

*Will you come and follow me.* A sermon preached on March 5, 2017 at St. Giles Presbyterian Church Prince George, BC by Rev. Herb Hilder.

Lessons: I CORINTHIANS 1:26-31  
JOHN 1:35-42

One of the most often watched genres of television today is the reality show.

Purported real life dramas that do not cover up or air brush flaws,

Warts and all are played out.

Peoples' personalities and interpersonal relations or lack thereof are there for all to see.

The reality show has never been one of my favoured viewing experiences – parish ministry is often all too real!!

I still prefer a good mystery

Be that what it may, I want us this morning to begin to enter into a reality drama that remains competitive in excitement, twists and turns, personality quirks and failures to communicate

The premise of this drama rests on following parameters.

- ✓ 12 people have to be chosen from hundreds of applicants.
- ✓ The people chosen are to be ordinary folk
- ✓ Choice will not be exclusively limited to the brightest and best.

- ✓ If they have a career – it is not one that brights with it high social status and lots of worldly power.

Just to make it interesting, the smartest of this very ordinary group will become discouraged and sell out their leader in the hopes of forcing the leader into action.

Above all, there must be no cover up of mood swings, reactions, inaction of the group  
The drama must make us see in it – thngs and times that make us say – this is just like me  
I know what is going through so and so's head – for I have been there!

Perhaps as a musical introduction, as the opening credits are rolling, there is a piano, guitar and even bhordan playing the tune which was our opening hymn.

Perhaps a close harmony choir is softly singing the opening lyrics of

*Will you come and follow me, if I but call your name  
Will you go where you don't' know and never be the same.*

*Will you let your love be shown,*

*Will you let my name be known,*

*Will you let my life be grown in you and you in me.*

My home church of St. Andrew's, Welland was not a perfect church,  
But as I have prayed about,

Thought about,

Ruminated about this Lenten series, I realize even more of how fortunate I was that many of my Sunday School teachers loved the narrative stories of the Bible – the people stories.

Colouring pages, drama vignettes, flannel boards, film strips, open ended questions about Bible personalities were the grist of Sunday school teaching.

Rousing and often off key, but exuberant singing of *I will make you fishers of men* – with actions – always necessary for active little boys!

This added so much at an impressionable age!

Stories of Jesus around choosing and calling his disciples – the 12 – though Jesus' followers numbered in the hundreds by the time of his death – are great stories.

They really are a Biblical reality drama.

Why? The disciples are so like us in many ways

They had fears, doubts, fits of pique, worry, anxiety, being in self, does not work well in groups.

Further the One who chose them, continues to choose us .

The question of John Bell's hymn: *Will you come and follow me, if I but call your name*

Is Jesus' current question to every person of every age.

The question of verse 38 in John 1 **What are you looking for?**

Is a question that still demands an answer.

Like all questions, this one starts a conversation and invites participation.

Questions invite people to get involved don't they?

Interesting point,

Never does Jesus preach a sermon when that is not needed.

Nor does he tell people what they need

Or give them rules to live by

Jesus is forever asking questions. Here-- **What are you looking for?**

It is a fundamental question that applies to all of us

I wonder How many times have we mistakenly assumed we know what people are looking for.

I wonder how many times have we assumed they are looking for whatever we are looking for.

Jesus does not make such assumptions

Instead he asks **What are you looking for?**

Then after Andrew and his companion ask Jesus where he is staying, Jesus says **come and see**

Again, no sermon

Not much of an answer – just an invitation

*Touch point for us* – our work, our 'job' as

God's people is to invite people to 'come and see'

We do not invite to convert, or to join or to confess

No, our *primary goal as followers of Jesus is to invite them to 'come and see'*

The first disciple chosen by Jesus is a fisherman named Andrew

The lesson Marie read from God's gospel describes what happened.

We do not know what initially drew Andrew to seek out this wild prophet of the wilderness preaching repentance.

I wonder whether it was simply a realization of his own sense of incompleteness  
Andrew's sense of longing for God – someone bigger and greater than he, Andrew, could ever be himself.

John the Baptist has from the get go clearly told his followers that he is NOT God's Anointed One.

So the behavior of Andrew and his friend is not unexpected.

When John says as Jesus walks by

**Look, here is the Lamb of God,(vs.36)**

You have to wonder though what is it beyond John's declaration that makes Andrew pick up and follow Jesus.

And then run to tell his brother Simon Peter –come and see – I am going to bring you to this man they call Jesus.

For he is the One John has spoken about.

