

IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE

John 1:40-42

INTRODUCTION:

Play clip of George Bailey, "It's A Wonderful Life." What makes a wonderful life in the kingdom of God? How does He define a life well lived?

MAIN TEXT:

Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard John and followed him. He first found his own brother Simon and told him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated "the Christ"), and he brought Simon to Jesus.

When Jesus saw him, he said, "You are Simon, son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which is translated "Peter") (John 1:40-42, CSB).

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

Peter's brother, Andrew, is the least known of the four disciples in the inner circle. Andrew ordinarily is left very much in the background. We will learn, too, he was used by our Lord to touch one who touched thousands. Homer Lindsey referred to Andrew as the inviter, or I see him as the bringer or introducer.

Had Andrew never been born, the New Testament could have changed significantly. Peter may have never been saved. Someone else would have preached the famous Pentecost sermon. We would have to eliminate two books of the New Testament, 1 and 2 Peter. Only heaven knows what else would have been left out of the Bible and church history. Andrew was the first of all the disciples to be called (John 1:35-40). His eagerness to follow Christ, combined with his zeal for introducing others to Christ, fairly typifies Andrew's character.

Think: Peter, James, John and Andrew. Certainly, Andrew was the least conspicuous. Scripture doesn't tell us a lot about him. He appears in the New Testament only nine times and most references simply mention him in passing. Andrew lived his life in the shadows of his better-known brother, Peter. He is even mentioned in the text as Simon Peter's brother. However, lest we forget, Andrew introduced Peter to Jesus. Andrew shows that he had the right heart for effective ministry in the background.

Andrew's name means manly. He was a strong fisherman. His life proved him to be bold, decisive and deliberate. He was driven by a hearty passion for the truth, and he was willing to subject himself to the most extreme kinds of hardship.

Andrew's personal encounter with Jesus took place a few months after Jesus' baptism (John 1:29-34). Andrew and John were standing next to John the Baptist when Jesus walked by, and John the Baptist said, "Behold the Lamb of God!"

Andrew and John became Jesus' first disciples. The news Andrew heard was too good to keep to himself, so he went and found the one person in the world he most loved, whom he most wanted to know Jesus, and led him to Christ.

PASSAGE OUTLINE:

I. HE SAW THE VALUE OF INDIVIDUAL PEOPLE.

Andrew appreciated the value of a single soul. He was known for bringing individuals, not crowds, to Jesus. Almost every time we see him in the gospel accounts, he is bringing someone to Jesus.

He brought Peter to Jesus: Just one

He brought the boy with his lunch to Jesus: Just one

Andrew has been referred to as the first home missionary because of the Jewish people he brought to Jesus. Andrew has also been referred to as the first foreign missionary because of the Greeks he brought to Jesus in John 12:20-22.

Most people do not come to Christ as an immediate response to a sermon they hear in a crowded setting. They come to Christ because of the influence of an individual. Andrew brought one—Peter. Peter then brought thousands. All the fruit of Peter's ministry is ultimately also the fruit of Andrew's faithful individual witness.

"Few have ever heard of Edward Kimball. He was a Sunday School teacher who led D.L. Moody to Christ. Edward went to a Boston shoe store where the 18-year-old Moody was working, cornered him in the stockroom, and introduced him to Christ.

Kimball was anything but bold. He was a timid, soft-spoken man. He went to that shoe store frightened, trembling and unaware of whether he had the courage to confront this young man with the gospel. Moody, on the other hand, was crude and obviously illiterate, and Kimball trembled in his boots as he recalled the incident. Moody had begun to attend his Sunday School class. Moody was totally untaught and ignorant about the Bible. Kimball said, 'I decided to speak to Moody about Christ and about his soul. I started downtown to Holton's shoe store. When I was nearly there, I began to wonder whether I ought to go just then during business hours. And I thought maybe my mission might embarrass the boy, that when I went away the other clerks might ask who I was, and when they learned might taunt Moody and ask if I was trying to make a good boy out of him. While I was pondering over it all, I passed the store without noticing it. Then, when I found I had gone by the door I determined to make a dash for it and have it over at once.'

Kimball found Moody in the stockroom and spoke to him with 'limping words.' Later, he said, 'I never could remember what I said, 'something about Christ and His love, that was all.' He admitted it was a 'weak appeal.' But Moody, then and there, gave his heart to Christ."

Tens of thousands testified that they came to Christ under Moody's ministry. Moody led C.T. Studd, the great pioneer missionary and William Chapman, who himself became a well-known evangelist, to Christ. Moody founded the Moody Bible Institute that has trained thousands for ministry. It all began when one was faithful to introduce another to Christ.

II. HE SAW THE VALUE OF INSIGNIFICANT GIFTS.

Some people see the big picture more clearly just because they appreciate the value of small things. In the feeding of the 5,000 story, Philip's vision was overwhelmed by the size of the need.

"There's a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish—but what are they for so many?" (John 6:8-9, CSB)

No gift is insignificant in the hands of Jesus.

He looked up and saw the rich dropping their offerings into the temple treasury. He also saw a poor widow dropping in two tiny coins. "Truly I tell you," he said, "this poor widow has put in more than all of them. For all these people have put in gifts out of their surplus, but she out of her poverty has put in all she had to live on" (Luke 21:1-4, CSB).

God's ability to use a gift is in no way hindered or enhanced by the size of that gift. It is the sacrificial faithfulness of the giver, not the size of the gift, that is the true measure of the gift's significance. It's not the greatness of the gift that counts, but rather the greatness of the God to whom it is given. The miracle of feeding the 5,000 illustrates the way God works. He takes the sacrificial and often seemingly insignificant gifts of people who give faithfully, and He multiplies them to accomplish monumental things.

III. HE SAW THE VALUE OF INCONSPICUOUS SERVICE.

Andrew is the picture of all those who labor quietly in humble places.

Don't work only while being watched, as people-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, do God's will from your heart (Ephesians 6:6, CSB).

He did not mind being hidden as long as the work was being done. He was a leader with a servant's heart. Andrew never preached to multitudes or founded any churches.

CONCLUSION:

Tradition has it that Andrew took the gospel north into Russia, possibly Scotland. He was ultimately crucified in Achaia, which is in southern Greece, near Athens. One account says he led a wife of a provincial Roman governor to Christ and that it infuriated her husband. He demanded that his wife recant her devotion to Jesus Christ, and she refused. So the governor had Andrew crucified. He was lashed to the cross instead of nailed, in order to prolong his suffering. Tradition says it was an X-shaped cross. Most accounts say he hung on the cross for two days, exhorting passersby to turn to Christ for salvation.

Instead, God has chosen what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen what is weak in the world to shame the strong. God has chosen what is insignificant and despised in the world—what is viewed as nothing—to bring to nothing what is viewed as something, so that no one may boast in his presence (1 Corinthians 1:27-29, CSB).