

# I'd Like You to Meet a Friend of Mine

Message for Sunday, March 20, 2016  
by Bruce Fraser

**Scripture:** John 12:20-22; 6:5-9; 1:29-42

**Children's Message:** (from Mark 11:1-11)

We heard in the Bible reading that people were laying branches on the road in front of Jesus. Another place in the Bible (John 12:13), it tells us these branches were from palm trees. That's why we call today, the day we remember this, "Palm Sunday." That must have been a custom back then. Today, the custom when you want to honour someone is to roll a red carpet down the aisle for them to walk on.

Or another way we celebrate something is with cheerleaders shaking pompoms. Here are some pompoms; who would like to shake one?

Now we need a cheer for Jesus. The cheer they used back then was "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"

What would you suggest for a cheer for Jesus we could use today? *Accept the suggestion(s), and try them out as a group!*

Prayer: Jesus, we praise you: with our mouths, with our bodies, with our whole lives. Amen.

**Message:** "I'd Like You to Meet a Friend of Mine"

Do you ever wonder if the little things you do make a difference? Maybe you think, "I'm just an ordinary church member. I don't have a big important job like Wayne Martin—the *Chairperson of Church Council!*☺ I'm not the pastor, like Bruce. No one notices the things I do."

Well, I want to tell you: you are important, and what you do is important. In fact, you can do things no one else can do. That's right: you're the only one who can do these things. I'll come back to that later.

We're looking in the Bible at Andrew, one of Jesus' disciples. He's mentioned only a handful of times in the Bible. In fact, according to John's Gospel, he and a friend were among the very first to follow Jesus [John 1:40]. We might think that would have earned him a place of honour; instead, he is often referred to as "Simon Peter's brother, Andrew."

There are only three occasions recorded where Andrew did anything at all significant. Most of his life was spent in the background. But, as we shall see, much of the church's most valuable work is done in the background, out of the spotlight. You see, Andrew did one very simple thing on each occasion: he brought someone to see Jesus.

## 1) Greet guests with a warm welcome

One day, some foreign visitors came, wanting to see Jesus.

**John 12:20-22, New International Version:**

Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the Feast. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. "Sir," they said, "we would like to see Jesus." Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus.

Philip, apparently, didn't know what to do with them; so he just told Andrew about it. Andrew immediately welcomed them, and brought them to Jesus.

I can picture a motorcycle gang riding up to the church on big, noisy Harley-Davidsons. They are dirty and greasy, after a week on the road. Their black leather jackets have strange pictures on the back. The chains they use for fighting are close at hand, serving as belts to hold up their jeans.

The gang comes to the front door of the church where you're standing, and the leader says to you in a gruff voice, "We heard about your church. Thought we'd come and check it out. Any problem with that?"

Now Philip would have said, "Well... ah..., I'll have to go and check if we have enough seats." But Andrew would have welcomed them in: "Sure, we'd love you to join us for worship. By the way, my name's Andrew, and I live just down the road on a farm. What's your name?"

Why is that people in some churches treat newcomers as if they are afraid of them? They talk with their friends, but the outsider is left, well, outside. Some of you have told me about visiting other churches while you're travelling, and that's exactly what it was like. In other churches, there is a genuine warm welcome to new people. You show them where to hang their coat, show them where the bathrooms are, tell them about the nursery and

Sunday School, invite them home for lunch, and so on.

Making people feel welcome and wanted is a simple thing, but it's so important! And it's a job for everyone!

## 2) Do your part, and trust Jesus for the rest

On another occasion, Jesus had been ministering to a crowd of over 5,000. Supper time came, and Jesus asked the disciples how they shall feed everyone.

John 6:5–9, New International Version:

When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do.

Philip answered him, "Eight months' wages would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!"

Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?"

Most of the disciples were struck dumb by Jesus' question. Philip's answer was one of despair, more or less saying, "What on earth are you talking about? There's no way we can feed all these people." Andrew didn't have a solution, either; but he did what little he could. He found a boy who had some loaves and fish, and brought the boy to Jesus. You may know the rest of the story: Jesus blessed the bread and the fish, the disciples served everyone there, and there was enough left over to fill twelve baskets.

There are many sermons to be made out of this passage. The point I want to make right now is simply this: Andrew again brought someone to Jesus. His attitude was, "I'll do what I can do; and I'll trust Jesus to do the rest." No one ever knows what will come out of it when you bring someone to Jesus.

Let me repeat that key thought for emphasis: "I'll do what I can do; and I'll trust Jesus to do the rest." That's what we do: we do our part, and we trust Jesus for the rest.

## 3) Invite someone to come with you to meet Jesus

John 1:35–42, New International Version:

The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!"

When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?"

They said, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?"

"Come," he replied, "and you will see."

So they went and saw where he was staying, and spent that day with him. It was about the tenth hour.

Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus.

Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which, when translated, is Peter).

As in the other two stories, Andrew's part was very simple: he brought someone to Jesus. In this case, it was his brother, Simon.

Hundreds of volumes have been published on how to convince someone else to become a Christian. There are hundreds of arguments to refute them. A person's automatic response to an argument is to think of how to win the debate. Both sides stop listening.

Notice this: Andrew did not try to argue with or persuade his brother to come. He merely told what had happened in his life, as a result of spending just one day with this extraordinary person. He summed it up in one sentence: "We have found the Messiah."

You can do this, too. You can invite someone to come to church with you, so they can also meet Jesus. You don't argue. You see, when you tell someone what Jesus Christ means in your own life, people will listen with interest. They might say, "That's not for me." But at least they will listen, unlike with an argument.

Charles Bradlaugh, an avowed atheist, once challenged the Rev. H. P. Hughes to a debate. The preacher, who was head of a skid-row mission in London, England, accepted the challenge with the condition that he could bring with him 100 men and women who would tell what had happened in their lives, since trusting Christ as their Saviour.

They would be people who once lived in deep sin, some having come from poverty-stricken homes caused by the vices of their parents. Hughes said they would not only tell of their conversion, but would submit to cross-examination by any who doubted their stories. Furthermore, the minister invited his opponent to bring a group of non-believers who could tell how they were helped by their lack of faith.

When the appointed day arrived, the preacher came, accompanied by 100 enthusiastic believers. But Bradlaugh never showed up. They ended up having a great time of worship and testimony.

Again: simply telling the difference Jesus means in your life is far more powerful than the greatest debater.

Remember at the start I said there were things you that only you can do? Here it is: *you are the only one who can invite your friends and neighbours to come with you.* I don't know your friends; I can't do that. You're the only one. God has placed you in that position for a purpose, that you would be a messenger of good news.

Not just friends and neighbours; what about family? Andrew probably knew lots of people. How interesting that the first person he sought out to tell the good news was his brother. Sometimes we find it easier to talk about personal things with total strangers, than with our own family. But what better place to begin? Who else will see better evidence of a change in heart than those we spend most of our time with?

Did you know that Easter is the one Sunday of the year when people who aren't part of church are more likely to come to church, than any other Sunday?

All you have to say is something like this: "I'd like you to meet a friend of mine. Will you come with me to church next Sunday?" Do it with warmth and sincerity. Like Andrew, you do your part, and trust Jesus to do the rest.

### Next Steps:

- Pray for the people in your circle: family, friends, neighbours, co-workers. Perhaps think of five in particular.
- Pray for yourself, that you would have an attitude of love towards them (i.e. they are *not* a tool to build church attendance!)
- Speak with them, invite them to come as your guests.