The end result by verse 42 – now there are two disciples of Jesus – brothers – Andrew and Simon Peter, who Jesus has named Cephas (Peter)

Step back for a few minutes to consider Andrew – the first recorded follower of Jesus. What were his gifts, skills, personality traits that made him not only a good disciple, but also someone we would wish to have as a mentor in our own faith life – following Jesus?

Andrew's name only appears in the New Testament 9 times and most of these references mention him in passing.

That is, apart from the places where all 12 disciples are listed, *Andrew lived his life in the shadow of his better known brother, Simon Peter.*

Does this mean that to follow Jesus we can be laid back and drift through life when it comes to following Jesus?

Not at all – Andrew is the first home missionary – he brings brother Simon to come and see Jesus. Andrew is also the first foreign missionary – he and Philip introduce some Greeks to Jesus (John 12:20-22).

*To be an Andrew like disciple or follower of Jesus means that if called by Jesus to do and be so,*

*We are willing to be a supporting actor in the drama.*

We do not have to be the centre

Further, we are not resentful or jealous when others have more public presence in following Jesus than we do.

There is no sense with Andrew that he ever lamented not being front and centre.

There is no “I could have been great, I could have been a contender.”

There is no sense of bitterness over lost opportunities.

*Who does the work required is secondary to the necessity of the work being done.*

I wish I had learned that skill and personality trait of Andrew earlier than I did.

It does take a special person to be an Andrew type.

I remember years ago, people visiting the smaller of the two churches I served in New Brunswick, questioning me before the service, did I know their minister.

I did – he had been a classmate.

So, I knew from which church they had come and it was a large building, well appointed and considerably more people on a Sunday morning worship service than the faithful 20 where I was serving.

After the service these same visitors asked how long I had been ministering where I was? 9 years .

They did not reply, but the looks on their faces conveyed – so why are you still here. What have you done wrong that you can't get out!!!

Don't you want to do better than this

Your classmate is in a big church – why aren't you?

That conversation stayed with me and I dwelt upon it longer than I ought at the time.

It caused unnecessary and very unholy thoughts about my classmate, and the congregations I served for too long.

By God's grace, talking my feelings through with my own mentors in ministry,

Scripture study – including the calling of the disciples and Jesus' teachings

Reading about the lives of the faithful of the recent and long past,

I began to realize that only a few of those whom Jesus calls will work out their calling in the limelight – to do that well and faithfully is a skill set that is given to fewer than realize it.

You know the story about the husband and wife driving home from church.

Husband who has just preached a sermon that has brought many accolades – says to his wife – do you know how many great preachers there are dear.

His wife, as all wives seem to have to do more often than not – introduce some reality – “one less than you think there is dear!!

What I had bought into in the conversation with the visitors that morning was the world's definition of success in ministry – big church, big congregation, high profile=success.

Serving God and his people is ministry  
Being faithful to God, trusting in Him, obeying him is what following Jesus is all about.

Lifting up Jesus so that all may be drawn to him is what following Jesus is all about.

And unless perspective is retained – that is we are chosen because God first chose us--sometimes bigness and flash get in the way of doing precisely that.

If God calls and chooses you or me to serve in a less high profile, public way (as defined by the world), it is not God's punishment.

Rather, it is an acknowledgement that He knows you better than you may know yourself.

Andrew was someone who knew that in God's hands, nothing is insignificant. *-that is an important Andrew like personality trait it remains important to cultivate.*

Do you remember who brought the little boy with the five loaves and two fish to Jesus when there was a panic about how to feed 5,000 people – Andrew.!

Think for a moment on your own story – and everyone's story is important and unique.

Whom do you credit with first inviting you to go to church

Or sharing through their actions, the real truth of God's love for you?

High powered, Biblically sound preacher?

Or a Sunday School teacher who you can see in your mind, but may not remember their name?

A family member ?

Someone of faith you met by chance – who made time for you and listened to you in a non-judgemental way?

Someone through whom the love and grace and mercy of God shone through.

I suspect further that these people did not try to convert you, lecture you, inundate you with Bible texts.

Rather, they invited you to do as Jesus did with Andrew and Andrew in turn did with his brother, "come and see" this Jesus.

For Andrew, then no one was insignificant or of little importance,

No one was beyond the love of God in Jesus.

*Will you come and follow me, if I but call your name*

*Will you go where you don't' know and never be the same.*

*Will you let your love be shown,*

*Will you let my name be known,*

*Will you let my life be grown in you and you in me.*

That remains the invitation for each of us here

- ✓ To continue faithfully and obediently in our following of Jesus
- ✓ To “come and see” if we have not already done so, who is this Jesus

Amen, let us pray – Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession.