

“Mosaic Relationships: A Case Study”

Last week, Pastor John painted a wonderful picture of the mosaic of missions. The mosaic I want us to look at today is the kingdom of God.

It is a breathtaking work of art assembled intricately by the master.

But, as we stop to appreciate this incredible work, we realize that each tile is dependent on its position to the adjoining tile that makes the artistry come to life.

So it is with the Kingdom of God.

Evangelism is one of those church words that at times gets a bad name, but all it means in the simplest form is reaching out to share something you've discovered, with someone else.

Evangelism has been seen in many ways, from large crusades, to giving out tracts, to people standing on street corners preaching.

I believe the most effective way to evangelize is to share your life with another person. To draw close to another as are tiles of a mosaic. This is a mosaic relationship or it is also called relationship evangelism.

It is simply investing your time and energies into a person's life and being intentional about living your life in Christ in front of them.

Then, bringing someone in contact with the person of Jesus and introducing them to the Savior. Then, it is the Spirit's work to do the rest.

We see that example of a mosaic relationship lived out in the life of one of Jesus' disciples, Andrew.

Andrew was a Galilean fisherman. He is Simon Peter's brother and in fact most of the time is referred to that way as Peter's brother Andrew.

I had an older brother with a legacy before me as well and I found myself being introduced as Doug's brother.

Andrew is described as a man without guile or deceitfulness.

He is simple, honest and straightforward in his approach to life.

Andrew was also one of the first disciples to meet Jesus.

But after that meeting he gets pretty much lost in the gospels.

In fact, after that first encounter he is only mentioned three more times.

But on each of those three occasions, Andrew is doing the same thing. He is bringing someone to Jesus.

From the very beginning of Jesus' ministry until the week before Easter, Andrew is practicing relationship evangelism.

So I can't think of a better disciple to give us some clues about what it might mean for you and for me to develop relationships, to get close to another person and to bring someone to Jesus.

By doing this, we get to participate in adding a tile to the beauty of the mosaic of God's kingdom.

Andrew's story starts in the first chapter of John. He and one of his fishing partners, John, have been introduced to Jesus.

The text tells us what happens next:

The first thing that Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus. (John 1: 41-42)

One of the things I love most about this episode is how Andrew's action is described:

The first thing Andrew did...

When I read that, I get this sense of urgency and excitement.

It seems that after meeting Jesus, even though at that time he hardly knew who Jesus was, Andrew just couldn't wait to go find his brother so he could meet Jesus.

And that makes sense.

When I am excited about some new discovery in my life or something amazing happens, my typical response is to find someone to share that excitement. That's true for most of us.

Andrew is so excited after meeting Jesus that he can't wait to tell his brother Peter about this amazing discovery of the one whom he believes just might be the Messiah.

Peter may be without question the best known of Jesus' disciples. He is the one who is going to walk on water and the one who will be given the keys to the kingdom of heaven.

Peter is going to preach at Pentecost and bring the gospel to a Roman centurion and perform all sorts of amazing miracles.

Peter's story is all through the pages of the New Testament.

But when you think about it none of that could have ever happened if it wasn't for his relationship with his brother who introduced him to Jesus.

And that points to a first truth about mosaic relationships.

1. When we bring people to Jesus, lives are changed.

Had he never been introduced to Jesus, Peter might have gone back to his fishing business and missed out on the adventure of a lifetime.

Meeting Jesus changed his life and because Peter's life was changed millions of other lives have been changed.

I have friend I went to school with who describes the person he was before he met Jesus as a completely self-centered jerk, the sort of person you wouldn't want to be around.

His wife was ready to leave him, his relationship with his son and daughter was non-existent, his employees couldn't stand him.

He was miserable and so was everyone around him.

Then one day a co-worker decided to take a risk and asked him to come over for a meal.

That was the beginning of many hours of time spent hunting, fishing and sharing meals together.

During one of the meals, my friend made a comment about spirituality and his co-worker began to share with what it meant to have Jesus in his life.

He wasn't preaching or debating or twisting the guy's arm, just telling what Jesus did for him.

