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When John the Baptist was “preparing the way of the Lord” as “the voice of one that crieth in the wilderness” (Isaiah 40.3), a time came when, as Jesus approached him one day for baptism, John cried out, “Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1.29). John then testified to his having recognised the true identity of Jesus, as being no less than the Son of God Himself, when he “saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove” and abiding upon Him (1.32-34). The following day, he again identified Jesus, “Behold the Lamb of God” (v 36).

Thus in this Gospel, alone among the other Gospels, the Holy Spirit explains, through the Gospel writer John, that Jesus’ first followers “came on board” already possessing some limited understanding as to who He really was – the long-promised, long-expected Messiah, the Christ, the Anointed One, being, in old Simeon’s words, God’s “salvation ... prepared before the face of all people; to be a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel” (Luke 2.30-32).

Little wonder therefore that two of the Baptist’s disciples, Andrew and probably John himself (who never identifies himself in “his” Gospel, (v 40)), turned their attentions away from John the Baptist and “followed Jesus” (v 37): indeed, that is what the Baptist expected and wanted them to do – for it showed him that he had succeeded, with these two at least, in his “preparing the way of the Lord”. After a brief conversation we read that “they came and saw where he (Jesus) dwelt, and abode with him that day: for it was about the tenth hour” (that is, because John uses Roman time with the day starting at midnight, about ten in the morning, (v 39)). Then Andrew went off to find his own brother, Simon - “We have found the Messiah ... the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus” (vv. 41-42a).

Before us here therefore is an account of simple deeds by ordinary young men, who were keen to discover, and then live by, God’s revealed Truth. Jesus was pointed out to them; they began to follow Him; they spent time with Him; they told others about Him, and brought others to Him. All in all, we have been given here a first-class summary of discipleship and witnessing!

Jesus, as the Lamb of God, duly “took away the sin of the world”. In shedding His own sinless, innocent blood at Golgotha, He took the punishment and suffered the banishment from God (“My God, my God,

why hast thou forsaken me?" Matthew 27.46 / Psalm 22.1) which the rest of us, being members of fallen, sinful humanity, fully deserve; for we are incapable by our own efforts of getting back into peace and fellowship with Almighty God. Jesus, the sacrificial Lamb, has given His life for us, and by simple faith in His Person and in this, His extraordinary deed of love, we are now "justified by faith", having "peace with God thorough our Lord Jesus Christ ... God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us ... There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus ..." (from Romans 5.1,8 / 8.1 / plus egs., John 3.18 / 5.24 / 20.31; and Romans 3.21-26 / 6.23 / 10.9-13 / ...).

Here is the glorious Gospel of grace, freely given to us by God the Father, and achieved for us at such appalling cost by His Son Jesus Christ, "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world". He calls all to come to Him (eg., Matthew 11.28-30), and that coming occurs, in response to the "drawing of the Father" (John 6.44), by our simple prayer of acceptance of Jesus' Person and Lordship over our lives, and our simple surrender of obedience to His will and His ways.

What continues to surprise is that comparatively so few are keen to join Andrew and his companion in following Jesus, in spending time with Him learning Who He is, what He is all about, and what our discipleship of Him in these wild days really involves. How true are those words of Jesus, "for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction ... strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (from Matthew 7.13-14).

But that is where we come in! Just as others have played their part, perhaps without their realising it, in bringing each of us to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, so too we now carry that same privilege and responsibility in that same precious task. Please God, may your Christian name or mine be able to sit appropriately at the start of those telling few words in John 1.42a, "And Xxxxxx brought him to Jesus ...".

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