

Amen. The word of God that we consider today is from John 1: “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”

Andrew had heard John’s fiery preaching of repentance; of preparation for the mighty one who was coming; of instructions for turning from sin and living a holy life. John did not soften any rough edges when it came to calling people sinners and telling them what God expected of them. But *that* day John did not speak of fire and wrath. That day, Jesus was there – Jesus his cousin. He had known him from childhood but now he came to know him in an entirely new way. Now he knew him as God’s anointed one – the Christ. That day, John simply lifted his finger, pointed it at Jesus and proclaimed for all to hear, “*Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.*” Andrew saw and heard.

What a wondrous thing his teacher was saying! The Lamb of God – Who is this Lamb? Andrew’s mind raced through the Hebrew Scriptures. The Passover Lamb, whose blood protected the faithful from God’s wrath against the Egyptians. The sacrificial Lamb God provided for Abraham as a substitute for the life of his Son Isaac. The Lamb Isaiah foretold would bear our iniquities and go silently to the slaughter. John was saying this Jesus is *that* Lamb! He was here to take away the sin of the world. That meant he was here for Andrew the sinner. Andrew knew that his problem was not just that he sinned but that he was a sinner. Andrew and the faithful remnant within Israel were waiting for the savior who would create a completely new heart in his people. Jesus had come to take away his sin; the sin that held the whole world in its grasp.

Andrew was a disciple of John but that was never meant to be a permanent arrangement. John’s ministry was temporary by design; a holding place; a finger pointing to the arrival of the one God promised. “*For this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel,*” John said. His ministry had served its purpose. Perhaps Andrew was reluctant at first to leave his teacher to follow Jesus but then on the following day Jesus was there again and John again faithfully pointed his disciples to Jesus – “*Behold, the Lamb of God.*” In other words, “Look guys! There he is. What are you waiting for?” So with a little nudge out of the nest, Andrew followed Jesus.

We say we are followers of Jesus. What does it mean to follow Jesus? We tend to overcomplicate and overthink things. For Andrew that day following Jesus meant literally walking behind him to see where he was going; maybe even to have the chance to stop and talk to him; to learn more. He followed Jesus until finally Jesus noticed someone behind him, turned around and said, “*What are you seeking?*” And Andrew addressed Jesus as Rabbi – teacher. Now, of course we know Jesus is much more than just a teacher but this is an important shift for Andrew! Just like that, he has transferred from being a student of John to being a student of

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 Jesus. His allegiance has shifted simply based on the power of John's testimony that Jesus is the Lamb of God.

Following Jesus can really be that simple!

Andrew was interested in where Jesus was staying; he wanted to follow him home. So imagine this – John has just announced that this man is the Son of God and Andrew the **fisherman** seeks an audience with him. Someone like Andrew wouldn't even dream of meeting, say, the Roman emperor. He would have little chance of even an audience with the Jewish high priest or a local governor. He was a nobody – but here he was following Jesus home, hoping to meet him, if even briefly. Now be astounded by Jesus' hospitality! The one by whom all things were made; who by all human estimates should be considered too busy and too important to spend time with someone like Andrew **invited him** to continue following him, see where he was staying, and remain for the night! So Andrew stayed with Jesus – not just that night but from then on he remained with Jesus and Jesus remained with them. And by the mysterious working of the Holy Spirit, during that day he came to believe that Jesus was the promised Messiah, the Christ.

We have here in very simple and literal terms, the first two people to ever follow Jesus (Andrew was joined by another former disciple of John). And then right away we also have what we could call the first evangelism call because what happened next, we are told, is Andrew went and found his brother – “Hey Simon, you've got to come with us. There's someone you need to meet. We have found the Messiah!” And he brought him to Jesus. What does it mean for someone to come to Jesus? Again, we overcomplicate and overthink. For Andrew that day, it literally meant grabbing his brother's hand and taking him to the place where Jesus was.

So in this passage we see Jesus through Andrew's eyes. And we witness a series of four actions: Andrew **beholds** Jesus, he **follows** Jesus, he **remains** with Jesus, and then he **invites** Peter to Jesus. God is still working those same four actions in us today. First, we behold. The voice of John the Baptist continues to spring off the page like a finger pointing to Jesus: *behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.* Behold Jesus through these Spirit-inspired eyewitness accounts. Behold him revealing the glory of God as he heals, preaches, forgives, and works wonders. Behold Jesus ushering in the reign of God, renewing creation wherever he goes. Behold the Lamb offering up his life on the cross. Behold, your sin and my sin there in his wounds; our sickness, our corruption, our greed, our lust, our selfishness, our lack of love for your neighbors, all the good things we have failed to do – see it all there in Jesus' death for you. Behold your sin, and the sin of all the world taken away; defeated, erased from the record permanently by the blood of the Lamb of God. Through the eyes of the women and the disciples, behold the empty tomb. Hear the promise of Jesus, “I will also raise you up on the last day.” Behold him right here in this holy sanctuary –as we approach the altar, we take the words of John and address them to Jesus, “Lamb of God you take away the sin of the world,” because he is truly present in

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this meal. Just as John could point to him right there in the Jordan River, so we can point to Jesus right here in the bread and wine. Behold.

Drawn to Jesus by what we see and hear and touch and taste, we can't help but follow him. What does it look like for us to follow Jesus? There are countless books on the topic, some of them very good! Does following Jesus mean imitating him? Yes. Does it mean loving others in a self-sacrificing way? Yes. Does following Jesus mean loving him with all our heart, all our mind, and all our strength? Yes. Does it mean being willing to suffer as Andrew ultimately would for our faith? Yes. Following Jesus means all of this and more...but it starts simply. Follow Jesus like Andrew did. Find the place where Jesus is staying and literally go to that place. I'm not talking in spiritual riddles or symbolic language. There are places where Jesus told us he could be found today. You found one of them! He promised, *"Where two or three are gathered in my name there I am in their midst."* Follow Jesus to worship. Jesus is also in his Word. Follow him through these pages that contain his very words, the words of eternal life. Follow Jesus to the water where you recall that he baptized you into his death and resurrection. Follow him to the altar where he has prepared a feast of love for us. Follow Jesus to where he is and the rest will surely follow.

And in following Jesus, he asks us to remain with him. He will never turn us away. Just as he did with Andrew and his companion, Jesus invites us to remain with him always. In fact Jesus used this same word extensively later in John's gospel – *"Remain in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it remains in the vine, neither can you, unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing."* And when he departed from his disciples' sight into heaven he left them a promise that extends to you and me, *"I am with you always, even to the end of the age."* The Lord of the universe is not too busy or too important to invite ordinary people like us to remain with him. He made you. He loves spending time with you. He loves to hear your prayers. In his radical hospitality, he has all the time we need and promises that we will remain with him forever. Remain.

Finally, invite. Bring others to meet Jesus. This sounds intimidating – and in some ways it is. What should we say about Jesus? How are we supposed to share our faith? Again, there are countless books written on this topic. But let's also start simple here like Andrew did. Who did Andrew approach? Not a stranger on an airplane but his own brother. What did he say? How did he try to convince Simon to believe in Jesus? He didn't. Rather than try to explain or persuade, he simply showed him. *"Come with me, there's someone you have to meet."* We can invite someone to church with us. Maybe they're not interested in coming just yet. That's okay! Keep inviting. We can invite someone to pray with us. We can invite someone to read a devotional

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book and discuss it with us. We can simply invite that person to our home to spend time with them, listen to them, and love them as Jesus loves us.

Behold. Follow. Remain. Invite. And in it all rest in the knowledge that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away your sin. AMEN.

May the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.
Amen.