

January 24, 2010

## CAN'T HELP ITS

*“The first thing 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 great anthems is the powerful African American spiritual “Ain’t Got Time to Die.” It was written by Hall Johnson, and it has these joyfully dramatic words: “Been so busy serving my Master.....Ain’t got time to die.”

In this inspiring and wonderful spiritual, the composer is underscoring and celebrating the joy and excitement of being a Christian, the joy and excitement of serving our Lord in gratitude for what he has done for us.

The point that this spiritual is trying to drive home to us with great enthusiasm is that when we really become Christians, when we really commit our lives to Christ, we can’t sit still. We become so excited, so thrilled, so grateful for our new life in Christ that we can’t help loving him, praising him, serving him, and sharing him with others.

This is precisely what happened to Andrew. He found the Messiah, he encountered Jesus, and he was so excited he couldn’t sit still. Immediately, he ran to share the good news with his brother Simon.

Then Andrew brought Simon Peter to Jesus. This was the greatness of Andrew. He was the man who was always introducing others to Jesus. Three different times in the Bible, Andrew brought someone to meet Jesus.

Here in John 1, he brings his brother Simon Peter. In John 6, Andrew brings to Jesus the boy with the five loaves and two fish. And in John 12, we find Andrew, along with Philip, bringing to Jesus the inquiring Greeks who wanted to meet Jesus and visit with him.

Andrew’s greatest joy was sharing the good news of Christ and bringing others into the presence of Christ. Having found Jesus, he could not sit still; he could not help it. He had to share Christ with others.

You see, Andrew had a strong case of the “can’t help its.” He was so grateful, so thrilled, so excited about Christ that he just could not sit still. *He could not keep Jesus to himself.* You know, as I think about it, having a strong case of the “can’t help its” goes along with being a Christian. Let me show you what I mean by sharing with you three thoughts. Try these on for size with me, and I’m

sure that you will think of others out of your own personal and spiritual life, but for now, let me share these three with you.

**FIRST, BECAUSE WE ARE CHRISTIANS, WE CAN'T HELP BEING GRATEFUL.** Andrew, along with the people of his time, was longing for a Messiah to come. When he found that Messiah in Jesus, he was grateful.

You know, there is no such thing as an ungrateful Christian. Christianity by definition is our grateful response to God for his love of the world and his gift to the world of Jesus Christ. Responsive gratitude. That's what Christianity is all about.

A group of young students was asked by their teacher to make a list of what they thought were the present-day Seven Wonders of the World. Although there were some disagreements, the following seven things received the most votes:

1. The Great Pyramids of Egypt
2. The Taj Mahal
3. The Grand Canyon
4. The Panama Canal
5. The Empire State Building
6. St. Peter's Basilica
7. China's Great Wall

While gathering the votes, the teacher noted that one quiet student had not turned in her paper yet. So she asked the girl if she was having trouble with her list. The girl replied, "Yes, a little. I couldn't quite make up my mind because there were so many." The teacher said, "Well, tell us what you have. Read your list and maybe we can help." Hesitantly, shyly, the girl stood up and then read her paper out loud to the class. She said, "I think the Seven Wonders of the World are:

1. To be able to see
2. To be able to hear
3. To be able to touch
4. To be able to feel
5. To be able to taste
6. To be able to laugh
7. To be able to love."

The room was so quiet when she finished that you could have heard a pin drop. Isn't it amazing how we overlook and take for granted the gifts that God has given

us? We become so captivated by man-made things that we sometimes forget the astounding generosity of God.

A missionary in Africa was preaching his first sermon in a mission church. When the time came for the offering, the people danced their offerings forward. They danced and sang praise to God as they brought their offerings to the altar. It was a beautiful moment.

After the service, he asked one of the people, “Why do you dance and sing when you bring your offering forward on Sunday morning?” Back came the answer: “How could we not dance? We are so grateful to God for what he has done for us in sending Jesus Christ to save us that we have to dance and sing our thanksgiving. And besides, it says in the Bible, God loves a cheerful giver.”

Let me ask you something. Do you feel gratitude to God that strongly? Do you have a strong case of the “can’t help it” when it comes to gratitude? When you are a Christian, gratitude is the spirit of your lifestyle.

**SECOND, BECAUSE WE ARE CHRISTIANS, WE CAN’T HELP BEING CONFIDENT.** Confidence is why Andrew kept bringing people to Christ. He had confidence in the Lord. Things were not always perfect, times and situations were sometimes hard, but Andrew never lost his confidence in Christ. He just did his best and then trusted God to bring it out right.

