

**Centre Congregational Church, United Church of Christ
The Reverend Dr Scott Everett Couper
Sunday, August 8, 2021
Tenth Sunday after Pentecost**

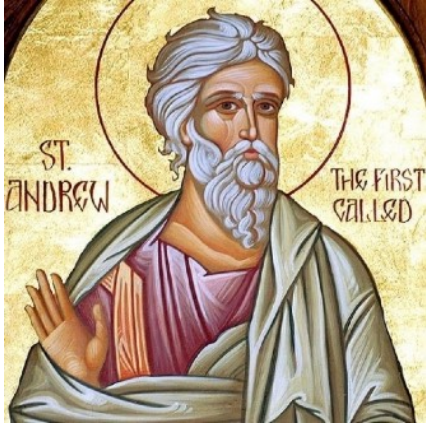
“Andrew: Protokletos”

**Second of six sermons of a series entitled:
“Apostolic Martyrs: Sacrifices Made for the Early Church”**

Christian Scripture: John 1:35-41



This sermon series on the apostles is intended to prepare us for the months to come. We will learn about the apostles and the great sacrifices they made in order to inaugurate the Christian church in the midst of a hostile world. I would like all of you to see yourselves as apostles of Centre Church, strengthening her as she begins again on September 12th.



Andrew was a disciple who the Bible seems to overlook much of the time. The four gospels actually tell us very little about Andrew.¹ Because he was overlooked, we really do not know much about him. Yet, Andrew was a very important founder of the Christian church whose story should be told.



I wonder if any of you have ever felt overlooked. I remember one time I was a part of group who achieved something pretty significant. We had a celebration with lots of food and drink. The newspapers were called and reporters and a camera crew came. I remember I stepped-out for a moment to bring-in more drinks. As I was coming back-in, everyone was gathering to pose for a picture to be published in the next day's newspaper. Even though I re-entered the room and

¹ Dennis MacDonald, "Andrew", in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 1 (A-C), ed. David Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 242.

was pouring re-fills for everyone, they continued to negotiate who was going to be in the front and who would be positioned where. I felt like saying, “Hello! I am here!”. Yet, no one called me over to be in the picture. I carried-on, clearing the tables, and even collecting the trash, while everyone said “Cheese!” as the pictures were taken. I felt invisible. I felt ignored. I felt unappreciated. I am sure all of us have had experiences in our lives when we thought we a part of something only to be disappointed that our participation was never acknowledged or appreciated.

There are many reasons we are overlooked.



Sometimes we are overlooked because we are ‘eclipsed’. I believe this happened to Andrew in the gospels of Mark (1:16-20) and Matthew (4:18-22). In these two gospels, Jesus walked along the Sea of Galilee and saw fishermen plying their trade in boats. Jesus called out to them and said to them, “Come and follow me! I will make you fishers of men.” Two of those called were Simon, also known as

Peter, and his brother Andrew. And here is the rub, Andrew is always listed second, after Peter. No one really knows why. Perhaps it is because Peter was the older brother, or perhaps it because the writers understood Peter to be a more prominent disciple. No matter, it is clear that Andrew is always listed second and is often barely even named.



After Jesus blurted out to the two brothers, "Come and follow me", Mark simply recorded, "At once they left their nets and followed him" (Mark 1:18). I find this to be unbelievable. I mean, who leaves their job, their tools, and equipment (a boat!) to follow some guy who happened to walk by and said "Come, follow me."? I'm not that gullible and neither, do I think, were Peter and Andrew. The entire narrative seems a bit far-fetched. But, let us come back to this point later.



Sometimes we are overlooked because we are ignored. In the gospel according to Luke (5:1-11), Andrew was simply not mentioned. Although the author of Luke took his material from Mark, Andrew's name was simply omitted. It's an absolute shocker, I think. How rude! And the author of Luke, who also wrote The Acts of the Apostles, only mentioned him once in the entire book of Acts (1:13). The author of Luke pretty much ignored and omitted Andrew.



Matthew, Mark, and Luke were all written before the gospel of John and it is John's gospel that rescues Andrew from obscurity and gives him his 'claim to fame', so to speak. Normally, we would assume Mark and Matthew's accounts to be more historically accurate than John's because John's gospel was written much later. Also John's account has more of a theological, and even mystical, purpose

rather than historical. John's version of how Andrew and Peter encountered Jesus is much different than Matthew and Mark's and, from my perspective, is strangely far more believable. In John's gospel, Andrew was a follower, a disciple, of John the Baptist.² John the Baptist observed Jesus walking from a distance and blurted out, "Look, the Lamb of God". At this declaration, Andrew, with another, chased after and followed Jesus. Andrew then went to his brother Peter and told him, "We have found the Messiah".



In John's gospel, Andrew arose to prominence in three ways. One, Andrew was the first named disciple called by Jesus.³ Two, Andrew told Peter about Jesus and thus evangelized his brother. Three, Andrew was revealed to be the first disciple to declare that Jesus was the Messiah.

