

Theme: Look! The Lamb!

Text: John 1:35-42

³⁵The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. ³⁶When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, “Look, the Lamb of God!”

³⁷When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. ³⁸Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, “What do you want?”

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

³⁹“Come,” he replied, “and you will see.”

So they went and saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with him. It was about four in the afternoon.

⁴⁰Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. ⁴¹The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, “We have found the Messiah” (that is, the Christ). ⁴²And 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).

The Word of God we’ll consider today is the Gospel from John chapter 1. Let’s begin with prayer:

Come, thou long-expected Jesus, born to set thy people free; from our sins and fears release us, let us find our rest in thee. Amen.

Should we start an argument this morning? Which one is it...? Merry Christmas! Or... Happy Holidays! No show of hands needed, I want everyone to leave here on good terms today. In fact, how about this... whether you lean more toward “Merry Christmas” or “Happy Holidays” you are in the right place this morning because for a Christian both are quite appropriate this time of year!

We are of course getting ready to celebrate Christmas in just over three weeks. Wishing fellow believers “Merry Christmas” as this joyous day approaches is a good thing. It’s even nice to use such a greeting out and about in our world, perhaps using such a simple greeting to build a bridge to a conversation about what Christmas is all about.

But “Happy Holidays” works well too, even for Christians! Why? Well first of all the word means exactly what it says. A holiday is a “holy day”. That is literally what the word meant in its original usage. And even today we as Christians have many holy days, that is, many days we set apart this time of year to consider God’s love for sinners. Sundays in Advent, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, even New Year’s is often used by Christians to remember God’s grace in the year gone by and to prepare for his gift of a new year ahead.

But those are not the only “holy days” that Christians have considered this time of year. Historically the Christian church has commemorated minor festivals to remember God’s love shown to various believers of the past. These “saints’ days” as they are often known are not meant to glorify people, but to glorify God for his grace in their lives and to give us models of faith to consider as we follow Jesus in faith like they did. The time around Christmas is filled with such holidays. And this year, three of them happen to fall on Sundays. We’ll consider St. Thomas the apostle the Sunday before Christmas, and the Holy Innocents on the Sunday after Christmas. But today, as we begin a new Church Year with the

first season called Advent we will consider the first apostle, a man called Andrew... a man who heard John the Baptist speak those precious words about Jesus when he said **“Look! The Lamb!”**

My prayer is that as we begin Advent today we would begin by hearing John’s cry just like Andrew did, and then say just what Andrew said after following Jesus, **“We have found the Messiah.”**

First, let’s get a few biographical details in place. Andrew, as you see in the text, is the brother of Peter. The two of them were from the city of Bethsaida, which is in Galilee in the northern part of Israel. They are also mentioned later as having the profession of fishermen. So, that means you have this initial transition for Andrew from being a follower of John the Baptist, to being a follower of Jesus, and the first one to introduce Jesus to Peter. It’s for that reason that Andrew has often been called in church history the first “home missionary” – telling his family about the Savior.

Later on, Andrew, along with Philip (another apostle from Bethsaida), brings some Greeks to Jesus during Holy Week, Greeks who very appropriately said, **“Sir, we want to see Jesus” (John 12:21).** So, Andrew takes them to Jesus. For that reason, Andrew is also often referenced as the first “foreign missionary” of the apostles.

And again just looking at our sermon text, it shows a depth of character that already before anyone has been officially called to follow Jesus, Andrew is found among John the Baptist’s disciples. Clearly, this man has a fervent desire for spiritual things, to know spiritual truths. He is faithfully waiting for the Messiah, God’s promised Savior.

It’s also significant that Andrew is from that city of Bethsaida I mentioned. During Jesus’ ministry in the north, Bethsaida is listed along with Chorazin and Capernaum as Jesus curses these cities for not receiving the gospel when it was preached to them by the very Son of God and his disciples. They spurned Jesus’ miracles and refused to repent at his preaching (cf. Mt 11:20ff; Lk 10:13ff.) Yet that proclamation was not without fruit. Andrew listened. And he delivered the message to Peter. And at some point, Philip also listened. The gospel message of sins forgiven in Jesus spread as hearts were comforted with the simple truth Andrew had heard from John the Baptist: **Look! The Lamb of God!**

So, what does all of this have to do with Advent? Well, remember that a major theme in Advent is repentance. You see it and hear it most clearly in John the Baptist’s preaching, which said, **“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near!”** It was a message of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And we’ll hear that message later on in our Advent services more directly. But it was this message that was delivered to Andrew, and he was convicted, repented, and forgiven by John’s gospel proclamation. The Messiah had come to Andrew!

