

Twelve Ordinary Men: Andrew

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Preacher: Rev. Murdo M Campbell

[0 : 00] Well, would you turn with me this evening, with the Lord's help, to the gospel according to Luke, and chapter 6.

Luke chapter 6, it's on page 1039. We're looking at our list, our list of learners, these 12 ordinary men, your disciples.

Luke chapter 6, and we're reading at verse 13. And when day came, he, that is Jesus, he called his 12 disciples, and chose from them 12 whom he named apostles.

Simon, whom he named Peter, and Andrew his brother, and James and John and Philip and Bartholomew, and Matthew and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon, who was called the Zealot, and Judas, the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

In 1955, a young Dutch missionary by the name of Andrew van der Beeschel, he traveled to a communist youth meeting in Poland.

[1 : 37] At that time, Poland, along with many other Eastern European countries, they were on the other side of the Iron Curtain, which, as you know, was a political boundary that divided Europe between the end of the Second World War in 1945 until the end of the Cold War in 1991.

But the reason Andrew van der Beeschel went to a communist youth meeting in Poland wasn't because he was a communist. It was because he was a Christian.

And as a Christian, in a suitcase, he had his Bible. He had a change of clothes, but he also had a hundred tracts entitled The Way of Salvation. And these 100 tracts he intended to give away.

And, you know, it was that missionary trip to Poland that changed his life. Because behind the Iron Curtain, Andrew van der Beeschel, he discovered persecuted Christians who were in desperate need of Bibles, pastoral support, and prayer.

And so on his return to the Netherlands, Andrew prayed for the Lord to direct him and to guide him. And the Lord spoke to him through his word, as the Lord always speaks to us through his word.

[2 : 47] He spoke to him through the letter to the church in Sardis in the book of Revelation, where the Lord said to the church in Sardis, wake up, strengthen what remains and is about to die.

Wake up, strengthen what remains and is about to die. And in the years following, Andrew van der Beeschel, this Dutch missionary, he traveled to many of the European countries that were behind the Iron Curtain.

And he did so using his blue Volkswagen Beetle, which became known as the Miracle Car. He courageously put his life on the line in order to smuggle Bibles into communist countries during the height of the Cold War.

In fact, when his Volkswagen Beetle was often searched at the borders, Andrew van der Beeschel, he would often pray, and this is his prayer, Lord, in my luggage I have scripture I want to take to your children.

When you were on earth, you made blind eyes see. Now I pray, make seeing eyes blind. Do not let the guards see those things you do not want them to see.

[4 : 01] His Bible, his car was full of Bibles. And over the years, Andrew was joined by others in this work of smuggling Bibles to believers in all these communist countries.

And today, that small Dutch mission, it is now an international missionary organization that works in more than 60 countries seeking to strengthen persecuted churches.

And the organization, you've probably heard of it, is Open Doors. The Open Doors organization that works alongside the persecuted church.

And as Andrew van der Beeschel said, he said, our mission is called Open Doors because we believe that any door is open anytime, anywhere. Every door is open to go in and proclaim Christ as long as you are willing to go and not worried about coming back.

And you know, my friend, in the 21st century, more than 360 million Christians worldwide suffer high levels of persecution and discrimination for their faith.

[5 : 09] That's worked out as one in seven Christians in the world. One in seven Christians in the world are persecuted. And you can read more about it on the Open Doors website.

It'll tell you that the most persecuted place in the world today is North Korea. But you can also read about Andrew's story in this free book called God's Smuggler.

It's a free book. All you have to do is follow the link that's in our weekly notices. You put your name and your address in, and they will send you a free copy of the book. I did it on Tuesday. It arrived on Saturday.

So it's a fascinating read. And it's a free book. Free to read. There's a copy at the door. And if you don't want to sign up for it, you can take this one home with you. It's a story about this missionary, Andrew van der Beeschel, who became known throughout all these closed and communist countries.

And he became known, as it says there, as Brother Andrew. He was known as Brother Andrew. But as you know, this evening we're looking at another Brother Andrew.

[6 : 14] We're looking at Peter's Brother Andrew. And I'd like us to think about Peter's Brother Andrew under three headings this evening. Because as we read, we saw Andrew listening.

Then we saw Andrew's lunchtime. And then we saw Andrew's life. Andrew's listening. Andrew's lunchtime. And Andrew's life. So first of all, Andrew's listening.

Andrew's listening. In our study of the twelve disciples, we've repeatedly said that they were twelve ordinary men who were chosen, called, and commissioned by Jesus to serve Jesus Christ.

