

True Ministry

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John 1:35-42

October 24, 2021

So, to be a Christian is to be exposed to the concept of ministry, right? You interact with pastors who are called to ministry, you get involved in ministry, you serve in ministry as a Christian. God had one Son and put him into ministry. The heroes of the New Testament were ministers, people who used their lives to care for God's people even unto death. The word minister is used 21 times in the New Testament. And with that word, you follow it, you see people ministering to those who are hungry and thirsty and strangers and naked, sick, and in prison. There were a group of women, Matthew 27 it says, that followed Jesus around and his disciples and ministered to them. 2 Corinthians 2:8, caring for those in need in churches is called ministry. When Paul had a need, the church in Philippi sent a guy named Epaphroditus, and it said he ministered to his needs.

Ephesians 4:11, evangelists, pastors, teachers were like coaches. We're to equip all the Christians under our care for "the work of the ministry". I've said it before. I don't like it that pastors are called ministers, because if you're a Christian, you are supposed to be a minister. Each Christian has a gift, a ministry that God has equipped you for when you were saved, and he expects you to use that gift to minister to other people. So the question for us today is: What is a good ministry? What is a true ministry? What does that look like? I mean, there's a lot of false ministry out there. That's why many of you are here in this room or watching online. You were exposed to that, and God rescued you from that, and praise the Lord.

There are a lot of ways of doing ministry that doesn't help, a lot of ways that good ministries could become really good ministries, and our text is going to help with that. Our text will help because our text shows us true ministry, real ministry by Christians to other Christians and real ministry by Christians to non-Christians. The text doesn't say everything there is to say about real ministry, true ministry, but we do see some of what true ministry is like in the four people named in the text, John the Baptist, Jesus, Andrew, and Peter. They show us true ministry in the text that gives us the historical account of the first moments of Jesus's ministry.

Now, you might be asking, "When did this happen? How do you fit this in with the other gospels, and how does that all come together?" As I've said in previous messages, I think these events happen between Jesus's baptism and temptation, and then his ministry in Galilee. So if you're familiar with the book of Mark, this happens between the period at the end of verse 13 and the beginning of verse 14. Some scholars think that's a year period of time. So this is this year of ministry that's only in the book of John and not in the gospels. One pastor I read said it's over a year, but what we're seeing is the highlights of those first year. And this highlight that we just read is the very first moment of ministry for Jesus. I want you to notice something else, verse 38, 41, and 42. It has those translations. Each has a Greek translation of a Hebrew word. And that's there because John wants it, whether you're Jewish or not Jewish, where you understand Hebrew or you don't, he says, "I want everybody to know because this book is written for everybody."

And this is the beginning of Jesus's ministry. This is the word becoming flesh and dwelling among us. This is the beginning of that. In 1:14, it says, "The Word became flesh and dwelt

among us. And we have seen his glory." And I said at the time when we went through that text that the us and the we there is the first disciples, making this text the beginning of them seeing, "Wait a minute, there's something special about this man." Jesus wasn't just here dwelling, hanging out. He lived 30+ years among people, real people, just as real as you and as real as me. Whether it's in a home or in a conversation on a dusty road of an ancient town called Bethany by the Jordan, Jesus lived among people and they saw his glory. This is when verse 14 begins to be fulfilled in history. And think about it, it doesn't happen among kings and princes. He's not hobnobbing with the social or religious elite. It happens in an obscure little town that is lost to history, nobody knows where this took place now, happens among peasants in the middle of nowhere, and it happens with just two guys. You would think that God of the universe shows up and there'd be millions of people. But no, there's just two, just two, Andrew and no name. Look at verse 35, two disciples, verse 37, two disciples, verse 40, "One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew." So we know one guy's name, his name's Andrew, but who's the other guy? We don't know. The theory is it's John the author. That theory's been going almost since this book was written, that John put himself in the text, but he didn't want to say his name because he's like, "The issue here is not who wrote it. The issue is who I wrote about." And so I have no reason to doubt that, I think that's John too. So verse 40, you got Andrew who's got a brother, Peter. We know from the other gospels that John has a brother, James. And the four of them probably lived in the same town. They're probably in their late 20s, early 30s, somewhere in there in this moment. Some think John is a teenager. He's like the scrawny little brother. They probably fished together. I think they had a small business together where they worked the Sea of Galilee together. I bet they worshiped in the same synagogue. They followed John the Baptist together. I mean, it says there in verse 35 that Andrew and John were two of John's disciples, John the Baptist. It wouldn't surprise me if James and Peter were too. So here they are. They're disciples of John the Baptist, and he's been teaching them over and over like, "Hey, the Messiah is coming. The Messiah is coming. Let me tell you. Here's what it's going to be like. Get yourself ready, repent, be baptized, all that stuff because the Messiah's coming." And so they're hearing that preaching together, and then we see in the text they pretty much meet Jesus together too. Let's see how that happens, verse 35, "The next day again, John was standing with two of his disciples, and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, 'Behold the Lamb of God.'" This is now day three of the first week of Jesus's ministry. John the Baptist sees Jesus walking by as He's standing there with two of his followers and says to them, "Behold the Lamb of God."

