

St Nicholas Parish Church, Prestwick

The Thought for the Week

Sunday 29th November 2020

What do folk around the world think of when they hear the word “Scotland”?

This little piece of real estate, perched way up on the western corner of Europe, this land that brought the world the Enlightenment, tartan, Robert Burns, Sir Walter Scott, penicillin, television, ships that sailed the oceans, modern engineering, the philosophy of economics, Susan Boyle, the square sausage, the plain loaf and Irn Bru – the list is endless! You can name lots of others, I know!

But how many would mention our Patron Saint? The saint we share with Greece and Russia.

St Andrew – and his day is, of course, 30th November.

Andrew was Jesus’ first follower.

Andrew was Jesus’ first evangelist

Andrew was Jesus’ first missionary.

Three times we meet him in the Gospel story and on all three occasions, Andrew is introducing others to Jesus.

First of all, it was his own brother, Simon Peter.

Andrew’s first act was to go and get his own brother and introduce him to Jesus.

Of that act, Archbishop William Temple, a former Archbishop of Canterbury wrote,

“Perhaps it is as great a service to the Church as ever any human ever did.”

It was Andrew who later on brought to Jesus the boy with the five loaves and two fish, and, as a result, Jesus was able to multiply the picnic lunch and feed the 5,000.

And finally, it is Andrew who brings to Jesus a group of Greeks who had been enquiring about him and they wanted to meet Jesus and speak to Him.

Andrew’s greatest joy was sharing the good news of Christ and bringing others into His presence.

He doesn’t have a big name like Peter and James and John and Paul.

We don’t know anything else about him except this one thing – over and over again, He introduced people to Jesus.

The fisherman from Galilee became the one who caught others for the Gospel.

And when that happened, on each occasion God did some amazing things.

Andrew, the disciple who was quite content to play second fiddle, the one who was fulfilled in bringing others to his Lord.

And it is our task, our remit, our vocation, as ministers, as elders, as members to so lead people to Christ, for if we don't do it, then nobody else will.

C. S. Lewis called it "the quiet infection".

People are always asking me, "Fraser, how can I speak to someone about my faith, about Jesus? I feel so ill prepared, inadequate, not up to it. I get tongue tied and awkward when I am asked about my faith."

Don't feel ashamed when you feel like that. We Scots have a natural reserve and reticence when it comes to talk about the deeper things in life.

Maya Angelou, the brilliant American writer, once said, "People will forget what you say; they will forget what you do; but they will never forget how you made them feel."

That is the secret of evangelism.

Our faith is more often caught than taught.

You know what draws folk to Christ and to His Church, friends?

When we meet someone in whose life Christ has touched us. It's as simple as that – ordinary folk in whose lives we see and hear something of the divine.

That is why I am where I am today – it was seeing Christ in my dear mother as she brought up the four of her family and ensuring that we had the best that she and Dad could offer us, and making sure that we had indeed a Christian upbringing within the fellowship of the Church ; it was seeing Christ in the Minister who graced the pulpit of my home Church in Johnstone Sunday by Sunday for 23 years and when you had been in his company, you felt as if he had come from heaven itself; it was encountering Jesus in ordinary men and women in that congregation who were Elders, Sunday School teachers, faithful members – Charlie Scott, the Headmaster of the local High School, who won the MC during the First World War, and was Superintendent of the Sunday School; Miss Mary Torrance who taught in the Junior Sunday School; Miss Isobel McNeillie, Headteacher of Craigholme School for Girls on Glasgow's southside, and the lead contralto in the Choir; Mr John MacKenzie, one of the senior Elders. They are all gone now, but their memories are fragrant still.

I saw people I wanted to be like.

Madeleine L'Engle once wrote, "We do not draw people to Christ by loudly discrediting them and telling them how wrong they are and how right we are, but by showing a light that is so lovely that they want with all their hearts to know the source of it."

Today we need Andrews more than ever. Folk who are going to win others for Jesus and His Church by their integrity, their love, their honour.

On that day long ago, Jesus simply said to Andrew, the fisherman, "Come and see"

And for the next three years, he followed Jesus.

There is the story that when Jesus ascended to heaven after His mission on earth was accomplished, the angels said, "Lord, did you accomplish your task?"

"Yes, all is finished," the Lord replied.

"We have a second question" said the angels, "has the whole world heard of you?"

"No," said Jesus

The angels then asked, "Then what is your plan?"

Jesus answered, "I have left twelve men and some other followers to carry the message to the whole world."

The angels looked quizzically at him and asked, "So, what is your plan B?"

Friends, there is no Plan B.

Jesus desires to reach the world through ordinary folk like Andrew, like you and me.

The Reverend Fraser R Aitken

Locum Minister