And as disciples, they were learners. Because as we said before, the word disciple, it means learner. Therefore, they all had their L plates on. They all had their L plates on, which is true of every disciple of Jesus Christ.

Because every disciple of Jesus is a learner. I'm a learner. You're learners. We're all learners, and we're all learning together. And we'll keep on learning together with our L plates on until we reach our graduation in glory.

[7 : 19] Now, as you know, last Lord's Day, we were considering the first disciple in this list of learners. We were considering Simon, whom Jesus later named as Peter. And we saw Peter's declaration.

We saw Peter's denial. And we saw Peter's discipleship. But we also noted that Peter had a brother named Andrew. We don't know if he was an older brother or a younger brother.

But what we do know is that both Peter and Andrew were from the same rural village. They grew up in the same home. And their home was just north of the Sea of Galilee, called Bethsaida.

It was called Bethsaida, which is also where Philip was from, too. And it's interesting that the name Bethsaida means house of the fishermen. House of the fishermen.

But these fishermen didn't have a house in the house of the fishermen. They actually lived and worked in the village of Capernaum, beside the Sea of Galilee.

[8 : 18] And together they had this fishing business, along with their friends and their colleagues, James and John. Now, as we saw last Lord's Day, we saw that Peter's first encounter with the Christ was when he was at work.

When they were working along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, they were mending their nets. And it was then that Jesus passed by. And he called to Peter and Andrew and James and John and said to them, He said to them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

And immediately they left their nets and followed him. And although that was Peter's first encounter with the Christ, Andrew's first encounter with the Christ was when he was listening to the preaching of John the Baptist.

Lots of people were going out to listen to this preacher in the wilderness. This preacher with a strange appearance and a strange appetite. And the boys were telling me that they were learning about this strange preacher this morning in Sunday school.

John the Baptist was this man, as you know, who wore camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist. And he ate locusts and wild honey. But it wasn't just John the Baptist's appearance and appetite that was strange.

[9 : 31] His announcement was strange too. Because as we read there in John chapter 1, when the Jewish priests and when the Levites came up to John the Baptist to ask if he was the Christ, or

if he was Elijah, or if he was one of the prophets, John the Baptist kept pointing away from himself, saying, there is one standing among you, you do not know, and I am not worthy to untie the strap of his sandal.

And with that, boys and girls, John pointed to Jesus, and he said, behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. John the Baptist preached and proclaimed that Jesus Christ is the sacrifice to end all sacrifices.

He is the Lamb of God who was foretold and foreshadowed at the Passover, that his blood would be sprinkled and shed in order to take away the sins of the world.

Because as you know, the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin. So John's declaration was, behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

[10:49] You know, I love that declaration of John. It always reminds me of what Charles Spurgeon wrote in his diary. I don't know if you've ever read Spurgeon's diary.

It says that on the 7th of October, 1857, Spurgeon, the great preacher of London, he preached at Crystal Palace in London to a crowd of 23,654.

It's a little more than the amount that we're here this morning. But two days earlier, on the 5th of October, 1857, Spurgeon went to Crystal Palace when it was empty, and he went to do a sound check and test the acoustics of the building.

But Spurgeon stood in the pulpit to do his sound test. He didn't do the familiar words of saying, testing, testing, one, two, three.

Instead, Spurgeon, he just used John's declaration. He said, behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

[12:01] Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. And if you've read the story, there was a workman in the gallery who knew nothing about Spurgeon, the great preacher in London.

He knew nothing about preaching. But when Spurgeon declared the Word of God from the pulpit that day, that Word pierced that workman's heart like an arrow from King Jesus, to the point that the workman who was up in the gallery put down his tools and went home and got on his knees and sought the Lord in salvation.

But, you know, it wasn't just the workman in the Crystal Palace who was affected by the words of John the Baptist. We read there in John chapter 1 that there were two disciples who were also affected by the words of John the Baptist.

Because when John pointed to Jesus and said, Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. We read there in John 1 that they followed Jesus.

In fact, they followed Jesus to where Jesus was staying. And they had fellowship with Jesus all afternoon. As we read, one of the disciples who listened to John the Baptist and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.

[13:17] And don't you find it remarkable that when John the Baptist pointed Jesus out, Andrew spent the afternoon listening and learning from Jesus.

When John the Baptist pointed Jesus out, Andrew spent the afternoon learning and listening from Jesus. Which ought to impress upon me as a preacher my role and responsibility to passionately point people to Jesus.

That they too would be disciples of Jesus and listen and learn from Jesus. But also, that we would take our responsibility and our role as a Christian seriously.

Because, you know, after Andrew had been pointed to Jesus, the first thing Andrew did was go to Peter.