Now, I don't know about you, I picture him saying this to thousands in this moment, "Behold the Lamb of God," standing up on a rock and thousands are hearing it, and he's like, "Behold the lamb of God." But no, the text says what? Just two guys. Two guys. It's like he's saying, "Hey, guys. Hey, come here. Hey, you know that one I was telling you about yesterday? Yeah, the Lamb, the sacrifice, the substitute that'll take upon himself the punishment sinners deserve for their sins, the sacrifice that God provided, it's God's lamb. Not for his own sins because he doesn't have any, but for the sins of his people, that one I told you about yesterday," he's like, "Hey guys, like he's right there. He's right there. The one I was saying was among us the day before, He's here now. He's right there." The implication is you need to go meet him, you need to go talk to him. And we know that's the implication, why? Because that's what they did, verse 37, "The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. They trusted their teacher, and they obeyed." So the first time John the Baptist says, "Behold the Lamb of God," chapter 1, verse 29, the text says that nobody followed. It doesn't say anything about people following Jesus. This

time he says it, two people follow him. Lifts up Jesus, two guys follow Jesus, and, listen, the world has never been the same after that moment.

Now what does this teach us about true ministry? What does John the Baptist show us about a true servant, a true Christian, how they minister to people? Well, true ministry, point #1) **is marked by Humility in light of Jesus.** That's what true ministry looks like. **It's Humility in light of Jesus.** In light of all that Jesus is, which John the Baptist most likely receives by revelation from God, in light of all that Jesus is compared to all that John is, humility is not a suggested response or maybe a good idea. Humility is the only right response. When the eternal God, when the creator, when the truth and life incarnate, when the glory of God himself, when God's Son is among you, humility is right. Self-focus, wanting people to focus on you, your accomplishments, your gifts, your abilities, your ministry when the focus could be on Jesus instead, it's like a marble eclipsing the sun. It's just crazy. Something like us, far smaller, far less impressive getting in the way of people seeing the brightness, the greatness, the glory of Jesus himself? I mean, when Jesus is the hydraulic lift that is used to elevate you, that is dangerous. That is incredibly, incredibly dangerous. But here, John the Baptist... Well, I don't know if it's done this for you, but the more I've studied him in the last three sermons in this series, the more he has just become... I want to be like him in every possible way. I want to study him more. I want to be just like a fraction of him. Think about it. He spends his entire ministry preparing people to leave him by pointing to the coming Messiah. And when the Messiah comes, he actively encourages his followers, "You need to go over there. You need to follow Jesus instead." I mean, we have a tendency to want to make our name great and build our empires. We hope our name lives longer than our physical lives.

John the Baptist, he's content. I think he found joy in becoming a nobody so that people would know and follow Jesus instead of him, even his own followers. And it makes sense that Jesus's first followers would come from John's followers. Why? Because John existed to what? Prepare people to meet Jesus. So when he shows up, he's like, "You need to go over there." True ministers show their humility in how they release their followers from themselves so that their followers can follow others. Think about it. John the Baptist isn't building a ministry empire. What's he doing? He's detonating his ministry empire. Thousands and thousands coming from all over, baptizing people from all over the nation, and he's detonating it. And then he's taking the rubble, which is the people, saying, "You don't need to follow me anymore." Taking those people, that rubble, and saying, "Hey, Jesus, let's build your ministry with the people that are here. Let's build your ministry with the people that are here." I mean, that's a true servant of God. That's real. That's true ministry, making sure there's a constant theme of getting out of the way so that people follow Jesus instead, that he gets the attention. That's what Christians are to do. It's we just want people to know him. We just want people to serve him. And that won't happen if the focus is on us and we will be the focus unless we're growing in humility and we won't be humble unless we know, unless we meditate, unless we spend time thinking and embracing all that Jesus is and all that Jesus has done for us. I mean, I think it's true, great humility comes from a great vision of God so that the greater God gets, it's like a teeter-totter, the lower you get. And that's a really good thing. Isn't it? I mean, your flesh won't think that's good. Other people won't think it's good. Your heart will tell you that's not good, but it is really, really, really good for Jesus to increase and you to decrease. One author put it this way. He said, "At a time when public trust in Christian leaders is at an all-time low," and he wrote that in the 90s. So, "At a time when public trust in Christian leaders is at an all-time low, the world is in a desperate need of preachers," and I would just say Christians, "who are prepared to mortgage their personal

ambitions and popularity out of a consuming concern for Jesus's preeminence and the advance of his cause by whatever human instrument." Translation: The world is in need of Christians who do not care who gets the credit for Jesus becoming preeminent in and through their lives and ministries because they're just so excited that what? That Jesus is becoming more wonderful to people and they don't care how that's happening.

That's John the Baptist. That's true ministry. Now, starting in verse 38, the historical Jesus enters the book of John. He takes center stage. He never leaves from this moment on. And how would Jesus respond to these two disciples following him? Well, I would ask you, how would you respond when you saw two guys following you? Let's look at verse 38, "Jesus turned, saw them following him, and said to them, 'What are you seeking?' And they said to him, 'Rabbi,'" which means teacher, "'where are you staying?'" We'll stop there. Scholars want to say that follow in verse 37 and verse 38 means becoming a disciple, but verse 38, they haven't even talked to Jesus yet. There's been no interaction. So he turns around. So you've got to picture it. Okay. So John the Baptist is standing with them. Jesus is walking by, and as He's walking by, he's like, "Guys, the Lamb of God." And so Jesus keeps walking because they're not talking. He's pointing to him. So he goes and the guys are like, "Okay, well, let's go." And so they start following him. So you got to picture that in your head. And so here's Jesus, up ahead. Here's these two guys following him. He's probably like, "What do you want? Can I help you?" That's what he says, "What are you seeking? What do you want? How can I help you? What's on your mind?" And notice they do the wonderful thing. They answer a question with a question, always helpful. "Where are you staying?" In other words, what we want is going to take a little longer than a brief conversation here on the street. So they accept John the Baptist's assessment of him. They even make him their Rabbi. You're the leader. You're a Rabbi. You're a teacher. But they want to talk, and notice Jesus very plainly says, verse 39, "Well, come and see where I'm staying." So they came and they saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day for it was about the 10th hour. Now Bible nerd moment. So, 10th hour, what does that mean? There's a bit of a debate. Is it Jewish time, which would make it 4:00 PM, or is it Roman time like ours, which would make it 10:00 AM? I think it's referring to Roman time. Why? Because it says there in verse 39 that they stayed with him that day. That makes more sense to say that about 10:00 AM than 4:00 PM. So that's why I take it that way. So from the text, we see a question in verse 38, invitation in verse 39. And I think that gives us insight into true ministry, the very first moment of Jesus's ministry. From him here, we see true ministry's, point #2) ***Shepherding like Jesus. True ministry is Shepherding like Jesus.*** And what we see in Jesus's shepherding of these two interested potential disciples is a shepherding marked by two things, interest and intimacy. Paul the apostle characterizes ministry like this in 1 Thessalonians 2:7. He compares ministry to a nursing mother. I mean, is there anyone more interested and intimate than a nursing mother? Listen to the way he puts ministry. He says, "We were gentle among you like a nursing mother taking care of her own children."

So here's pastor, leader, minister, apostle. And he says, "The way you could characterize my ministry with you, the illustration for that is a nursing mom. That's how we treated you, being affectionately desirous of you. We were ready to share with you, not only the gospel of God, but also our own selves. There's intimacy, because you had become very dear to us." You see this illustrated in the way that Jesus treats these two disciples. First, he takes an interest in them. He initiates a conversation by asking them a question. He wanted to know what they wanted presumably so he could help them get what they wanted. Here, there is an interest there between the pastor, the minister, whoever it is that you lead in your life. Is there an interest there that, to

the people entrusted to your care, that's not a job that you're just punching the clock? He knows the people. He wants to know them better. He interacts with the people. He asks questions. He generally takes an interest. Not because he has to but because he wants to. He wants to help the people he's interested. And second, true ministry embodies shepherding that's intimate. Notice verse 39, Jesus invites him over to where he is staying. He makes room for him in his life, and it's an extended period of time. It's not just like, "Hey, I'll give you a half an hour." Oh no, it's a period of all day. Like the God of the universe gives somebody all day. He didn't just talk to them. He talked with them. That's the implication of the text at least. They interacted. They got to know him. He probably got to know them. They get to know him. And I know they got to know him because verse 41, after spending the day with Jesus, Andrew's like, "We found the Messiah. We found him." Interest and intimacy, that's true ministry. Jesus models this in a speech that he gives in John 10 about a good shepherd. He says here's a good shepherd, really, by extension, all shepherds. And I'm not talking about just pastors. I'm talking about like you're a teacher in a classroom or you're a mom with your kids, you're a dad with your family. Maybe you're a CEO at a company, like you're a minister, you're a shepherd. What does that look like? "All good shepherds," Jesus says John 10, "They speak to the sheep. They know the sheep, some even by name. He leads them. He protects them from danger rather than running away from the dangers that could harm the sheep. They know him. He knows them. He's not a stranger to them. They're not strangers to him. He even, if called upon, will risk his life to protect the sheep."

He's the good Shepherd. Jesus is the perfect Shepherd. There are no perfect servants other than him, but he is the model. He is the standard for true Christian ministries, the model for all Christians to emulate. So again, you may not be the shepherd of a church or a pastor, all of that, but maybe the shepherd of the people in your home or at your job. Do you take an interest in them? Do you know them? Do you let them get close to you? Obviously, if you're a CEO of a company with hundreds of people or have some kind of job like, that's going to be more difficult and you got to hire other shepherds to take care of other people, leaders, managers, all of that. I get it, but the principal remains. Whether it's your wife and kids, or whether it's people at your job, whether it's the ministry that you have in our local church, one of the major goals of ministry is shepherding, and that's seen in Jesus being interested and intimate. I mean, think about it. If anyone could be hands off, like got to keep people at arm's distance, protect myself, just don't click with those people, we don't have a lot in common, that would be Jesus with like every human being ever, right? Aren't you glad that's not how he is? Let's watch out for excuses to not be interested or intimate with the people that God's placed in our lives. Let's not be like those leaders who have a ton of fans but very few, if any, friends. You don't see that in Jesus. True ministry is shepherding like Jesus, being interested in people and being intimate with them, allowing them into your life. It's also seen in the impact of spending a day with Jesus. Look at verse 40, "One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah.'"

