

Sermon – John 1:29-42
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“If You See Something, Say Something”

Sisters and brothers in Christ, grace be unto you and peace in the name God the Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

1. Over the past few days, I’ve had the opportunity to do one of my favorite things, which is to watch my kids do some of their favorite things. Our kids have spent the last few days playing sports and making music, not always perfectly but certainly with joy. I’ve attended a band concert, a basketball game, and a handful of hockey games. One of the things I love most about watching these moments is that they keep me in the moment. There’s no big screen offering instant replay, no multiple camera angles. If you see it or hear it - this slap shot, that high note – you see it or hear it. And if you don’t, you’ve missed it. The moment is unrepeatable. Sure, someone somewhere may have captured some footage on an iPad, but it’s not quite the same as seeing it live. By the same token, you can always watch or listen to someone else do the same thing another time, but it’s not the same. Watching basketball is fun, but it’s not the same thing as watching people I love play basketball. And while I love listening to my kid and his peers play their way through “Mary Had a Little Lamb,” I don’t really have a need to track down recordings of other elementary school band concerts. All of which is to say, there are moments in life that you don’t want to miss. Seeing isn’t just believing; seeing is being part of the moment; seeing catches you up into community. In the pews or the bleachers, it’s a time to put down the phone and focus your attention on the people in front of you and what they’re about to do. It just may be so exciting you invite someone else to join you, too.

2. Our reading from John today is a festival of sight, of making sure the moment isn't missed, either for oneself or for others one holds dear. John the Baptist had recently seen the most remarkable thing down at the Jordan. Jesus, having gone under the waters, parts them as he breaks back through to sunlight. At that moment, the Holy Spirit descends upon Jesus and remains there. This was all John needed to see to know that Jesus was God's Son, the One who was before even though he came after

3. The next time the Baptist saw Jesus, he points him out for all to see. "Here," John announces. Here he comes! That's him! John does not, however, announce him as the Son of God, but as the Lamb. Indeed, as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Jesus, the Lamb of God? Those with ears to hear would have been instantly awash in allusion. They are drawn back to the far shore of other waters once parted, when their ancestors had been redeemed from bondage in Egypt – saved when the angel had seen the blood of the Passover Lamb upon their doorposts and lintels. The lamb's blood had saved them once before, and the Passover still marks the center of their faith, for their had they been moved from death to life. And perhaps their minds wander back further, to a young boy named Isaac and his sorrowing father, Abraham, on their way to make sacrifice. Where, the boy wondered, is the lamb we shall offer? To which Abraham answered, hoping against hope that it would be true: God will provide the lamb for the offering. Or maybe their thoughts travel to the time of exile, when God through the prophet Isaiah promised the coming of the Servant who would suffer for his people, a lamb led to the slaughter for the sake of sheep gone astray. And under it all was the constant beat of the sacrificial system, punctuated on the Day of Atonement, as year after year blood was shed for the sake of the people. The lamb who saves from slavery and death; the lamb provided by God as an offering to God; the Servant come to suffer for the sake of his sheep; the sacrifice not for

one people at one time, but who takes away the sin of all people in all times? This, this One, this Lamb is worth seeing. You don't want to miss out!

4. That's certainly how Andrew felt, this one-time disciple of John who turns now to follow Jesus. His curiosity piqued, Jesus now invites him to "Come and see." Having seen, he goes and tells. He can see that this Son, this Lamb of God, is the Messiah, the One come now to save his people. Not only does he not want to miss this, he is moved to make sure that those close to him don't, either. He goes and finds his brother, Simon. Simon, this headstrong, waffling fisherman who is now named Peter, the rock upon whom the Church shall be built, against which the gates of hell itself shall not prevail. As for Andrew? Poor Andrew, but for a few future cameos, this is about it for him. Among Jesus' top three disciples, Andrew ranks fourth. And yet without him, Simon never meets Jesus. Without Andrew's seeing and believing, Andrew's going and telling, Andrew's "We've found the Messiah and you do *not* want to miss this," it would have all been different. Maybe not in the grand scheme of things. God, after all, will always find a way. But it sure would have been different for Simon, who would have kept on plying Galilee's waters for fish, not people.

5. Each time this text appears in the lectionary, I wonder about the Andrews of the world, those who may not occupy center stage in the story but without whom we would not know Jesus at all or at least not so well. I wonder who has been an Andrew for you. Who, knowing they'd found the Lamb of God, made sure you found him, too? Perhaps your parents, bringing you to the waters of the baptismal flood. Or a grandparent who read Bible stories to you as you bounced on the knee. Or a classmate or colleague who pointed to Christ and helped you to see him, to know him. In addition to my parents, Andrew always reminds of my big brother, Chris, who helped keep me keep faith in Christ during my teenage years. And now I'm the senior pastor of Grace Lutheran Church, while he's faded into obscurity as a successful

- biostatistician. Okay, he's no more obscure than me, but whatever I am is thanks in no small part to him. Who has been an Andrew to you? And for whom are you called to be an Andrew? To announce Christ and point to him, and then let Christ do his thing?
6. Today should have been the 94th birthday of another Andrew who helped, who still helps, many to open their eyes and behold the Lamb. This Andrew is the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who spent his life, whose life was spent, pointing people to Jesus and his reign that they – and we – would open our lives to the Lamb. Dr. King believed, knew, that this Jesus coming to us was the One in whom everything changes, for the world and for us: “By opening our lives to God in Christ,” King preached, “we become new creatures. This experience, which Jesus spoke of as new birth, is essential if we are to be transformed nonconformists . . . Only through an inner spiritual transformation do we gain the strength to fight vigorously the evils of the world in a humble and loving spirit.” Dr. King continues to point us to Christ, even as he has attained the rest in Christ for which we still wait. It is Christ the Lamb who saves us from sin, both the sin within us that would pull us toward death and the sin of others from which we need liberation in this life.
 7. John pointed to Jesus, as did Andrew and Martin. Behold, they call out, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Did you hear that? Do you see him? He has come to take away our sin. He builds his church on a strong foundation to carry out this ministry for your sake. So, on the off chance you weren't paying attention earlier, you sinners; or if you've managed to commit more since in the last 36 minutes; or in case you don't think it applies to you, because your sin is so great; or because you're a bit smug and you're not really sure you are a sinner; or because you're not sure what you think about all this, let's do it again: Look! Behold! Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. So, sinner, standing as a fellow sinner on the strong foundation of Peter, with Andrew and Martin and all the saints as

witnesses, I say now to you: In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, was given to die for us and, for his sake, God forgives you all your sins. By the authority of Christ, I declare to you the entire forgiveness of all of your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the +Son, and of the Holy Spirit. *It's gone!* Behold the Lamb of God once slain for you, whose reign now knows neither border nor end. Look to him and live. What a thing to see! What a thing to say. What a thing to share. Amen.

And now may that peace that passes all understanding keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus, this day and forever. Amen.