And what did he do with that message? What did he do with that Advent gospel? What did he do when he heard the wonderful news that the long-awaited Savior, the Messiah, had come? Did he bottle it up inside and keep it to himself? Did he shrug it off as not that important or just another false hope? Did he get agitated and lash out against it and oppose the message? No, none of that. In fact, just the opposite! He believed in the Lord Jesus Christ! He sought to follow him with this question that sought to know more about Jesus, **“Rabbi...where are you staying?”** as if to say, “Teacher, where you stay, I want to stay there!” And to that heart longing for the Savior, Jesus replied, **“Comes, and you will see.”** And they did!

And what’s more for Andrew is that he shared that message with those closest to him. **“We have found the Messiah!”** he tells Peter right away, without delay. He just can’t keep it to himself. The good news message of the Christ, the wonderful news of sins forgiven by the coming Savior was just too good to pass up, and too important to keep to himself. What a comfort this was to Andrew!

Brothers and sisters, as we sit at the beginning of another Advent, preparing for Christmas, going through all the busyness that we usually go through this time of year, isn't it wonderful to find a quiet place here at church and revel in the message of the gospel that you have found the Messiah? But for what purpose? To what end? As we look at Andrew, the first disciple called the first missionary, we gain insight into what it means to have found the Messiah.

How often do we fail to share this comforting message of Andrew's, **"We have found the Messiah,"** with our families, with our friends, with those closest to us? Do we sit around the dinner table and talk about Christ with our families? Do we take the comfort of the Messiah with us each and every day so that we can have that comfort even in the midst of the busyness of the season, or at a chaotic workplace, or in a challenging situation at school? In short, what's the point of finding the Messiah if we don't take him with us into life? If it doesn't bring joy to a saddened heart, ease a troubled conscience, or comfort us in our afflictions, then have we actually missed the Messiah? And if we have nothing to share with our closest loved ones about the Messiah, you might start to wonder if we really have found him at all?

Let's ask ourselves today, what have we found with Andrew? **"When John saw Jesus passing by, he said, 'Look! The Lamb of God!'" "Look! The Lamb!"** That's what we've found! Yes, like Andrew, when we see Jesus this Advent season we know we've found the hope of eternal life! We've found the sacrifice that actually meant something. We've found the One who would carry away the sins of the whole world! We've found Jesus. We've found the Messiah, the one chosen and anointed by God to bring peace and joy to the ends of the earth because he atoned for our sins, he paid for them in full, he restored our relationship to God the Father. John the Baptist is more than happy to point him out to us and to all when he said **"Look! The Lamb!"**, and Andrew was listening! And we're listening too. And like Andrew, that message of sins forgiven in Jesus floods our lives with the light of the gospel.

And knowing that beautiful comfort in a busy life, what will we do with it? Like Andrew, let's share it with others. Let's revel in the good news together. Let's bring it to our brothers and sisters, our children and parents, our grandparents, those in our homes, those in our inner circle of friends. Let's take that good news with us everywhere... all throughout our lives! And let's take that good news comfort even to our graves, because that's where it makes the biggest difference of all. Jesus saves, and that means death is defeated and heaven is ours—even when life seems the bleakest.

Perhaps some of you know the tradition of Andrew's martyrdom from church history, but perhaps you don't. Both Peter and Andrew had unique ways in which they gave their lives for Jesus. Upon execution, they were both sentenced to crucifixion. But because they didn't feel worthy to share in the exact same death as their Savior, Peter made the request to be crucified upside down, and Andrew made the request to be crucified on an X-shaped cross. And so, with their deaths as well as with their lives, they gave a witness to the Messiah whom they had found. They were comforted even in their agony because what was waiting for them was the crown of life. It was theirs in Jesus – **the Lamb of God**. They had found the Messiah. And so have we. This Advent let's go with the comfort we know. Come back to find that quiet rest in Jesus here each Sunday. And then take that quiet comfort with you back into the busy season of December so that you can share that comfort of the Messiah with those closest to you. So you can point to Jesus and say, **"Look! The Lamb!"** And say with Andrew, **"We have found the Messiah!"** Amen.

Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. (Revelation 2:10) Amen.