Someone once asked Phillips Brooks why he seemed always to be so serene, poised, optimistic, and confident. I love Brooks’ answer. He said simply, “I am a Christian.”

A father and daughter were in their last moments together at the airport. The airline had announced the daughter’s departure, and standing there near the security gate, they hugged and her father said, “I love you, and I wish you enough.” She replied, “dad, our life together has been more than enough. Your love is all I ever needed. I love you so much, and I wish you enough, too, Dad.” They hugged and held each other tightly and then she turned and left. The father walked over toward the window to watch his daughter’s plane take off. Tears rolled down his cheeks.

Another man had been watching them. The father turned to the man and said, “Did you ever say good-bye to someone knowing that you would not see each other again in this lifetime?” “Yes, I have,” the man said. “Please forgive me for asking, but why is this a final good-bye?” The father answered, “I am old

now.....not in good health and the real truth is that her next trip back will be for my funeral.” “I’m sorry,” said the stranger.

“It’s OK. I have had a wonderful life, and it will soon be over for me. But it’s been a great ride. God has blessed me and he has always been with me, and he will be with me in the life to come. I have no regrets. I trust God for whatever is ahead.” The other man said, “May I ask you about something? When you were saying good-bye, I heard you say, ‘I wish you enough.’ What does that mean?” The father smiled and said, “That’s a wish that has been handed down for many generations in my family. My parents used to say it to everyone.”

When we say, “I wish you enough,” we are wanting the other person to have enough good things to sustain them. The wish goes like this:

*I wish you enough sun to keep your attitude bright.*

*I wish you enough rain to appreciate the sun more.*

*I wish you enough happiness to keep your spirit alive.*

*I wish you enough adversity so the smallest joys in life appear much bigger.*

*I wish you enough gain to satisfy your wanting.*

*I wish you enough loss to be grateful for all you possess.*

*I wish you enough hellos to get you through the final good-byes.*

The father looked at the other man and said, “I wish you enough,” and then he turned and walked away.

When we are Christians, we can be confident because in Christ, God gives us enough – enough strength to keep us going, enough forgiveness to make us a new creation, enough courage to enable us to stand tall when times are rough, enough assurance to convince us that ultimately God wins and he wants to share the victory with us.

This is the good news. Nothing can separate us from God’s love and watchcare. Nothing. Not trouble or pain or heartache or disappointment; not even death can cut us off from God and his love. God is always with us. That is God’s promise. So, because we are Christians, we can be grateful, and we can be confident.

**THIRD, BECAUSE WE ARE CHRISTIANS, WE CAN'T HELP BEING LOVING.** Again, Andrew is a great example of love. He was bighearted and generous. He was a loving, caring person who was eager to share and eager to help others. If only we could learn that lesson from Andrew, life would be better for all of us.

Donna was a mentor to a little boy in Houston named John. Every week she went to his elementary school. Donna and John bonded in a beautiful way. Though there was quite a difference in their ages, Miss Donna – as John called her – became John's best friend. Once each week, she visited him at school, helped him with his school work, and then, every Saturday, Donna took John to do exciting things that without Donna, John would likely never get to do – things like going to the zoo, the museum, and the mall.

One night, Donna's husband died in his sleep. Little John came to the funeral to support his friend Miss Donna in her grief. At the reception after the memorial service, John stood beside Donna and held her hand. She had been there for him, and now he was there for her. He would not leave her side. It was a beautiful moment, and people in the room had tears in their eyes, so touched by John's commitment to lovingly stand by Miss Donna, his friend and mentor.

Several people at the reception saw John eyeing the goodies on the reception table – punch and chocolate chip cookies – and some said to him, "John, would you like to walk over to the table and have some refreshments?" But no, he would not leave Donna's side. "I want to stay here with Miss Donna," he would say. The love between the two of them was so radiant and powerful in that room.

Oh, by the way, also in the room that day was a man from Chicago who had flown all the way to Houston to be with Donna. Do you know why? Because 38 years ago when he was in first grade, Donna had been his mentor at an elementary school. He made a special trip to be with Donna when her husband suddenly died. That man said of Donna, "I am what I am today because of the love and support she gave me 38 years ago. She was the first person in my life who believed in me."

Now then, where did Donna learn to love like that, to reach out to people in need like that, to make a difference in people's lives like that? You know, don't you? The same place the disciple Andrew learned it: from Jesus.

You see, when you are a Christian, you get a strong case of the “can’t help its”. You can’t help being grateful, you can’t help being confident, and you can help being loving.

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