When I was in high school, I'm two years older than my sister, and it drove my sister crazy on the first day of school, freshman year, when the teachers are reading the role and they'd say her name, and they would say what? "Oh, you're John's sister," drove her nuts. And I wonder if that was the same for Andrew, probably not, but that's where he is. You can't say his name without saying his famous brother, Simon Peter, but it makes sense though. This book, John, is written some 50 to 60 years after the events took place and it assumes the readers knew Peter better than they knew Andrew, which makes perfect sense. Peter is one of the, you know, pillars of the church, central leader of the early church, makes perfect sense. But what I want you to see is that

this like superstar hero of early Christianity is brought to Jesus by a lesser-known brother. Andrew spends the day with Jesus, verse 39, and when the conversation ends, the text says the first thing he does before he does anything else is he finds his brother, Peter. Verse 40, "He first found his brother Peter and said, 'We found the Messiah.'" You think about it. Jesus asked, "What are you seeking?" And Andrew says, "We found the Messiah." It seems like that's what they were seeking. "Behold, the Lamb of God. We trust you, John. We're going to find this out for ourselves. And hey, we found him." This means Peter was there at Bethany in that city. Again, maybe he's a follower of John the Baptist. Maybe he's heard all of these things as John the Baptist has been talking to them and preaching. And maybe he's got baptized and he's repented of his sin. So when Andrew shows up and said, "Hey, we found the guy, like he's here, the one John the Baptist has been talking about, like, he's here now," he follows the leadership of his brother, yes, but listen, Andrew cannot help but make sure Peter knows that he's found the Messiah. And I think that gives us insight. If we're going to take ministry like home or work or here in church, and we're just going to boil it down to its most essential core, true ministry is, point #3) **Bringing people to Jesus**. That's all it is. It's **Bringing people to Jesus**. Whether it's the first time Jesus is brought to a person or whether it's the hundredth time Jesus is brought to a person, whether that person is a non-Christian and you bring them to Jesus or whether that person is a Christian that needs to be brought to Jesus for the thousandth time in their life, this is the essence. This is the core, bringing people to Jesus.

In fact, in the book of John, every time Andrew is seen, chapter 1, 6, and 12, whenever he's mentioned, he's always doing the same thing, taking people to Jesus. And the idea is true ministry, bringing people to Jesus, is the natural effect when we get to know who Jesus really is. He spends the day with Jesus. He gets to know who he really is, and he's like, "I can't help but share this, the one, my father, like you got to know this right now." To know the real Jesus is to become a bringer of people to Jesus. Why? Because you just want them to know him. You just want them to know what you know. You just want them to have what you have. You know they need forgiveness. You know they need grace. You know they need mercy. And you're like, "I just want you to have it too." And look at the text. The great Peter comes to Jesus from a brother who loves him and wants him to know what he does. Hey, the Messiah is here, and think about it. Everything Peter would become, humanly speaking, starts with Andrew finding him and saying, "Hey, I need to take you to somebody." Andrew becomes the second preacher after John the Baptist in the world, and John the Baptist preaching the thousands, Andrew preaching to one. Don't ever forget the most obvious way people come to Jesus is through the witness in both word and deed of family members and friends bringing them to Jesus. And we talked a lot about evangelism in the last message I did in the series. We talked about what to do and how to do it, even gave some tips, some very practical tips. So let me just say this. Let's not let the nonsense in the media that's trying to paint Christians in a certain light and has been trying to for decades, and let's not let past interactions with family or friends stop us from bringing them to Jesus.

So if you need to apologize for something to make your ministry to them credible, then do it. If you have to study up a little bit because they're kind of smart or they got some ideas and it's going to be a little bit of a back and forth, just do that. If you have to practice with another Christian, "Okay, I'm going to pretend to be my atheist father and you be the Christian, and we're going to go back and forth. We're going to try to figure this out," just do those things. See, here's the thing, is we let this excuse or we let excuses be more powerful in our souls than the simple truth that Jesus saves and that he saved us. He can save your friends. He can save your family. If he can do it for you, he can use you to do it for them. That's true ministry. And the last place we

see true ministry is in kind of hard to see place in verse 42. He brought him to Jesus. Andrew brings Simon to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon, the son of John." That would kind of be like your last name. Here's how you're identified. You're John's son, not John the Baptist, by the way, or John the apostle, but another John. Lots of Johns. "You shall be called Cephas, which means Peter." Andrew takes Peter to Jesus. I picture him kind of dragging him to Jesus because of that word brought, but that's probably not what happened. Peter follows the leadership of his brother. He trusts the witness of his brother. And notice before speaking to him, what does Jesus do? It says, "He looked at him," and that word isn't just like he glanced at him. That word speaks of searching of, he read him. He examined him. And then after doing that, Jesus shows that he's God in the flesh. How do I know that? Two ways. First, Jesus shows that he knows everything because he names Peter without having met him before. He does what only God can do. And then second, Jesus does what only God does in the Bible.