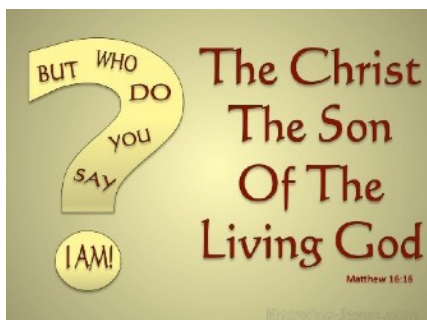
This brings me to my third and last point about being overlooked.

² Dennis MacDonald, "Andrew", in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 1 (A-C), ed. David Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 243.

³ The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, "St. Andrew: Christian Apostle", *Encyclopedia Britannica*, assistant ed. Melissa Petruzzello, July 20, 1998. Found at: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Saint-Andrew>, accessed August 8, 2021.



Sometimes we are overlooked because someone else takes credit for what we have done. Has that ever happened to you? I remember once in high school I said a little something funny under my breath. No one except my best friend heard me. Then, about five minutes later, my friend without crediting me for being the originator of the humor, made the same funny reference. Everyone laughed. In a way, the same thing happened to Andrew. After meeting Jesus, Andrew went to his brother and said, “We have found the Messiah (that is the Christ)” (John 1:41).



Then much later, Jesus asked Peter “Who do you say I am?” and Peter responded, “You are the Christ” (Matthew 16:16). Because of Peter’s response, Jesus blessed Peter. Jesus proceeded to congratulate Peter for this declaration specifically because it was “told to him by God and not man”. Andrew, who we assume was

present, must have choked on his tongue. Did Andrew think, “Wait a minute! I told him that!”? Then the icing on the cake for Andrew must have been when Jesus declared that due to Peter’s confession, Jesus will build the church upon the Peter’s leadership (Matthew 16:18). Thus, according to church tradition, Jesus anointed Peter the first bishop of Rome, or the first Pope. Peter took all the credit for the first declaration that Jesus was the Christ.

Yet, the story does not end there. In the end, the apostle Andrew received due credit. The Eastern Orthodox Church⁴ in its rivalry with the Western Latin church in Rome needed an apostolic patriarch to legitimate its holy see in Constantinople.⁵



⁴ Also known as the Byzantine church founded in Constantinople (now Istanbul).

⁵ Jimmy Akin, “St. Andrew the Apostle: Eleven Things to Know and Share”, National Catholic Register, November 27, 2013. Found at: https://www.ncregister.com/blog/st-andrew-the-apostle-11-things-to-know-and-share?gclid=CjwKCAjwgb6IBhAREiwAgMYKRqEYeLiOrhpogIzYwK1DEPRS0Sd1EdmpXKJoSUqpW7vDv4kDgVolGxoCBB8QAvD_BwE, accessed August 8, 2021.

Andrew is their patron saint for two reasons. One, while the New Testament does not record much of Andrew's personal ministry activity as a disciple nor as a missionary apostle, he was a prominent evangelist to the east and helped found the church in what is known as the Baltic region and even as far as present-day Russia where the Eastern Orthodox Church is prominent.⁶ As I mentioned already, John's gospel recorded Andrew as the 'first called', *before Peter*.



Hence, Andrew is known in Greek as *Protokletos* or 'First Called'.⁷ Because Andrew was first called, and Peter was second, the Orthodox Church in Constantinople could claim as much, if not more, legitimacy as the Western Latin Church in Rome.

All but two of the Apostles were martyred. Sadly, Andrew, one of the ten, was killed for proclaiming the Christian faith. In a region known as Achaea in

⁶ Ryan Nelson, "Who Was Andrew the Apostle? The Beginner's Guide", *Overview Bible*, 2019. Found at: <https://overviewbible.com/andrew-the-apostle/>, accessed August 8, 2021.

⁷ Also sometimes written in Greek as *Protoklete*.

Ryan Nelson, "Who Was Andrew the Apostle? The Beginner's Guide", *Overview Bible*, 2019. Found at: <https://overviewbible.com/andrew-the-apostle/>, accessed August 8, 2021.

Greece, Andrew was executed. Church tradition records Andrew was to be crucified on a cross like Jesus.



In humility, Andrew requested that the cross not be similar to one on which Jesus died. Instead, the cross was fashioned in the form of an 'X'.



That is why the Scottish flag includes an 'X', called Saint Andrew's Cross.⁸ Today, Andrew is the patron saint of Scotland and many other countries. So, in the end, credit was given where credit is due.

Friends, just about all of you gathered here have sacrificed your time, talents, and treasure to Centre Church. I want to apologize to any of you and all of

⁸ Philip Sellew, "Andrew" in *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, eds. Bruce Metzger and Michael Coogan, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 27

you if I have not thanked you and appreciated you for all of your efforts on behalf of the church.



I have learned from Andrew that in the end, sacrifice and humility will be appreciated and honored by those who follow you, and most importantly, by God who accompanies you.

This was the Word of God. And it was delivered to the People of God. And the People of God responded, "Amen!"