It fanned a spark of interest in my friend and that meal turned into a weekly meeting to discuss God and a few weeks later my friend accepted Jesus into his life.

It didn't happen over night, but over time his life began to change.

Today, he has a good marriage and both of his children have also become followers of Jesus.

He and his family are actively involved in serving the Lord and he tells me that he is simply having the time of his life living his life for Christ.

You see, a friend took a risk, developed a relationship, told his story and introduced my friend to Jesus and the lives of an entire family were changed.

Another tile was added to the mosaic of God's kingdom picture.

That happens every time when we, like Andrew, get excited and take the opportunity introduce someone to Jesus.

The second time we find Andrew bringing someone to Jesus comes in the midst of a familiar story.

Jesus is surrounded by a crowd of people and decides that He and the disciples should make sure that they all have something to eat.

“Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward Him, He said to Phillip, “Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?”... Philip answered him, “It would take more than half a year’s wages^[a] to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!” (John 6: 5-7)

So Andrew steps in with another introduction:

Another of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, spoke up, “Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many people?” (John 6: 8-9)

What I love here is Andrew's optimism.

Five loaves and two fishes aren't nearly enough to make a difference and it sounds as if Andrew knows that, but he's optimistic and has incredible faith in the person he follows and so he makes the introduction.

Jesus takes those five loaves and two fish and feeds 5,000 people.

And we learn a second truth about mosaic relationships.

2. When we bring people to Jesus, Jesus performs a miracle.

Sometimes we hesitate to bring someone to Jesus because we really don't have much confidence in anything happening.

That sort of hesitation often stems from a poor understanding of evangelism.

Too often we think that everything is up to us. We have to have all the answers to any question. We feel we need convincing arguments and proofs. For a person to come to Christ, we have to win the debate.

Maybe there are people in your life who you are absolutely sure will never have anything to do with Christianity.

They are too cynical, too resistant; they have answers for every argument you offer.

And you are convinced that it would take a miracle for them to come to know Jesus.

That's the point of the story, it does take a miracle. But, the miracle isn't our responsibility.

Our responsibility is to develop a relationship of trust and to commit our lives to walking with others and then to make the introduction, with hope and prayer and optimism about what Jesus can do, and then to leave the rest up to God.

Jesus said:

No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. (John 6: 44)

Changing hearts and transforming lives is the miracle that Jesus performs.

Our part is to love those around us, let them see our lives of followership to Jesus Christ, and then to tell our story and make the introduction and to pray that God would be at work drawing people to Him.

And we can make that introduction with optimism because our confidence, our optimism, is in Jesus Christ who is ready and waiting to work miracles.

Who do you know that needs a miracle in their lives?

- The person who lives with guilt and shame because they feel their past actions could never be forgiven by God.
- The person who has suffered great pain from abuse or neglect and could never imagine that God loves them at the deepest level of their existence.
- The cynic who longs for a relationship that is whole and complete, but is tired of pat answers and just wishes someone

would be straight and honest about God. Someone who cares about them and not winning a debate.

My friends, who is it that needs you to come alongside and be honest and transparent in your walk and who desperately needs you to share your life and your story of what Jesus has done for you?

This brings us to the final occasion where Andrew is bringing someone to Jesus. It takes place during the week before Jesus' crucifixion.

Jerusalem is packed full of people there to celebrate the Passover Feast and that crowd included both Greeks and Jews.

Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the Feast. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. "Sir," they said, "we would like to see Jesus." Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus. (John 12: 20-22)

What I love most about this introduction is the way the request is made.

These Greeks come to Philip and Andrew, probably because they had Greek names, and tell them: ***We would like to see Jesus.***

What an awesome request. ***“We would like to see Jesus.”***

Because you know deep down that's what everyone wants. In one way or another everyone is looking for Jesus.

Dr. Dan Labrides put it like this:

The high achievers who run out of rungs, the low achievers who run out of hope, the elderly who are running out of time and the young who are running out of alternatives: Sooner or later almost everyone looks for God.

Sooner or later almost everyone reaches the point where they would like to see Jesus.

And that brings us to a third truth about mosaic relationships.