After Andrew had been pointed to Jesus, the first thing Andrew did was go to Peter. And Peter, as you know, was his brother, his neighbor, his work colleague, and his friend.

[14:30] And he went to him to tell him all about Jesus. But Andrew not only told Peter about Jesus, Andrew brought Peter to Jesus.

He not only told him about Jesus, but he brought him to Jesus. And, you know, that's why so many Christians living in these communist countries that are mentioned in this book, that's why they called Andrew van der Beeschel, Brother Andrew.

Because by smuggling Bibles into these communist countries, behind the iron curtain, Brother Andrew told them about Jesus. And he brought them to Jesus.

And you know, my Christian friend, Andrew the disciple and Brother Andrew mentioned in the book, they're an example to us of how to be a Christian friend.

How to be a Christian friend. They told people about Jesus. And they brought people to Jesus.

[15 : 32] Which raises the question, my Christian friend, and I ask myself this question before I ask you, when was the last time you told someone about Jesus?

Just like Andrew did with Peter. When was the last time you spoke to someone about their need of salvation? Like Andrew did with Peter. When was the last time you invited someone to come to church?

Like Andrew did with Peter. When was the last time you offered to take someone to church with you? Or someone who doesn't drive? Someone who's nervous about coming on their own. Someone who's never been invited before.

When was the last time? When was the last time, Myrtle? And of course, by asking someone you might be told no. That's fine. At least you asked.

My friend, Andrew's someone was his brother, Peter. Andrew's someone was Peter. That was his family. That was his friend. That was his neighbor.

[16 : 34] That was his work colleague. Andrew's someone was Peter. Who is your someone? I'm sure you can think of someone straight away.

Who is your someone that you can pray for this coming week? That you'll have an opportunity to tell them about Jesus. Or invite them to church. Or say to them, I'll take you.

Come with me. Bring them to Jesus. And so we see Andrew's listening. But then secondly, Andrew's lunchtime. Andrew's lunchtime.

In John chapter 6, we read about the famous and the familiar miracle when Jesus fed the 5,000. But you know, I've never really been convinced that Jesus fed 5,000 people with only five loaves and two fish.

I'm more of the opinion that Jesus fed about 25,000 people with only five loaves and two fish.

Because the gospel accounts, as we read there in John 6, they tell us that there were 5,000 men present.

[17 : 44] They don't mention the women. They don't mention wives. They don't mention children being present. And yet the Passover was taking place. The Passover was a family festival.

Which means that men, women, and children would have been present. But regardless of how many there were, it was a large crowd that was following Jesus. It was a large crowd that was following Jesus.

And sadly, when you actually read to the end of John chapter 6, you discover that the crowds who were following Jesus, they were following him for all of the wrong reasons. Because the crowds weren't following Jesus as committed Christians.

They were following Jesus because they had heard the sermons and they saw the signs that Jesus was performing. And they thought it was this new phenomenon. And human nature being what it is, they all had FOMO.

They had the fear of missing out. So they were all following Jesus. And they followed this new phenomenon. They made it a new fad and a new fashion of the day. And human nature being what it is, the crowd attracted an even greater crowd.

[18 : 45] And they were all following after Jesus. But for the gospel writers, the crowds who followed Jesus wasn't a positive thing. It's actually a negative thing when you read through the gospels.

Because the gospel writers emphasize to us again and again that it's easy to follow in the crowds. It's easy to go along with the crowds. It's easy to get lost in the crowds.

But Jesus isn't into crowds. Jesus isn't into crowds because there are crowds in hell. There are crowds in hell.

No, Jesus is into disciples. Jesus is into individuals who will confess their sin and call upon him as Savior and commit their life to him in service.

Jesus once committed Christians. And he would far rather one committed Christian than 5,000 or 25,000 souls just going along in the crowd.

[19 : 50] That's why we read there in John chapter 6 that Jesus tested the disciples. He tested these 12 ordinary men whom he had chosen, called, and commissioned to be his disciples.

He tested them because we read that Jesus turned to Philip and said, where are we going to buy bread so that all these people may eat?

And of course, Jesus knew what he was going to do. But you know, Philip hearing that question, where are we going to buy bread so that all these people may eat? You can almost hear Philip choking when he heard Jesus' question.

But in order to show integrity, in order to show intelligence as a disciple of Jesus, Philip immediately tries to be, he starts working it all out in his head. He's thinking, how much is this going to cost? He starts working it all out. And the first thing he says to Jesus, well, Jesus, 200 denarii would not be enough to buy bread for everyone to get even a little.

