**A reading from John’s Gospel, Chapter 1, verse 35**

**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.

**40** Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. **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.

Jesus looked at him and said,

**“You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas”**

(which, when translated, is Peter).

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Have you ever been asked talk to someone about your faith?

Of course it’s not easy --- what if they ask questions I cannot answer --- surely it’s the Minister’s job --- or someone trained to do it. I’m only an ordinary person --- I can’t help with Sunday School – or Youth Club – especially Youth Club.

This reading from John’s Gospel is definitely for **us**. It’s the story of Christ using ordinary people to do extraordinary things.

John witnesses to Christ, and two of his disciples leave to follow Jesus. We don’t know the name of one of John’s disciples, the Bible doesn't tell us his name.

The other is Andrew, a nice sort of fellow - but seemingly not the kind of person to set the world on fire.

Jesus sees these two men following him, and asks,

**"What are you looking for?"**

Their response is odd. They answer Jesus with a question. They say, **"Rabbi, where are you staying?"**

It sounds as if they are asking for his address.

But their question isn't as odd as it seems.

When you look at it in the original Greek, it can mean,

"Where are you abiding?" or "Where do you stand?"

or even "What are you all about?"

In other words, these two disciples are asking

Jesus to tell them about himself.

He responds by saying,

**"Come and see"­­** - and they go with him.

After they have been with Jesus for a day or so, Andrew, the one whose name we know - comes to believe that he is in the company of the Messiah - so he decides that he **has** to tell somebody.

* You might think that having discovered the Messiah, Andrew would tell someone important.
* The High Priest.
* Or somebody from the Sanhedrin, the group of seventy who ran the nation's religious affairs.
* Or, at least, the president of the synagogue.
* You might think that Andrew would shout the news of the Messiah from the housetops.
* You might think that he might even hire a trumpet to get everyone's attention.

But Andrew does none of those things. He goes to get his brother, Simon. He starts as small and as close to home as he can. As we said earlier,

**Andrew isn't likely to set the world on fire.**

But an amazing thing happens!

Simon is a hot-blooded kind of person who rushes in where angels fear to tread. Then, realizing that he's in over his head, he quickly beats a retreat.

 He isn't likely to set the world on fire either.

Unlike Andrew, Simon has plenty of energy, but he can't seem to put it all together.

So we might conclude that nothing much has happened.

But that would be wrong! Simon turns out, in Jesus' hands, to be truly outstanding.

When Jesus meets him, he says,

**"You are Simon"**

**"You shall be called Cephas - or Peter"**

Cephas is the Aramaic word. Peter is the Greek.

Both Cephas and Peter mean the same thing.

Both mean **Rock**.

In other words, when Jesus meets Simon, he says, "I'm going to give you a new name - which means that I am going to make you a new person.

Your new name is Rock. I see great strength in you,

Mr. Rock! You're going to be as solid and unmovable as the Rock of Gibraltar! You're going to be as sturdy as that mountain over there.

Now, if you were Andrew, I wonder if that would make you wonder about this new Messiah?

Perhaps Jesus **is** the Lamb of God - the Saviour of the world - but he has seriously misjudged Simon. Simon is hardly a rock. Simon is about as substantial as the spark that shoots out of a campfire, only to fade and die a few seconds later.

If Andrew had not been so impressed with Jesus, he would surely laugh behind Jesus' back. Andrew knows Simon. They grew up together. Andrew has seen Simon bounce off one wall - and then another - and another.

**Simon - a rock? “You cannot be serious!”**

But Jesus looks at Simon and sees something that won't be visible to anyone else for quite some time.

Simon will not become a rock right away.

He will continue to flake his way through life, lashing out this way and that - until Jesus' Resurrection!

When Peter sees the resurrected Jesus, he will become Cephas!

He will become Peter! He will become a **ROCK**!

Before Jesus' Resurrection, everything shook Peter!

Before the resurrection, Peter was anxious and afraid.

But after the Resurrection, nothing would ever shake Peter again! Once Peter sees the risen Christ,

he will preach powerfully, and he will preach fearlessly!

Sometimes people will respond by coming to him for baptism. But sometimes they will respond by throwing Peter in jail!

It doesn't matter to Peter! It isn't Peter's problem to get results! That's God's problem! Peter's only job is to be faithful!

For the rest of his life, Peter - Mr. Solid Rock –

will do great things for Christ!

So that which seemed like nothing much - three mediocre men (the unnamed disciple with Andrew and Peter) following Jesus

 - turns out to be a hinge on which

Jesus will turn the whole world.

Jesus does that! He takes the most ordinary men and women and uses them in extraordinary ways.

He looks deep into their hearts to see their real potential. Then he unlocks that potential and uses it

to turn the world upside down.

You might think that we’re talking about people like Billy Graham––or Pope John the 23rd––or Mother Teresa –

but we’re not talking about famous people –

but ordinary people.

Every congregation has an ordinary man or woman –

hopefully several ordinary men and women –

of extraordinary faith - of extraordinary devotion to Christ.

