

## **Sent Ones: The Core Team**

**From the Series, “The King and I – Matthew Tells Us About the King of the Universe”**

**By Phil Brainerd**

**Presented to Trinity Church of Teaneck, NJ**

**On Sunday, January 23, 2022**

### **Introduction**

In the business world, there is a location that symbolizes prestige: The corner office. How do you get a corner office? By being important. If you’re the head guy of a department within a business, that corner office shows it.



What does a corner office provide? Why would somebody want one? You get a view! If you’re a nobody, you get a cubicle. If you’re a little more important, you get an office with a door and a window. In the corner office, the head guy gets windows looking out in two directions. That’s prestige in the business world. And of course, the higher in the building you are, the more important you are.

And for some, more important than the view, importance brings power.

So, how do you establish your importance? For some, it’s the length of time you’ve been around. You have seniority. For others, it’s intelligence and talent. For some, it’s just brute force. Maybe those people are the loudest?

Importance.

We’re in our series, “The King and I – Matthew tells us about the King of the Universe. Recently, we started a sub-series called “Sent Ones.” Jesus Christ had a message – a vital message for the world. He needed some special people to make sure the message got off to a good start. So, he chose twelve men. These were his apostles - his sent ones.

In our last article, we looked at the first of those twelve men: The Apostle Peter (Also known as ‘Simon’). In this one, we’re going to look at an interesting group. Among the twelve sent ones, Jesus chose a core group - A core team. It included Peter, and three other men. Andrew, James, and John. So, our message today is entitled: The Core Group.

The core group is a story of power, and importance, and what people do when they want those things. Let’s learn about the three men that joined with Peter to form the core group of the sent ones.

## I. Andrew

We'll learn first about Andrew:

18 As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. 19 "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people." 20 At once they left their nets and followed him. (Matthew 4:18-20)

As Matthew tells his story, the first apostles we meet are Peter and Andrew. And we learn something interesting: They're brothers. Not only are they brothers, but they're both in the same profession: Fishing.

In today's world, we have all kinds of opportunities for variety. It's unusual for family members to take on the same profession. In ancient days, you had a lot more family businesses. So, multiple family members all joined the same business. Peter and Andrew were brothers, and they were both fishermen.

We can see here that, not only were Peter and Andrew part of the same profession, but they were also business partners - They worked together. And as we learned last week, both were willing to give up their place in the family business to follow Jesus.

Now, does the fact that these men were brothers, and that they were partners in the same family business, mean that they had the same personalities? No, not at all. This is where we begin to see some differences. When we read the other gospel accounts, we learn more about Andrew.

35 The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. 36 When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!" 37 When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. 38 Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?" They said, "Rabbi" (which means "Teacher"), "where are you staying?" 39 "Come," he replied, "and you will see." So they went and saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with him. It was about four in the afternoon. (John 1:35-39)

You say, "That's a nice story - What does that have to do with our topic today? And as always, I'm glad you asked! Let's read on:

Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. (v 40)

Now we've learned something very important about Andrew - He was a disciple of John the Baptist. Andrew was a faithful Jew who looked forward to the coming of the Messiah. When he heard about John the Baptist, he became a follower.

Apparently, John saw something special in Andrew. When Jesus appeared, John testified that this was the Messiah. So, Andrew and a fellow disciple of John check it out. They spend time with Jesus. After that, Andrew becomes a disciple of Jesus.

Of all the apostles, Andrew was the one who was with Jesus the longest. He was first. To this day, the Greek Orthodox Church refers to Andrew as the "First Called."

Earlier, we asked the question, "What makes someone important?" One of the qualities was seniority. If seniority is the issue, Andrew is clearly the winner. We're going to find though, that there are apparently other, more important qualities that Jesus looked for in choosing his sent ones. One of those qualities is the thing that we learn next about Andrew. Let's read on:

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

Andrew spent a significant part of his life looking for the Messiah - And he found him. He becomes a follower, a disciple. What's the first thing he does next? He finds his brother, and he brings his brother to Jesus. Now, both of them can follow Jesus together.

Let's stop here for a moment. Apparently, Andrew and Peter were more than two brothers who could work together at the job. **These were two brothers who loved each other.** When Andrew found the most important thing he could ever think of, he immediately went and shared what he found with his brother.

Andrew was a man who knew how to share. That's very important to Jesus.

Friends, do we share Jesus with the people we love? I hope so. That's why we go to so much trouble in our church to have periods of time that are designed to invite friends and family. The next one will be the Easter season. If you're associated with Trinity Church of Teaneck, make sure you invite friends and family. If you attend elsewhere, watch for those times when you can invite loved ones.

Maybe you want your friends and family to know about Jesus earlier than that? You can tell them any time you want. But maybe you don't think you're good at explaining. Let me know! I'm happy to help. We'll figure something out. Again, if you attend another church, I'm sure your pastor will be happy to help, too.

So, Andrew has seniority - And he's good at sharing. We can see why that's important.

But now, we see something curious. Last week, we learned about Peter. We learned that Peter wound up leading the early church.