If you're familiar with the Old Testament, God shows up, talks to a guy like a guy named Abram and says, "You know, I'm going to give you all these promises, and you know what? I'm going to change your name to Abraham." Same thing with Jacob, change it to Israel. God is in the business of changing people's names to show his authority over them, number one, but number two, to say, "This is going to be your character. This is going to be your future." So he looks at Peter and says, "You're the rock." Well, when you follow Peter's life he's anything but a rock, right? He's more jellyfish, right? Spineless, gutless, brash, arrogant, foot in mouth, ready, fire, aim. Like that's Peter, right? We all know that. That's not where he stayed. After Jesus's resurrection, becomes a rock, a faithful strong leader, fearless, true minister who shows us that true ministry is marked by courage because of Jesus. He was anything but a rock, but with Jesus, starting with this proclamation in the moment that they met, he eventually becomes a rock, a faithful, courageous minister. He preached Jesus in the face of people that wanted him dead for doing so. He was willing to go to prison. He takes the gospel to people who aren't Jewish at a time when racial tension was so high, just to show that Jesus is for everyone, and he doesn't care what anyone else would think about bringing the gospel to them.

Even though he messes that up in Galatia and gives into intimidation and being very cowardly, he eventually repents of that. How do I know that? Because when this book was written, 20 to 30 years prior, Peter was crucified upside down for being a follower of Jesus. That's courage. Keep your life by defying Jesus on the one hand or death by crucifixion, and he chose the latter because he was a rock. And anybody reading this, the first readers of this would see that name and go, "That is exactly what he was," because they would know he gave his life for Christ. He was courageous, faithful to the end. So guys, let me talk to you specifically, even though what I'm going to say applies to everybody. So we had a men's conference this weekend, right? Were you guys there? Anybody there? Was it good weekend? Awesome.

It was on being men of courage at a time when we're living in place and time and history that's calling us and moving us and forcing us to choose between compromise and courage. It may have been that you sat there this weekend, and we put this together and kind of help you and encourage you in this time, but it may have been that you were sitting there this weekend saying, "I'm not courageous. I'm weak. I compromise. I'm not a leader. I'm so ashamed. I hear the message, and here's where it is, and my life is like way down here." Listen, the snapshot of your life now doesn't have to be where it is forever because if Jesus can make Peter a rock, he can do the same for you. If you think about it, guys, this is what we do. We go, "Okay, there's the standard, and I got to go from here to there overnight." Right? That's what we want to do, 0 to

60. How about just zero to one? How about just six to seven? How about just 13 to 14? Just one step of obedience, one step forward in obedience. That would be a good response, not only to the men's conference, but also to this text. See, a lot more could be said about true ministry, but humility, shepherding, that's interested and intimate, bringing people to Jesus for the first time or the thousandth time, and courage. That's real true, genuine, faithful ministry on the very first day of Jesus's ministry. Incredible, incredible book, the book of John. Let's pray.

Jesus, we're all in our lives right now, here, are watching, all in different places with you and all in different places in relation to the things we've seen in this text. So I thank you for the hope that just giving Peter a new name can give to so many who are watching now, who are here. I pray for your grace. I pray for your teaching. I pray for your sanctification, your growth in our lives. I pray that you would do that, that however you would want us specifically to respond to this message, that you would help us to take that next step of obedience towards you. Why? Because you are the Lamb of God. You gave yourself. You gave your life to rescue us from our sins. You took the punishment we deserve. You took our wrath. You took our hell so that we can enjoy heaven forever. And it's because of that we want to, out of love and gratitude, we want to follow you. So give us the grace that we need. Your Word says that grace teaches us to say no to ungodliness and to live upright and godly lives, and so give us more grace, show us more of your grace so that we'll be more like you as a result of our time in your Word. Do this, please, I pray for the glory of your name. Amen.