One of the great celebrative anthems that comes to us out of African-American culture is the powerful spiritual “Ain’t Got Time To Die.” It was written by Hall Johnson and it has these joyfully dramatic words:

“Been so busy praising my Jesus,

Been so busy working for the Kingdom,

Been so busy serving my Master…

Ain’t got time to die.

If I don’t praise him,

If I don’t serve him,

The rocks gonna cry out

Glory and honor, glory and honor…

Ain’t got time to die.”

In this inspiring and wonderful spiritual song, 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… then, we can’t sit still… we become so excited, so thrilled, so grateful for our new life in Christ that we can’t help but love Him, praise Him, serve Him, and share 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, gratefully, excitedly, he ran to share the good news with his brother Simon.

“Andrew went and found his brother, Simon and said to him: ‘We have found the Messiah’”

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 comes to center stage… and each time he is bringing 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 bringing to Jesus the enquiring Greeks who wanted to meet Jesus and visit with Him.

Having found Jesus, he could not sit still, he could not help it… he had to share Christ with others.

A minister tells about a woman in his church who is so excited to be a Christian. She had a shady past and had pretty much hit bottom when a friend reached out to her… and brought her to church. The church member welcomed her warmly and loved her into the circle of their love and God’s love. She started going to church faithfully. She joined a wonderful Sunday School class. She began studying the Bible daily. She started praying regularly… and in the process was converted. She realized for the very first time in her life that God loved her… even her! She came to understand that even though she had done all those sordid things in her earlier life, that God still loved her, forgave her, accepted her, valued her, treasured her. She was absolutely bowled over by that “Amazing Grace” of God and she committed herself to Christ heart and soul. Recently she said to her minister, “I’m so excited to be a Christian, that I’ve got a strong case of the “can’t help its.”

This is also true of Andrew. He, too, 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.

**Let’s explore why that may have been for Andrew.**

**FIRST OF ALL, BECAUSE WE ARE CHRISTIANS, WE CAN’T HELP BUT BE GRATEFUL, AND IN BEING GRATEFUL OFFER PRAISE TO GOD.**

Andrew, along with the people of his time, was longing for a Messiah to come, hoping for a Messiah, praying for a Messiah. When he found the Messiah in Jesus, he was incredibly grateful. You know there should be no such thing as an ungrateful Christian. Christianity by one 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 one of many marks of being Christian.

A group of young students were 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. The psalmist did not make that mistake. Read the Psalms. They resound on page after page with praise and gratitude to God. The 100th Psalm is a classic example:

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the lands.

Serve the Lord with gladness!

Come into his presence with singing!

Know that the Lord is God!

It is He that made us and we are His.

We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.

Enter His gates with thanksgiving and

Go into His courts with praise!

Give thanks to Him and bless His name.

For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting and His faithfulness is from age to age.

That same theme of praise and gratitude is also in evidence in present-day hymnals. Hymns like: How Great Thou Art;

Now Thank We All Our God;

Come, Ye Thankful People, Come;

O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing;

Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee;

and hundreds more like these great hymns of gratitude fill our hymnals and our hearts.

Let me ask you something. Do you feel gratitude to God often? Do you have a strong case of the “can’t help its” when it comes to gratitude? Do you express it? Tell Him, thank Him? Gratitude is one of the marks of being Christian. Does it show in you?

**SECONDLY, BECAUSE WE ARE CHRISTIANS, WE CAN’T HELP BUT BE LOVING.**

Again, Andrew is a great example of love. He was big-hearted, magnanimous, generous. He was a loving, caring person who was eager to share and anxious to help others. If only we could learn that lesson from Andrew, life would be better for all of us.

Her name is Donna. Donna is a member of a church in Houston. She is a mentor in the church’s Kids Hope USA program. Every week she goes to a nearby elementary school to be a friend, encourager, and mentor to a little boy named John. John looks to be 6 or 7 years old. Donna and John have bonded in a beautiful way. Though there is quite a difference in their ages, Miss Donna – as John calls her- has become John’s best friend. Once each week, she visits him at school, helps him with his school work… and then “going the second mile” every Saturday, Donna takes John to do exciting things that without Donna, John would likely never get to do – things like the zoo, the museum, the Galleria.

A few months ago, 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 in the church hall 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 intense commitment to lovingly stand by Miss Donna, his friend and mentor.

Some there saw John eyeing the goodies on the reception table – punch and chocolate chip cookies in abundance… and they said to him, “John, would you like to walk over here 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.

Also in the room that day was a man from Chicago. He had flown all the way from Chicago 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 in the Chicago area. He flies from Chicago to Houston every summer to see Donna and to thank her for what she did for him 38 years ago – and then he made this special trip to be with Donna when her husband died unexpectantly. That man from Chicago says to Donna every time he comes, “I am what I am today because of the love and support you gave me 38 years ago.” He says, “Ms. Donna, you were the first person in my life who believed in me.” And today little John says to her in words and actions: “Miss Donna, I love you. I know you love me. You are my best friend.” Now, 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.

Let the love of God permeate us so that His love flows freely from us to others. It too is a mark of being Christian.

You see, when you are a Christian, you get a strong case of the “can’t help its.” You can’t help but be grateful and you can’t help but be loving. Go and be like Andrew and Donna and most of all, be Like Jesus. Amen