

JOHN 1:35-42
THE POWER OF QUIET

Have you spent your life living in someone else's shadow? How has that felt? It might be a brother or sister who has appeared to be more talented than you are or who has been more favoured than you, at home or at school or in other ways. Maybe there has been a rival, someone who worked in same place and you worked alongside them all your working life and they got promotions and you didn't, and you lived in the shadow of their success. It might be a spouse, someone who has 'shaped' your life, made decisions for you and you've gone along with them, but they were not necessarily what you'd have chosen; or you have been forced to stand in the background while your spouse has been successful at work, on in some other walk of life. It might have been a parent, a strong character, and the expectation on you to do things 'their' way or even to walk in father's footsteps into the same career, into the family business. There has been someone who has seemed to be better than you at everything and you're told 'why can't you be more like...' How has it felt to live in another's shadow like that? There will have been frustration at best, resentment and more at its worst? Has there been a constant feeling of being a failure? You've always been told that you're not good enough?

Quiet is a brilliant book. Susan Cain is an American lawyer who saw the world that she lived in being driven by people who were extrovert and loud, people who have a lot to say, and those who were not like that, the quiet, were being overlooked and even overrun! *Quiet* was published in 2012 and its subtitle is "the power of introverts in a world that can't stop talking." If you know TED Talks online can catch a flavour of her thinking there; she did one. The temptation for those of us who are introverts is to try to be something that we're not, to be loud and extrovert in order to compete. *Quiet* says "stay true to your nature. If you like to do things in a slow and steady way, don't let others make you feel as if you have to race. If you enjoy depth, don't force yourself to seek breadth. If you prefer single-tasking to multi-tasking, stick to your guns." Stay in and read a book rather than going to the party, and that's OK. In other words, it's OK to be you, as you are and not as someone else thinks you should be, or to try to be person in whose shadow you have lived your life.

Andrew is a fascinating character. He is one of the twelve, one of Jesus' first disciples, but we know very little about him; he doesn't appear much in the gospel story, but when he does he exercises a wonderful ministry, introducing people to Jesus in his own quiet way. We don't even know much about him in his life as an apostle in the days of the early church; he was there at beginning of the life of the church and it is believed that he was crucified for his faith in the area of Greece around Corinth. He is the patron Saint of Scotland and it is supposed that some of his bones were brought to Scotland to St Andrews, but whether that is true or not... The quiet man, consistently there, but not mentioned, not hitting the headlines, but a person in the background, dependable, ready to go to work for Jesus. He lived in the shadow of his brother, Peter; his brother is more famous in the church; his brother is the leader of the group; Andrew, when he is listed, is listed as Peter's brother! There is a quote which, when it was quoted in something I read, perhaps suggests that Andrew's biggest service to the church was to bring his brother to Jesus! I've never really looked at Andrew before, but what I've seen of him this week as I've prepared this sermon has fascinated me. He is mentioned three times in John's gospel and each time, he is bringing someone else to Jesus. Andrew may not have been the up-front leadership person, but 1-to-1 with people, he is a brilliant pastor and evangelist.

When we meet Andrew, he is a disciple of John the Baptist. On the day we meet Andrew, John sees Jesus walking past and says to his two friends "Look, the..."

(*John 1:36*) implying that they should go, follow Jesus. Andrew and the other anonymous disciple go; they spend time with Jesus, an evening perhaps, or time in his lodgings, they have a meal with Him perhaps, such that Andrew becomes a firm and committed follower of Jesus. The next day, “*the first...*” (*John 1:41*) From the time spent with Jesus, Andrew is convinced that Jesus is the Messiah and he wants to tell someone else that news; who else would he tell but his brother; they are brothers, business partners in the fishing business and from what we know of Peter, Andrew is the quiet brother. Andrew brings Peter to meet Jesus; he introduces Peter to Jesus for the first time. Later, we read the stories of Jesus calling Peter and Andrew to leave their fishing business behind and become disciples, but maybe these later stories are possible only because Andrew has introduced Peter to Jesus here.