[20 : 53] Now, 200 denarii was a lot of money. It was about eight months' wages. If you were to put that into our perspective, the average UK salary, looked it up on Google, is £38,131.

Eight months of that salary would be £25,421. So, question two, how much would it have cost to feed the 5,000?

Boys and girls, over £25,000. That's a hefty bill for a picnic lunch. But, you know, when Jesus tested his disciples, he wanted to see if they would use their head or their heart.

He wanted to see if they would use their head or their heart. And what we read is that Philip used his head. He started counting how much it's going to cost. But Andrew used his heart.

Philip used his head, but Andrew used his heart. Because while Philip was doing all his mental maths at lunchtime, Andrew went for a walk and found a little boy with a lunchbox.

[22 : 06] And Andrew did with this little boy what he did with his, maybe his little brother, Peter. He told him about Jesus and he brought him to Jesus.

And Andrew said to Jesus, here is a boy who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they among so many?

Philip used his head, but Andrew used his heart. And you know, it's safe to say that Andrew passed his maths test because he had the, not because he had the figures, but because he had faith.

Andrew passed his maths test not because he had the figures, but because he had faith. Andrew had faith to believe that if he gave the little he had to Jesus, Jesus would use it for his glory.

He believed that if he gave the little he had to Jesus, Jesus would use it for his glory. And you see, my friend, when it comes to discipleship, it's not about the head, it's about the heart.

[23 : 11] It's not about what you know, it's about who you know. And you have to know Jesus. It's not about the figures, it's about faith. It's not about quantity, it's about quality.

It's not about our gifts, it's all about giving glory to God. And that's what Andrew did at lunchtime. He gave the little he had so that Jesus would use it for his glory.

And you know, you bring it back to ourselves. We often think that all our energy and all our efforts and all our commitment and all our contributions and all our support and all our service, we often think that it's all irrelevant and insignificant to Jesus.

But it's not. None of it is. None of it is. It's all for his glory. And the wonderful thing is, if Jesus is able to use a little boy's lunchbox to feed five or twenty-five thousand people, then as Paul says, Jesus is able to do in us and for us exceedingly, abundantly, above all, more than we can ask or even think. We are to give the little we can to Jesus in our service for his glory, because he's able to do in us and for us exceedingly, abundantly, above all, more than we can ask or even think.

[24 : 44] You know, the wonderful thing is, like these twelve ordinary men that we're studying, we are just ordinary people. Living ordinary lives, but we have been saved to serve an extraordinary God.

And we ought never to forget that. We are ordinary people living ordinary lives who have been saved to serve an extraordinary God. And so we see Andrew's listening, Andrew's lunchtime, and then lastly and briefly, Andrew's life.

Andrew's life. So Andrew's listening, Andrew's lunchtime, and Andrew's life. The other occasion that we read about in John's gospel was from John chapter 12, when some Greeks, they came to Jerusalem to worship at the Passover, and they were looking for Jesus.

And you know, I love what they said. I love what they said when they were seeking Jesus. They were seeking the Savior. In fact, I love what they said so much that I had it fastened to the pulpit up here.

You can't see it from where you're sitting. You're welcome to come anytime and have a look. But on the book board here are the words written on it, Sir, we would see Jesus.

[25 : 58] Sir, we would see Jesus. And you know, it's a wonderful reminder to me every week, and it should be a reminder to every preacher who stands in this pulpit, that the purpose of this pulpit is to preach and proclaim Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

Sir, we would see Jesus. That's what the Greeks wanted. They wanted to see Jesus. That's how we should come to church. We should come to church wanting to see Jesus.

We should come to church expecting to see Jesus, expecting the preacher in the pulpit to preach and proclaim Jesus Christ to you.

Sir, we would see Jesus. But when Andrew and Philip went to tell Jesus that there were Greeks who desired to see Jesus, Jesus responded.

We read there, he responded with some of the most personal and also the most profound words. Because all the way through John's gospel, Jesus keeps saying, my hour has not yet come.

[27 : 02] My hour has not yet come. My hour has not yet come. Then John chapter 12, Jesus says, the hour has come. The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone. But if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

If anyone serves me, he must follow me. And where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him. And you know, what made Jesus' words such a personal and profound statement was that he was not only speaking about his own life and how he was going to be crucified, he was speaking about the lives of these twelve ordinary men.

These men whom he had chosen, called, and commissioned to deny self, take up their cross, and follow after him. You know, we mentioned this on Wednesday evening in our study of the book of Revelation.

We're looking at Revelation chapter 1. And we noted that apart from the apostle John who wrote or who saw the revelation from Jesus, John was exiled to the Greek island of Patmos, as you know.