3. When we bring people to Jesus, they find the One they are seeking.

We are surrounded by people- in the places where we live and work and go to school- by people who would love to see Jesus.

These are people who at times are desperately searching for answers to that gnawing feeling inside that they are missing something in life.

Often they may not even know what they are searching for.

A man in our Men's Fraternity shared with me that he had tried everything else and nothing worked, so now he was going to give Jesus a try.

We have heard this story from countless people in our Celebrate Recovery program.

You see the truth is, after we've tried everything else, only Jesus has what we are looking for: He provides:

“ **Meaning** and significance for our lives.

“ **Strength** to meet the challenges we face.

“ **Love and** forgiveness that satisfies the deepest longings of our hearts.

Sooner or later, whether they know it or not, everyone wants to see Jesus.

And what a great opportunity that gives to you and to me· because we know Him.

Do you know that there are enough people who don't know Jesus in just a few blocks around this church that we could spend years making introductions?

Multiply that by the people with whom we come in contact everyday and we start to understand what Jesus meant when He said that ***the fields are ripe for harvest.*** (John 4:35)

When we, like Andrew, introduce people to Jesus:

“Lives are changed

“Miracles occur

“And seekers find the One they are seeking.

Our vision is relationship evangelism- investing our lives into others and introducing people to Jesus.

Our hope is for each one of us to be a part of fulfilling that vision.

One last point about mosaic relationships.

When we bring people to Jesus, there is a celebration in heaven.

Jesus said that:

There is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God every time someone comes to know Him.

- Every time the gospel is shared with someone in prison through Next Chapter ministries.
- Every time a

- Every time a person living in shame because of poor choices experiences God's grace and healing.
 - Maybe they had an abortion or an affair or our living an alternative lifestyle. It doesn't make a difference, we have all made poor choices. But, every time someone living in bondage hears of God's love and experiences his forgiveness, Heaven celebrates.
- Every time someone living in the darkness of depression and can't find a reason to hope or live finds the hope that can only be found in Jesus, heaven erupts.
- Every time we invest in children and they ask Jesus to come into their hearts and be their forever friend Heaven throws a party.

And when we bring people to Jesus we get to be a part of that celebration.

But that doesn't happen unless you open yourselves to close, authentic and transparent relationships with those who need Jesus.

This world doesn't need another holier than thou Christian telling them what they are doing wrong. What they need is someone who genuinely cares for them, who is serving them and speaking the truth in love into their lives.

They need someone to live a life of true discipleship. They need someone who is living a Christ like life next to them to show them the difference that Jesus makes in a person's life.

About this time last year a couple in our church shared with me that they had a neighbor whom they had been praying for and whom they wanted to bring to church so that he might meet Jesus.

On Christmas Eve he accepted their invitation and came to worship with them.

Somewhere in the midst of that service God began to work on his heart and in the months to come he began spending considerable time with this family and attended our weekend worship services and discovered more and more about what it means to follow Jesus.

He attended their small group and accepted Jesus as his Lord and Savior.

And here's the best part. He is now investing his life into a person and this Christmas, **he** will be praying for his unchurched friend and plans on bringing that friend to our Christmas Eve service so that he might have a chance to meet Jesus like he did.

That story could be repeated by thousands across this community.

Every Christmas season we are given this wonderful opportunity to practice contagious evangelism.

I know a number of folks from our church that invite un-churched friends to come every Christmas and Easter to our musicals and then have dinner together afterwards.

These are just examples of disciples today doing exactly what Andrew did; they are bringing people to Jesus.

And as we head into this year's Christmas season we want to invite you to do the same.

In this time of economic uncertainty for so many and when peace on earth is our constant prayer, I can't think of a better gift than to bring someone to Jesus.

As we close let me challenge you to think of the people in your life that God might be calling you to invest your life into and to bring to Him this year.

Would you commit to spending time over the coming weeks, praying for them and for the opportunity to introduce them to Jesus?

Can you imagine the party the angels will throw if each one of us introduced someone to Jesus this Christmas season?

Would you join us and take the risk of developing kingdom relationships and to be like Andrew so that we might join together in all the celebration of heaven as God completes his beautiful mosaic.