Few people know their names. Nobody would call them great. But Jesus does most of his work through ordinary people like them - **through ordinary people like you and me.**

Jesus takes little people that no one else wants, and he empowers them to **change the world.**

He can do that for any of us - if we let him.

Sometime ago there was a television series called *Band of Brothers*. It was the story of a group of soldiers who fought from Normandy to Germany during World War II.

They were an ordinary group of men who accomplished extraordinary things. Many of them died in the process.

Of those who survived, quite a number became teachers. Others became builders of homes.

They had been destroyers. But when they got a chance, they decided to be builders.

They wanted to do something beautiful with their lives.

But others were so damaged by the horrors of war - by the things they had seen and done –

that they couldn't seem to recover.

Sergeant Skinny Sisk was one of those.

One of Skinny's soldier buddies had warned him that all the killings were going to jump into bed with him one day –

and one day they did. After the war, Skinny Sisk suffered flashbacks and started drinking. He became a drop-out.

Then one day his little niece - **four years old** - came unbidden into his room. None of the rest of the family would have anything to do with Sisk - he was such a vile drunk.

But this little four-year-old girl came into his room –

and she told Sisk that Jesus loved him –

**and that she loved him.**

She told him that, if he would repent, God would forgive him for all the men he kept trying to kill all over again.

Quite a speech for a four-year-old girl!

 She probably heard one of the adults say those things,

and she knew that Sisk needed to hear them –

so she marched unbidden into his room to tell him.

Sisk says, "That little girl got to me. I put her out of my room - told her to go to her Mummy."

And then he reports what happened next.

He says, **"There and then I bowed my head**

**on my Mother's old feather bed and repented** - and God forgave me for the war and all the other bad things I had done down through the years."

And do you know what happened! Sisk quit drinking. He gave his life to Jesus,

and Jesus unlocked the potential that no one else could see. Sisk became a minister, and served God well

for many, many years.

If you or I were trying to change the world, would we start with an old vile drunk? Probably not!

Or a little four-year-old girl? Probably not!

But Jesus takes people like Andrew - and Peter - and Skinny Sisk - and that little girl - and you - and me - and the person who is sitting beside you.

And Jesus does wonderful things with us and through us.

All we have to do is to put ourselves in his hands.

All we have to do is to let Jesus take charge of our lives.

**That's much harder than it sounds. It's not easy to give up control of our lives - even to Jesus.**

But it can be done! Skinny Sisk proved it.

Jesus can make something of our lives too:

* Perhaps, if you're a young person, you probably want to change the world - but aren't quite sure how to do it.
* Perhaps, if you are middle-aged, you have come to realize that you aren't going to change the world very much. Just paying your bills and keeping your youngsters from self-destructing is challenge enough.
* Perhaps, if you're older, you wonder where the years went - and what it all meant.

But, in the hands of Jesus, all our lives are important. Jesus doesn't care that we are ordinary. Jesus doesn't care whether we are young and inexperienced - or middle-aged and tired - or old and sick.

Jesus doesn't mind that we have so little to offer.

Jesus has always done his best work through ordinary people who surrendered their lives to him.

**So we bow our head on our Mother's old feather bed and repent - and learn what Christ can do with our ordinary lives!**

The message is clear: Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ has won the victory, once and for all. The assurance of salvation is ours, through faith in him.

This is what I hope we will take home today:

His dying and rising are an inspiration for us to follow. He told his disciples:

**"If anyone desires to come after me,**

**let him deny himself, take up his cross,**

**and follow me.**

**For whoever desires to save his life will lose it,**

**but whoever will lose his life for my sake,**

**the same will save it."** (Luke 9:23-24)

It's in dying to self that we're born again to eternal life. Only as we're willing to get our own egos out of the way will we be able to experience life in all its abundance.

The Good News is that God has a plan for each of us

– a destiny to fulfil. As we surrender to God's good and perfect will for our lives, we'll experience the fullness of life God has in store for us.

**Charlotte Elliott** was a just a young woman the night she went to some friends' home for dinner. The year was 1835. The home was in the West End of London. There she met a brash young minister named César Malan. During the course of the meal,

he asked her if she were a Christian.

She took offense and said she'd rather not discuss the matter. He apologized and the conversation moved on.

Three weeks later, their paths crossed again. This time it was she who brought it up.

She said ever since he'd asked the question, she'd been trying to find the Saviour, but to no avail.

"So, you tell me," she said, "How does one come to Christ?" He said simply, **"Just come to him as you are."** Not long after this, she wrote this hymn:

*Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidst me come to Thee;
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.*

When John the Baptist saw Jesus coming his way, he told his disciples, **"Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"**

As you see signs of his presence in the trials and tribulations of everyday life, let us dare to let him come more fully into our heart and invite others to know him, as well.

How do I do it?

One of our 20th Century prophets, Clifford Hill, wrote this message from The Lord:

**TELL MY PEOPLE I LOVE THEM**

**TELL MY PEOPLE I CARE**

**WHEN THEY FEEL FAR AWAY FROM ME**

**TELL MY PEOPLE I’M THERE**