[28 : 26] And apart from him, all of the other disciples encountered and experienced a martyr's death. They all literally denied self, took up their cross, and followed Jesus to a martyr's death.

Peter, as you know, he was crucified upside down. James was beheaded. Philip and Bartholomew were crucified. Matthew, the gospel writer, was killed with an axe.

Thomas, doubting Thomas, was thrust through with a spear. James, the son of Alphaeus, was stoned to death. Simon, the zealot, was also crucified. Matthias, who was the new addition to the apostles, he was beheaded.

And this man, Andrew, Andrew's life as a disciple of Jesus ended, boys and girls, this is your question, ended with him being crucified on an X-shaped cross.

There were two types of cross that the Romans used for torture and execution. There was the T-shaped cross, which is the one that Jesus was crucified on, and there was also the X-shaped cross, which, you Andrew was crucified on.

[29 : 34] And as you know, that's why our national flag is known as the St. Andrew's cross. And if you look it up, there are lots of traditions and lots of legends about Andrew.

One is that after his crucifixion, some of the relics of Andrew were brought by divine guidance to where the Scottish town of St. Andrew's is today.

Of course, it's only a legend. But the truth about Andrew's life is that he was a committed Christian. Jesus said to him, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

And that's what he did. He followed Jesus. And he followed Jesus in life, and he followed Jesus in death. He denied self, took up his cross, and followed Jesus.

Andrew was a committed Christian who followed Jesus. That was also true of the Dutch missionary, Brother Andrew. He followed Jesus, which is why he said about Christians in our day.

[30 : 37] And he makes this really challenging quote. And with this, I'll conclude. Brother Andrew, what he says, he says about Christians today, me, I think we in the West are cowards.

We ought to become people of guts, people of courage, people with strong convictions, and don't count our lives as dear to ourselves.

These people, this Andrew the disciple, Brother Andrew, they were committed Christians who followed Jesus in life and followed Jesus in death, which is what Jesus said to Andrew.

Jesus said to Andrew, there in John chapter 12, if anyone serves me, he must follow me. He must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also.

If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him. Friends, we need to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, yes, but also Andrew, the committed Christian who followed Jesus in life and in death.

[31 : 51] And yet, as we said, he was only an ordinary man. An ordinary man called to serve an extraordinary God. And so we see Andrew's listening, Andrew's lunchtime, and Andrew's life.

He was Andrew, called to serve Jesus in life and in death. May that be so of us as disciples of Jesus. Well, may the Lord bless these thoughts to us.

Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks to Thee for reminding us this evening of the need to tell it to the generation following, that this God is our God, and that He will be our guide even unto death.

Or that we would be enabled and encouraged to go to our Peters, to go to people in our homes and our families, our workplaces, and tell them about Jesus.

Lord, that Thou wouldst give us a boldness, give to us courage, give to us a desire to speak about Jesus as if He is our best friend, one that we want to talk about and share about.

[33 : 07] And Lord, help us, we pray, that we might see that even the little we do, like it was for Andrew, that we would be to the glory of God and the furtherance of His kingdom.

Or that Thou wouldst use us, we pray. Make us willing in a day of Thy power. Make us willing to serve our great God, for Thou are one who is able to do in us and for us exceedingly, abundantly above all, more than we could ask or even think.

Bless us in the week that lies ahead, a week, as we are reminded often, that is unknown to any of us. But Lord, we commit and we commend ourselves into Thy care and keeping.

Do us good and we pray, take away our iniquity, receive us graciously for Jesus' sake. Amen. Now we're going to bring our service to a conclusion this evening.

We're going to sing in Psalm 66. Psalm 66 in the Scottish Psalter, page 300. We're singing from verse 16 down to the end of the psalm.

[34 : 17] Psalm 66 and verse 16. Here we have the testimony of one of the Lord's people.

He says, All that fear God, come, here I'll tell what He did for my soul. I with my mouth unto Him cried, my tongue did Him extol.

If in my heart I sin regard, the Lord will not hear. But surely God me heard unto my prayer's voice gave ear. O let the Lord, our gracious God, forever blessed be, who turned not my prayer from Him, nor yet His grace from me.

So we'll sing these verses in conclusion of Psalm 66 to God's praise. O that fear God, come here I'll tell what He did for my soul.

I with my mouth unto Him cried, my tongue did Him extol.

[35 : 45] If in my heart I said, we guard the Lord, we will not hear.

But surely God be heard unto my I pray your choice, give ear.

O let the Lord, our gracious God, forever blessed be, who turned not my prayer from Him, nor yet His grace from me.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and forevermore. Amen.