jerusalem and Jesus is coming up to Passover. And there were certain Gentiles, Greeks, going up to worship at the Passover. And these four came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, same hometown as Andrew and Peter. "And they began to ask him, saying, 'Sir, we wish to see Jesus. We want to see Jesus.'"

Now Philip could have said, "Sure, come with me. I know him personally." He didn't, what did he say? Philip came and told who? Andrew. Andrew was the bringer of people to Jesus. And together they went to Jesus and told him. We can assume that the people came...the people came. It doesn't say in the text. But this is what Andrew did.

Philip didn't know what to do with him. He was confused. Andrew was not confused when somebody wanted to see Jesus, he brought them to Jesus. I mean, that's, I'm sure, what Andrew thought Jesus would want. Hadn't He come into the world to save sinners? Wouldn't Andrew have assumed that there wouldn't be anybody that Jesus wouldn't want to see? Wouldn't Andrew assume that somebody who wanted to see Jesus, Jesus wanted to see?

What do we learn about Andrew? That's all there is, folks. I wish I could say more, you know me. I can't. Andrew is more a silhouette than a portrait. But in these three incidents we do learn some things about Andrew. He was a missionary. He brought people to Jesus. And he had no prejudice. He brought Gentiles, Gentiles. He knew that Jesus had first declared His messiahship to a Samaritan woman, I'm sure he had first hand knowledge of that. He not only was open and without prejudice, but he had faith. Philip, he had not the faith to believe that Jesus could do anything to meet the crowd, and Philip failed the test. But Andrew, believing Jesus to be the Son of God and have miraculous power, said, "Lord, I've got a boy with one little lunch, what can You do with it?"

And I think it's also fair to say that Andrew exhibits humility. I mean, the very fact that he went to get his brother Peter, you know, human nature might have been tempting him to say...You know, I've been under this guy's shadow my whole life, I've been dominated by my brother Peter my whole life...and now I have found the Messiah, and I think I'm just going to bask in my singular privilege.

It wasn't like that. He knew that as soon as he told Peter and Peter embraced the Messiah, that he would stay right in the shadow of Peter as he had his entire life. And he did. In fact, he was always in the shadow of Peter.

It's an interesting thing. I grew up with a famous father and I was always "Dr. Jack's son." "Meet Dr. Jack's son." I was so obliterated by that that somebody introduced me one time as "Dr. Jack's son," and this lady said, "Oh, Dr. Jackson, it's nice to meet you." So I completely lost my identity, I was Dr. Jackson. I had no identity. But the Lord has a sense of humor because now my Dad is John MacArthur's father. It's amazing what happens if you live long enough, isn't it?

Well Andrew was Simon Peter's brother. He was in the shadows. There are people who won't play in the band unless they can hit the big drum. James and John were like that, but Andrew wasn't like that. He was more concerned about bringing people to Jesus than about who got the credit, or who was in charge. He had no craving for honor. He's never seen in the big debates. We never hear him say anything except that which was involved with bringing someone to Jesus. He's one of those who

labored quietly in the background, not with eye service as men pleasers, but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, as Paul put it. Peter, James and John are referred to in the Bible as pillars of the church, not Andrew, he was a humbler stone. Andrew could have anticipated the sentiment of Christina Rossetti who wrote that beautiful poem, "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, or if for me that lowest place is too high, make one more low where I may sit and see my God and love Thee so."

That was Andrew.

Never really part of the three intimates, always on the edge, always Peter's brother. Slighted? No. Privileged, first of all, to hear that this was the Lamb of God. Andrew was one of those rare people who doesn't mind being in the shadows, those kinds of people that all of us who lead depend on, all of us who are Peters desperately need Andrews. Those self-forgetting souls, content to occupy a small sphere and are free from self-seeking ambition. Andrew has his honors. Like all of the Apostles, he will reign over one of the tribes of Israel in the thousand-year millennial reign of Christ on earth after the Second Coming. And like other the Apostles, the name of Andrew will appear when you get to heaven and you go in one of the gates of the holy city, the New Jerusalem, his name will be on one of the foundations.