Two more times we see Andrew at work: in chapter 6 and the story of Jesus feeding the five thousand with five loaves and two fish: “*Andrew...*” (*John 6:8f*) Why did John do that? Why put Andrew back in the shadow of his brother? Andrew, in his own right, does a good thing here; he brings a little boy with his packed lunch to Jesus, and makes the miracle possible. He doesn't do the miracle; that's Jesus' job. But Andrew brings the boy to Jesus; Andrew makes these connections. He's there again in chapter 12: “*now there...*” (*John 12:20ff*) Philip seems to have been a disciple often out of his depth, so when these Greeks come and Philip isn't sure what to do, he seeks out Andrew and together they go to Jesus; “*we would...*” (*John 12:21*) and Andrew makes it happen; Andrew brings these people to see Jesus and something happens because of that connection! We know nothing about these people who want to see Jesus, and know nothing of what happens to them afterwards, but at the heart of that encounter, making connections again, stands the disciple Andrew.

Do you live in someone else's shadow? Here's the bible reason to come out from underneath: Jesus called Andrew to be Andrew, not to be another Peter. Andrew made a huge contribution to the team of disciples from what we see – for three mentions, think of all the connections that Andrew made for people with Jesus that nobody noticed or thought to write down! How many of them might there be? Tens, hundreds of them? Jesus calls you to be you: in your family not to be a carbon copy of your brother, sister, father or mother, but to be you, an individual with your particular, unique gifts and skills. In the Church, Jesus calls you to be you, not to be another me; we are not all preachers, not all leaders, but we all have unique gifts and skills to bring to the whole church and without your gifts and skills church life will be poorer. At work, in your sporting life, wherever we meet other people and live in their shadow, come out from behind that shadow, and be yourself with Jesus. This is the key to being rid of these frustrations and resentments; be true to your nature.

The Christian who cares for someone, the church member on their visiting list, or a neighbour or friend who is on their own or is sick or is in hospital and they care without making a fuss; nobody knows what they do, nobody sees them do it, but they show Jesus to the person for whom they care and when the opportunity arises, share something of their Christian faith. The Christian who commits to pray for someone else, and does so in the peace of their own home, or who responds to the e-mail prayer updates, saying nothing to anyone, but who commits to pray for the person in need, dependable in the background, making no fuss, no song and dance about it, nobody knows. The Christian bringing up their children or looking after grandchildren and telling them the stories of Jesus, quite naturally, or teaching them Christian songs and it is second nature to them to do that and the children take these things in with their cheerios! Making connections for people with Jesus – this is ministry Andrew-style. It is fantastic!

There was a survey done some years ago now, but there is no reason to think that things have changed. People were asked “How are you attracted to a Church?” They said: Advertising 2%; Organised Visitation 3%; the minister 8%; invited by family member or friend 80%. In another survey one in four people said they would go to church if invited by someone they trust. This has always been way the gospel has spread, people being enthralled by Jesus, telling their family and friends and passing on the excitement of their faith. From these statistics you see that “personal witness and friendship continue to be the primary means by which people are brought to Christ.” We connect people to Jesus by telling people about Jesus and what we believe; we connect people to Jesus by the way in which we relate to them, with humility, kindness and compassion; we connect people to Jesus by praying for them. We don’t need to go out and about in the world to make these connections for people, we can do it at home for the members of our family; we can do it for our friends. We can do it quietly!

In 2 Corinthians Paul writes about the Christian as an ambassador for Christ. The ambassador is one who represents Christ in the world, who brings good news to people from Jesus, who is the agent of reconciliation between Jesus and people we know. The more I look at that idea, that picture, the more I see that this is all of us. It is a picture for preachers because in our preaching we try to tell people about Jesus and make connections. It is also a picture for every Christian, as the disciple is called to tell others something of what we’ve discovered and in telling others about Jesus, we make connections; we connect people with Jesus by telling the story of our faith. It is a huge privilege to help people make these connections! Who first told you about Jesus? The chances are it was not a minister, but a member of your family, being an ambassador for Christ. To whom can you be that ambassador today? For whom can you be the person who helps them connect with Jesus?

Andrew brought people to Jesus. He brought his brother, he brought a boy with a packed lunch; he brought a group of foreigners. He brought them and they made connections; Jesus touched their lives. The challenge for us as disciples is that disciples bring others to Jesus: we bring people to Jesus by telling them the stories of Jesus; we bring people to Jesus by inviting a friend or family member to come to church; we bring people to Jesus by showing them Jesus reflected in the kind of people we are; we bring people to Jesus by praying for them. Andrew is described as the first Christian missionary: since then there have been many who have walked in his shoes, quietly, without fuss, with no fanfare, drawing no attention to themselves, bringing people to Jesus, making connections. He was not his brother, but he was never meant to be his brother; he was always called to be himself, with his unique personality, gifts and talents, given in service of Jesus; how many people will give thanks to God to have known Andrew? How many people will give thanks to God to have known you?