

## Andrew and the Beginning of Advent - “Come and See”

John 1:35-46

When I was a child, we didn’t know about “Advent” – it was not a Season that was part of our church or family culture, at least not within the bubble of my experience. What we **did** have was the paper chain that – beginning December 1 – would count down the days to Christmas. Every morning, we would tear off one link of the chain, meaning one more day was done. For us little boys, my brother and me, that’s all we needed to know. Sure, there were other markers of the season: the Charlie Brown Special on TV, the caroling night with the church, the annual Sears catalog with enlarged toy section. But the countdown of days was what mattered. “How many days til Christmas, Mom?!” “Look at the chain and count the links. How many days are left?”

Christians in different cultures, and at different times in history, have also found ways to mark off the season. The Advent Candles – usually in a wreath or circle – indicate the theme of each Sunday of the season before Christmas. Advent Calendars mark off the days with little gifts or candies hidden behind the door of each day’s compartment.

Some Christian traditions celebrate “Saint’s Days”, and perhaps some of you come from those backgrounds. In those traditions, you would know where you were in the Advent season by which Saint was being remembered on any given day. Saint Nicolas, for example, is only December 6<sup>th</sup>, and you would know that you still have a long way to go!

The Brethren in Christ have historically not paid much attention to “Saints”, instead emphasizing (as part of the radical Protestant Reformation) that **all** Christians are “saints”, and rejecting the more superstitious and even heretical practices that developed during the Middle Ages. But we know some of these Saints’ names – the more popular ones, anyway – and we may remember some of the stories we’ve heard over the years. And, it is not wrong to honor and remember the faithful Christians of past ages.

For this year’s Advent season, Pastor Keith chose a theme that marks each passing Sunday with the remembrance of one of these Saints. Some of them you will know... and some will be new to you. But we hope that in hearing their stories, and reflecting on their messages, you will be encouraged to make your Advent an especially meaningful one, marked not with just the passing of days, or the noise of the culture around you, but with spiritual truth and growth.

Today, we start with Saint Andrew. One of the ways that the start of Advent is “calculated” is the rule: “The Sunday closest to St. Andrew’s Day [*saint day November 30*] is the First Sunday of Advent.”

There are many things we can talk about in regards to Andrew, but for today, let’s look just at this one passage: **John 1:35-46**. [*Side note: In the Christian East, Advent runs six weeks instead of four, and begins on Saint Philip’s Day. So, East or West, this passage has you covered!*]

What’s happening here? John – the gospel writer – is introducing us to the person he will spend the rest of his book telling us about. He does this by giving three little snapshots of people encountering Jesus for the first time: John the Baptist, Andrew (and Peter), and Philip (with Nathaniel). Pay attention to how each one highlights a different aspect, a different facet, of who Jesus is:

**John:** “the Lamb of God” (“who takes away the sin of the world”, he says earlier in a few verses just before our passage today.)

**John’s disciples:** “Rabbi” (which means “teacher”)

**Andrew:** “the Messiah”

**Philip:** “the one of whom Moses and the prophets wrote” and also “Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph”

**Nathaniel** (easily impressed): “Son of God! King of Israel!”

Notice also how often the idea of “seeing” – as in “finding out” or “understanding” – is used:

**John:** “Behold!” (“Look! Right there!”)

**Jesus** (when he notices the disciples following): “What are you looking for?”

**Jesus** (when asked where he was staying): “Come and see”

**Philip** (when he tells Nathaniel): “Come and see”

**Jesus** (when Nathaniel gushes): “you will see greater things”

This is the invitation, then, to you and your families as we begin our Advent season. One is coming, has come, will come, who is Teacher, and Lamb, and Anointed, and Promised, and King. We don’t always believe it, we certainly don’t always understand it. But Andrew (and John, and Philip) stand at the beginning of this sacred time and say, “Look! We have found him! Come and see!”