In the meantime he has had a golf course named after him. Some of you are saying...what? All golfers know that golf heaven is St. Andrews. It is interesting to play there. I have had that privilege. That town is named for Andrew. Andrew is the patron saint of Scotland. And they picked him for his openness and his humility and his faith. A Scot writes in tribute to Andrew, Daniel McClain(?), "Gathering together the traces of character found in Scripture, we have neither the writer of an epistle, nor the founder of a church, nor a leading figure in the apostolic age. But Andrew is 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 moderate endowment, scarcely redeemed his early promise, simple minded, sympathetic, without either dramatic power or heroic spirit, yet with that clinging confidence in Christ that brought him into the inner circle of the Twelve, a man of deep religious faith with little power or expression at first. Better suited...he writes...for the quiet walks of life than the stirring thoroughfares." Andrew is the Apostle of privilege life.

And yet Andrew did become a preacher. That's what an Apostle did. And he was given power later on to heal diseases and cast out demons because God can make much out of little. Andrew suffered, by the way, for his love to Christ. He suffered for his loyalty to the gospel. Tradition said that Andrew did a very dangerous thing, he led the wife of a provincial governor, a provincial Roman governor to Christ and this infuriated her husband. He demanded that his wife recant her devotion to Jesus Christ and she refused. And so that governor had Andrew crucified. He had him crucified on an X-shaped cross. And whenever you see an X-shaped cross in church tradition, that's a St. Andrew's

cross. It subsequently has been linked to him throughout church lore. He is said by the tradition to have been suspended on the cross in agony, excruciating agony for two days, constantly preaching the gospel of salvation to all who passed by for as long as he could speak...always bringing people to Christ.

There's another silhouette here that I want you to look at. Back to Luke 6. This is James...James. Peter and John, of course, get the highlights. We have a fairly well colored portrait of them. But we have silhouettes of Andrew and James.

Verse 14, "Peter is followed by Andrew, his brother, and then comes James and then John." And we'll look at John next time. James, we know, was a son of a man named Zebedee. Zebedee had a fishing business and James and John were fishermen in that business.

James is more significant, I think, than we at first would consider because we know so very little about him. In two of the lists his name comes after Peter. Some reason to maybe assume from that that he was a very, very strong leader. Also, when the two names of the brothers are together, James and John, James is first...which could indicate that he was older and could indicate that he was the more dominant of the two. James never appears at any time in the gospels apart from John. We don't have any information about James without John...it's James and John, James and John.

They are inseparable in the gospels. But James seems to be the predominant one. Their business was fairly successful apparently because we learn in Mark 1:20, Matthew 4:21 that their father had this business and apparently they had hired hands so that the business was fairly large. James and John, of course, like Peter and Andrew, were privileged to be called in that first calling, along the shore of Galilee that day when Jesus came and pulled them in to that inner circle.

And unlike Andrew, James was in the intimate three. He was there on the Mount of Transfiguration. He was there in the special place in the garden with the Lord praying. He was with that triumvirate that were intimate with Jesus, and yet we know so little about him.

The best way to get a look at James is probably to note that Jesus gave them a name, He called them Boanerges, it means "Sons of thunder." Now when you call somebody a son of thunder, you are defining their personality in very vivid terms. This fits James, zealous, thunderous, passionate, fervent. He may well have been the New Testament counterpart of Jehu who said in the Old Testament, "Come see my zeal for the Lord," and then uprooted the house of Ahab and swept away Baal worshipers from the land.

James was a fiery person, passionate. He seems to have been able to make great enemies rapidly. While Andrew was quietly bringing people to Jesus, he was driving them away. And there's a place in spiritual leadership for those people who have thunderous personalities. James apparently was that

way by personality, by character and it may have been aided and abetted by the fact that he camped on some of the things that Jesus did that justified that kind of fury. I'm sure he well remembered that Jesus had made a whip and cleansed the temple when those people in the temple were doing what dishonored God. And I'm sure that James was convinced that his fury was really righteous indignation, protective of the holiness of God.

But sometimes his zeal was less than righteous. We don't have many glimpses of James, but I'll show you the ones we have. Look at Luke 9 and here is a typical response of a son of thunder. Luke 9:51, Jesus is now going to ascend into Jerusalem for the final Passover, for His death, burial, resurrection. He sets His face in verse 51 of Luke 9 to go to Jerusalem. Now they're coming from the Galilee area, coming down toward Jerusalem. They have to go through Samaria. And there's a Samaritan village. There was no 800 number to call and make a reservation to stay somewhere, so you have to send a messenger ahead. This is the time when a lot of pilgrims are migrating, got to find a place to stay. And so they send messengers on ahead of Jesus.

They go and they enter a village of the Samaritans. Now you need to know that Samaritans and the Jews hated each other with a passion. Samaritans were people who had inner married with Gentiles. They were Jews who disregarded and disdained their heritage, like Esau had, and they had inner married with pagans, and thus they had polluted the line of Israel. And they were hated for such disdain and defection by the Jews. And Jews wouldn't even go into Samaritan areas.

The Samaritan not only hated the Jews, they hated the worship of Jerusalem. They had their own worship on Mount Gerizim. They therefore hated the messianic gospel. They had no interest in that at all. That was just more of the Jewish things that they despised.

So when the messengers ahead of Jesus came, they probably said, "Look, the Messiah is coming," and so forth, and gave them the whole story and they wanted to make arrangements, verse 53, that they did not receive Him because He was journeying with His face toward Jerusalem. They wanted nothing to do with somebody going to Jerusalem, going to be a part of that worship and they wouldn't receive Him.

So when His disciples, James, again first name, and John saw this, they said...here's their response, "Lord, do we pray for these dear folks that they'll be enlightened?" No, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" This is not the seeker-friendly mentality. Lord, give us the power and we'll incinerate them. This is the son of thunder.

It may well have been that there was a serious visit in the Samaritan village. The messengers could have been driven out with curses and stones thrown at them...the animosity was that great. But just the fact that they wouldn't accept the Messiah infuriated James and John. James, apparently as always, the leader and James' idea was that the Lord should give them the power to call down fire

from heaven and literally turn that whole town into ashes, obliterate the unsaved.

Now Andrew said...Bring them to Jesus. James said...Burn them up. Not exactly the missionary spirit. But isn't it interesting that the Lord called a guy like this and a brother like that into the Apostles?

Well Jesus responds in verse 55, "He turned and rebuked them and said, 'You do not know what kind of spirit you're of.'" You have a bad attitude, guys. This is...what kind of a spirit is that? "The Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but save them." Can't you be more like Andrew? So they had to go to another village.

Now that was their approach. There's a touch of nobility in it. There's something about it that I like. Better to get fired up with righteous wrath than to allow insults to Christ, wouldn't you agree? I like the fact that they don't allow an insult to the Messiah to pass without a reaction and Jesus got angry when God was dishonored, zealous, explosive, fervent.

There's another insight in Matthew 20 verse 20. This is one of the more bizarre incidents in all of the gospels about the Apostles. James was not only fervent, passionate, zealous, insensitive. But he was also ambitious, driven to achieve the highest places. "So then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Jesus with her sons, bowing down and making a request of Him."

They sent for their mother. She could sort of soften up Jesus. "And He said to her, 'What do you wish? What do you want?' She said to Him...this is not a mild request...'Command that in Your Kingdom these two sons of mine may sit one on your right and one on your left.'" Any idea where they might have gotten their attitude? I don't know what Zebedee was like, but Mrs. Zebedee was a handful. Wow. She's commanding the Messiah. And some of you ladies are saying, "I cannot identify with...this is not a meek and quiet spirit."

"I'm telling you, you command that my boys are on your right hand and your left hand in the Kingdom." Poor Mr. Zebedee. I'm sure he spent a lot of time on the boat. Wow. You know, they were close to Jesus. They knew they were in the intimate circle. They had been called as disciples for a long, long time. They knew Him well. And they were going to take advantage of that position. They were on the inside track and they knew it. And they got their mother involved. I mean, she didn't have...she didn't have any hesitation. That's how bold she was. She carried their ambition right before Him. And Jesus said, "You don't know what you're asking for. Being on My right hand and My left, that's having the most prominent place in the Kingdom, is the idea, you don't know what you're asking for. Are you able to drink the cup that I'm about to drink?" And what He was saying was that's a place for sufferers. And since He suffered the greatest, He will be exalted the greatest and those who suffer the most will be exalted to those positions. It's given to those who suffer. So are you able to drink the cup that I'm about to drink.

And, of course, in their self-ambitious confidence they said, "We are able...we are able." Clamoring for honor, clamoring for position. You know, would the Lord...would the Lord purposely call somebody who is insensitive and harsh and zealous and passionate and ambitious into ministry? He does it all the time. He likes projects. And as I've been telling you all along, the only kind of people He's got to work with are people who are problems that need to be solved. With the kind of passion, the kind of zeal, and the kind of fervency that these brothers had when harnessed was used mightily by God.

So, the Lord says, "Okay, My cup you shall drink. You want to get there? You think you can handle it? You're going to drink it. I'm sorry, I can't give you the right or the left hand, only the Father will determine who deserves the seats of prominence." There will be seats of prominence in the Kingdom, even among the Apostles. They will rule over the twelve tribes, yes. But some will receive more prominence than others. But the Father knows that.

Well this ridiculous ambition created all kinds of problems because verse 24 says, "Hearing this the ten became indignant with the two." Now everybody's caught up in the spirit of rivalry. And you know the story. This becomes the big debate the whole time they're together, clamoring for honor. Here are the would-be killers of the Samaritans consumed with ambition. Their zeal becomes a stalking enterprise to get them into the positions of power. They play on their privilege and so demean Christ and the Kingdom. A lot of work to do on these two.

James wanted a crown, Jesus gave him a cup. He wanted power, Jesus gave him servanthood. He wanted to rule, Jesus gave him a sword not to wield, but to be the instrument of his own execution. Fourteen years later, after this, heaven was found by James beneath the shadow of the sword.

Turn to the twelfth chapter of Acts for the end of the story. Here outside the gospels we see him alone, even though he's identified as the brother of John. Now this is very interesting. Chapter 12, "Now about that time, Herod the king," now Herod is very, very furious, irate against the church, the spread of the church, the spread of the gospel. It is starting to effect the pagan world. And Herod laid hands on some who belonged to the church in order to mistreat them. He starts to persecute.

And look at verse 2, "He had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword. And when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also." How interesting, there is the triumvirate, Peter, James and John. When Herod wants to stop the growth of the church, who does he kill? Peter? No. John? No. James. By this time James is a force for God. By this time James is spiritual power personified. He killed James, not Peter, the great preacher of the first twelve chapters of Acts, nor John, the companion of Peter who traveled with him. He killed James.

That son of thunder had been mentored by Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit, shaped by those means into a man whose zeal and ambition was for God and the Kingdom of God, whose strength and intolerance was for divine purposes and the protection of the truth, whose sympathies were reserved for those things that honored God. Somewhere along the line he had learned to control his temper, bridle his tongue, redirect his zeal, eliminate revenge and completely lose personal ambition. Courageous, zealous, sometimes loveless, insensitive, ambitious, a man of passion he had now turned into an instrument of God. And his strength was so great that when it came time to stop the church, he was the man who had to die. He drank the cup, his life was short, it came to an end swiftly at the edge of a sword.

And, you know, one historical writer says that when he was sentenced to death he was taken to the place of execution by an officer, it says, who guarded him, who became so impressed by the courage he displayed that he repented of his sin and fell down at that Apostle's feet and begged pardon for the part he had played in the rough treatment he had received on the way to execution. The Apostle, according to this report, raised up the officer from the ground, embraced and kissed him and said, "Peace, my son, peace be to you in the pardon of your sins." Immediately transformed the officer, publicly confessed his surrender to Jesus Christ and was beheaded alongside of James. James became a little more like Andrew, bringing someone to Jesus even in his death.

God wants passionate, zealous, front-runners, dynamic, strong, ambitious people, but not with insensitivity. God has to do a wonderful work to tenderize people like that, zeal with insensitivity is cruel. Billy Sunday, famous American evangelist, all his children died in unbelief. James could have been like that very easily, but he needed refinement.

Now if I have to choose between a man of burning, flaming, passionate, enthusiasm and a potential for failure and a cold compromiser, I'll take the man with passion. But it takes a lot of work to harness that. If by the grace of God its harnessed, then you get James who is so important and so strong and so committed that to stop the church you have to execute him. God needs His Peters, He needs His Andrews, and He needs His James, as well.

Father, we thank You again for a glimpse of the life, not just any life but a remarkable and amazing life, a life still being lived in Your presence in heaven, the life of James, son of Zebedee, a fisherman who became the leader of the Jerusalem church. How wonderful. And another came after him, also named James, the brother of our Lord, as well a leader of that church following this James. We thank You, Father, for again reminding us of how You take us with all of our various idiosyncracies, all of the different raw material and You can shape all kinds of common people so that they can be brought to uncommon calling and have eternal impact. Use us as You see fit, having shaped us for Your glory in Christ's name. Amen.

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