



THE BEREA PAGE

“Examining . . . to see if these things are so” ~ Acts 17.11

Unsung Brothers

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Save for a break here and a bounce there, Mark Lemke would have been named Most Valuable Player of the 1991 World Series. All he did in the seven games was bat .417, hit three triples, score the winning run in Game 4, and make a key defensive play which changed the flow of Game 5. Not a bad week’s work for a man who was not the starter at his position at the beginning of the series, or for much of the season for that matter. A little known utility infielder, as his role is called, young Mr. Lemke took up the slack when better known stars failed to live up to advance billing.

The above is the lead paragraph in an article I wrote for the bulletin of an Atlanta-area church shortly after the 1991 World Series. The thrilling series, which featured two worst-to-first teams, saw the Minnesota Twins defeat the Atlanta Braves four games to three, bringing to a close a series of events that positively electrified the Atlanta region. Some recent manuscript editing led me to think about and re-read that article, not because the baseball playoffs are upon us, but because of the lesson I used Lemke’s success to introduce. My aim in the piece, which I entitled “Utility Players,” was to stress Paul’s teaching in 1 Corinthians 12.12–26 on the nature of Christ’s body, especially his emphasis on the indispensability of its “lesser” members (vv. 14–24).

I remembered “Utility Players” while reading a section of the manuscript that focuses on Andrew. That revelation may surprise you; Andrew was an *apostle*, after all, included among the first four names in every list of the twelve (Matt 10.2; Mark 3.18; Luke 6.14; Acts 1.13). In Matthew and Mark, he’s one of the four fishermen Jesus called first (Matt 4.18; Mark 1.16). He’s also one of those named who asked Jesus the questions that prompted the Jerusalem discourse (Mark 13.3). But apart from those eight references, all of which merely mention him, his name appears only five other times (Mark 1.29; John 1.40, 44; 6.9; 12.22). To say “the NT shows little interest” in Andrew is spot on (MacDonald 1992, 243).

But the story of Jesus’ ministry would be markedly different without him. At the urging of John the Baptist, he spent a day with Jesus, was among the first to recognize him as the Messiah, and then brought Peter to him (John 1.35–42). Later, when Jesus inquired how they might feed the 5,000, it was Andrew, identified as “Simon Peter’s brother,” who brought the boy with the loaves and fish to Jesus (6.1–10). And after the triumphal entry, Andrew took the lead in taking the Greeks who had approached Philip to Jesus (12.20–26).

Would Peter have met Jesus anyway? Would someone else have connected Jesus and the boy? Would Philip have led the Greeks to Jesus on his own? Possibly. But there’s no way to know for sure. The point is moot, however; things happened as they did because of Andrew. In terms of the NT’s interest in him, he was a utility player; but if we were inclined to do such things, we can

make a case that he was also an MVP.

As we reflect on the brothers' roles in light of the emphasis on each in the NT, Andrew and Peter exemplify Paul's point in 1 Corinthians 12. To paraphrase verse 15, "If Andrew should say, 'Because I'm not Peter, I don't belong to the body,' he is not for that reason any less a part of the body." Peter's gifts and contributions were vital, and there's a reason he gets billing in one of the NT's featured roles. But Andrew's contributions were also important, however "less" his role.

His lesser, but still significant contributions remind us to guard against repeating the specific problem at issue in 1 Corinthians 12–14: exaggerating the importance of some gifts, and the people who demonstrate them, over others. Paul wanted the Corinthians to understand that those they considered "weaker" were to be afforded "greater honor" and "respect." (12.22–24). But don't overlook his use of the word "indispensable" (ἀναγκαῖος, *anagkaios*; v. 22). As important as the apostles, prophets, teachers, miracle-workers, healers, leaders, tongue speakers, and interpreters were, their contributions were inadequate to complete the body's purpose (12.28–30).

And so it remains. When Christ's body presents itself as mature, healthy, strong, and winsome, "the whole body," including "every supporting ligament," is involved in "the work of ministry" (Eph 4.11–16). Including the unsung brothers.

Works Cited

MacDonald, Dennis R. 1992. "Andrew." *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*. vol. 1. ed. David Noel Freedman. Doubleday.

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