Why not Andrew? We don't know. Here's something more. Later in Matthew, we'll read about an important event called "The Transfiguration". Let's read about it:

After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. 2 There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. 3 Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus. (Matthew 17:1-3)

What an incredible scene! Some of the apostles, the sent ones, are given a vision of what Jesus will be like in his glorified state. They see a vision of Jesus walking with the greatest prophets of the Hebrew people: Moses and Elijah.

There's only one problem: Where's Andrew? Andrew has seniority! Andrew brought Peter to Jesus. Without Andrew, Peter wouldn't be in the picture.

We don't know for certain, but here's what some commentators suggest: Andrew was very good at what we call a "supporting role". Sometimes you need people to work behind the scenes. For those roles, you need faithful people - Good people. People who are content to stay out of the spotlight. People who don't throw a tantrum if they aren't always included. Perhaps Andrew was one of those types of people?

If that's the case, this brings up a very important point. In the kingdom of heaven, there are numerous roles. There are multitudes of different jobs. Those jobs and those roles all have different kinds of authority and prominence. ***In each case, true followers of God accept the level of prominence and authority that God gives them.***

We've all met people who like to be in charge. They like titles. And if they're not in charge, and if they don't have a title, they don't join in. The common way of saying this is, "They take their ball and go home." Paul writes about this.

12 Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. 14 Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many. 15 Now if the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. 16 And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? 18 But in fact God has placed the parts in the body,

every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. 19 If they were all one part, where would the body be? 20 As it is, there are many parts, but one body. (1 Corinthians 12:12-19)

Look at that: “Many parts, but one body.” Apparently, Andrew understood this. Andrew was content to play a supporting role.

Again, let’s stop for a moment. Are we content to play a supporting role? Are we content to be the person who isn’t in charge?

Did you know that Jesus isn’t always in charge? He submits to the will of his Father. On the night he was betrayed, he knew that his death was coming. At that time, he made his famous prayer:

...he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.” (Matthew 26:39)

God the Father assigns a level of authority to everyone - including Jesus. Within the Trinity itself there are roles with levels of authority. Jesus submits to his Father’s will.

Do we understand how to submit when God has assigned greater authority to others? If not, let’s ask God to help us.

Andrew understood this. His life involved, at least at times, a supporting role. When he wasn’t doing that, he was sharing. In the days of the early church, there was one time that he shared, and it got him into lots of trouble. Andrew shared his faith with a woman who was the wife of a provincial governor. She came to a saving faith in Jesus Christ. Her husband, a powerful man in the Roman empire, was not pleased. He ordered that Andrew be executed by crucifixion. But for Andrew, something was different: The cross was shaped like an ‘X’. When a person is crucified this way, it’s not quite as painful as a traditional cross, but it takes much longer to die. A person can hang on an ‘X’ shaped cross for days.

For two days, Andrew hung on a cross. Do you know what he did during those two days? He shared his faith! He spoke to anyone passing by who would stop and listen. He shared so well that numerous people accepted Christ.

Today, we think that we have to share a Jesus who solves all our problems. Some say that, if you follow Jesus, you’ll become rich and successful. When people saw Andrew’s last station in life, they did not see a rich and successful man. They did not see a mansion. They did not see fancy clothes or an expensive car. All they saw was a man hanging on a cross. And when they saw that, they accepted Jesus.

So, Andrew was a man who should have been in charge. But, in humility, he accepted a support role. He submitted, shared, and obeyed until the moment of his death.

Oddly, the rest of the core team was different.

## II. James and John

Let's talk about James and John. Earlier, we revisited the passage in Matthew 4 where Jesus called Peter and Andrew. If we go back there and read the words immediately following, we see this:

21 Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, 22 and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him. (Matthew 4:21-22)

So, Jesus calls Peter and Andrew, then immediately moves on to call James and John.

Now we have the core team. Note: They all have something in common: They're all fishermen. We spent time in our last session talking about why this looks unusual to people who want power and influence in the world. There are lots of ways to get power and influence: Family wealth, Military experience, Sports, and scholarship, to name a few.

But not fishing. Not in those days. For Jesus, the experience you get as a fisherman qualifies you to be on his core team. These are the people who would lead the sent ones. Perhaps at a later time we can talk about the activities of fishing and why they would qualify someone to be a Christian leader. For now, let's move on to see why James and John were different than Andrew.

James and John are a funny couple. Again, they're brothers. But here's an interesting note: In the Scripture, they are never mentioned separately. They are always a pair. So, it seems they had more in common than Peter and Andrew.

In fact, these two men have a title - We see it over in the Gospel of Mark when he mentions the 12 sent ones:

James son of Zebedee and his brother John (to them he gave the name Boanerges, which means "sons of thunder"), (Mark 3:17)

Ah – "Sons of thunder"! Where might that have come from? Most likely it comes from an episode recorded by Luke:

51 As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. 52 And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him; 53 but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem. (Luke 9:51-53)

Jesus spent most of his time in the region of Galilee, which is the northernmost part of Israel. Jerusalem is to the south. Between Galilee and Jerusalem is the region of Samaria. There's a long story here, but the residents of Samaria didn't get along with Jews. So much so that, if you were a Jew traveling from Galilee to Jerusalem, you could run into some trouble. And this is exactly what happened.

