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John 12:20-36  
"Matchmaker"

Jesus's disciple, Andrew, in the Gospel according to John is a matchmaker. After discerning this, I went online and saw that matchmaking pertained primarily to matching a potentially intimate person another potentially intimate person. A matchmaking online site that I looked at randomly, shares testimonials.

One person says, "I am in the venture capital business and am used to doing research on competitive companies within an industry. Choosing a wife-headhunter was very important for me and I did quite a bit of research. Even though Matchmaker, Inc. [fictitious name] is not in my city, I thought their business model generated the best, high quality 'deal flow,' and now I can attest that Matchmaker, Inc. proved me right. Barbie is an unusually talented matchmaker. As the Master Card advertisement says - "Matchmaker, Inc. fees: several thousand dollars. Finding an amazing partner: Priceless."

I am not sure what business model they use but Barbie seems like a good matchmaker. I am positive that Andrew in the Bible did not have a business model but he was an excellent matchmaker for Jesus and for the sake of the Gospel. The Gospel message would be much less without him.

The Gospel story today is a case in point. The text reads, "Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, 'Sir, we wish to see Jesus.' Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus."

Why didn't Philip go straight to Jesus? Instead, he goes to Andrew and the two go to Jesus. Andrew is the go-to guy. When connections need to be made, Andrew makes them. That seems to be his role in the gospel as this sermon will demonstrate. He is thoughtful, bold, caring and efficient.

In the story, he sees the value of outsiders like the Greeks going to Jesus who was communicating the gospel primarily to his own people, the Jews. Jewish religious consciousness of the day was primarily directed towards their own people. There were exceptions then as there are today.

Andrew and Philip speak to Jesus and Jesus responds with a new teaching. The pinnacle of his response is the sentence, "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."

This is very significant because it communicates the universality of the gospel. Jesus' message is *not* exclusively for his own people. It is for every human being on the planet. No one is left out. Jesus' death on the cross is the sign and symbol of this amazing message. Humanity will know Jesus in their brokenness and suffering. The good news of Jesus is found on rough roads and easy street; in hospitals and clinics; in slums of the so-called developing world and hills and suburbs of the so-called developed world. It is a message to every race, ethnic group, gender and sexual orientation.

It is an amazing message and it came because Andrew went to Jesus to speak to him about the Greeks. Matchmaking is an important ministry. We're not sure what will happen when connections are made. With Jesus in the picture, we can trust that good things will happen.

In the next Andrew story, Jesus is engaged in ministry near the Sea of Galilee and thousands gather around him. Jesus acknowledges the large crowd and wants them fed.

“Jesus said to Philip, ‘Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?’ He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. Philip answered him, ‘Six months’ wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little.’” (John 6:5b-7)

Guess who comes to the rescue? Yes, Andrew. He says, ““There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?”

Andrew didn't have a business plan but this is a good one. He presents Jesus with something practical – a boy with bread and fish, absurd but practical – and throws out a challenge, “But what are they among so many people?” He knows that Jesus will make something of it. Jesus performs a miracle.

The text says he multiplied the bread and fish and all were fed. Some scholars say that he shared the little he had and because he shared everybody shared the little they had, and everyone was fed. Whatever version we choose we are assured that when connections with Jesus are made for whatever reason amazing things happen.

Feeding the thousands easily translates into feeding the hungry of the world. The Alternative Christmas Fare here at Redwoods makes these connections. We connect members to worthy programs around the country and world and people are fed or are provided with means to feed themselves. Debbie is our Andrew. Every person at a ministry table is an Andrew.

The final story is the one told last week and the impetus for me to continue Andrew's story this week. Originally, I named this sermon "Andrew Revisited" or "Andrew Continued." Last week, we saw Andrew in the first chapter of John's gospel bringing his brother Simon, later called Peter, to meet Jesus for the first time. Andrew spends the day with Jesus; he is totally impressed and runs to tell Peter. In this sense, Andrew is the first evangelist. The Jesus/Peter connection is made and the rest is history. Peter becomes one of Jesus' closest disciples.

None of the above would have happened without Andrew the matchmaker and connector. There's a challenge here for ministry. Some of us are better than others in bringing people to people. Melissa is good at that. She invited me to a few Corte Madera Chamber mixers, introduced me to a number of people, and left me to it just as Andrew did with Jesus.

Matchmakers are not responsible for the outcomes. You bring people to our worship or to any of our programs and the Holy Spirit does the rest. You connect one family member to another family member and the Holy Spirit goes to work (sometimes with a mediator); you introduce two people to each other and the Holy Spirit nurtures the relationship; you visit a therapist or financial counselor with Jesus in the picture and good things happen. I introduced two entrepreneurs to each other at a church potluck dinner in a private home in Calistoga and a great business partnership began and succeeded.

Newly elected officers will be ordained and installed today. One can say that our elected leaders are great connectors in the church. They connect us in caring ways (deacons) and they connect us to people and programs (ruling elders). All of us make multiple connections beyond the walls of the church.

If you hear persons speaking about spirituality or the church, you might, in the spirit of Andrew, mention that you have a great match for them. Amen.