James and John had a very interesting reaction to this.

54 When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, "Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?" 55 But Jesus turned and rebuked them. 56 Then he and his disciples went to another village. (vs. 54-55)

So here are James and John. They love Jesus. They are zealous for Jesus. They don't fully understand who he is, but they understand that he is the Messiah, the Holy One, the Great King. And they see people dishonoring him. As a result, they are appropriately offended.

However, they are not appropriately aware of the grace of God yet. They have seen Jesus show great power, like calming a storm on the Sea of Galilee. Being aware of his power, they know that they could call down fire from heaven if needed to wipe out these ingrates. That however, is not Jesus' plan. He has to rebuke them. There will be no fire from the skies on that day. Jesus just tells his disciples to follow him to another town.

Remember, James and John started out as fishermen. They were not important people. Now, they're important. They hang around with the King of the Universe. And he is the Lord of Nature.

This is called "letting power go to your head." Forget the corner office – these men wanted raw power - enough to destroy people. These men had zeal, but they had no compassion. Even after spending significant time with Jesus, they still didn't fully understand him or his mission. He came to save the lost, not destroy them. This problem showed itself even more in another scene recorded by Matthew:

20 Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of him. 21 "What is it you want?" he asked. She said, "Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom." (Matthew 20:20-21)

Talk about letting power go to your head! Jesus is the King of the Universe. These two men want to be next in line. This is the corner office in the top floor of the imperial palace. How does Jesus react to this request?

“You don’t know what you are asking,” Jesus said to them. “Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?” “We can,” they answered. (Matthew 20:22)

Notice something here: There is some question about how the mother of James and John got involved here. It looks at first like she grabbed her boys by the ears and dragged them in front of Jesus. However, when Jesus gives his answer, he doesn’t talk to her. He talks directly with James and John. That leads some to suggest that it was the boys who put their mother up to this.

Whatever happened, these two young men think they’re about to get their request. Jesus asks them if they can handle the responsibilities of the position their requesting. They say, “sure!”

We’ve talked about the importance of humility to Jesus. It’s an important character trait. These men are worse than the opposite, which would be pride. They’ve jumped past pride into raw hubris. Jesus gives them an answer in keeping with their bad attitudes.

Jesus said to them, “You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father.” (v 23)

Sorry, boys - No corner office today. But, you will drink the cup that Jesus drinks, which is danger, persecution, and death. More on that in a minute.

As we look at these men, we are constantly confronted with the fact that they were far from perfect. And we constantly ask: Why did Jesus pick men who were far from perfect? This is a principle that we’ve seen in each of our sessions:

*Jesus doesn’t call people based on their earthly gifts and accomplishments.  
Jesus calls people based on what they can become  
if they will give themselves over to him.*

Over time, each of these men changed. They did become something different and better after spending time with Jesus. They changed from selfish people to people who learned service and love.

James and John both drank the cup that Jesus drank. James was the first of the twelve to be martyred. He was killed by King Herod. According to tradition, a soldier was assigned to him and heard his testimony. The soldier was so moved that he knelt before James as asked to be forgiven for being part of his execution. James told him to stand. He then embraced the soldier and said, “Peace to you, my son. Peace to you, and pardon for your faults.” The soldier was even

more moved, and he confessed Christ. As the story goes, the two of them were beheaded together.

John lived under a different kind of pain. He lived a long life, and survived assassination attempts, one by poison. In his closing days, he was sentenced to exile on a desert island called Patmos.

John was entrusted with major blocks of Scripture. His book about the life of Jesus is considered the most theological. But one thing stands out about John's writings: He was a man who understood love. This is how he wrote in his first letter to the church:

7 Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. 9 This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. 10 This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. 11 Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. (1 John 4:7-12)

John started as a man who let power go to his head. He would have condemned whole towns to death were it not for a rebuke from the Lord. He closed his life as a man who learned to love and to serve, even to death.

Let's pull this all together.

## **Conclusion**

So, now we've met the core team of the twelve Sent Ones: Peter, Andrew, James and John. They were all fishermen. They were all unknown. They all had character flaws. But they were all men who were willing to give themselves to Jesus Christ. And so, they were changed - Changed from simple men to leaders who were used of God to change the world.

Today, we are reminded of a challenge: Although he does not call exactly the same way, Jesus calls us. He calls us to follow. Would you do that? Would you become a follower of Jesus?

Let him change you. It doesn't matter what you have when you start. What matters is what Jesus can do if you will let him use you. If you don't know where to start, come talk with us. We'll tell you how. There is important info on how to find us at the end of this article. In the meantime, may God bless us as we continue to learn about his Sent Ones.

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Thanks for reading! Here are some helpful links:

Trinity Church  
[www.TrinityTeaneck.org](http://www.TrinityTeaneck.org)

Phil's Site  
[PhilBrainerd.com](http://PhilBrainerd.com)

To learn how to begin a new life with Jesus Christ, visit Billy Graham's site:  
[PeaceWithGod.net](http://PeaceWithGod.net)

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