

Sunday's Sermon

Gloria Dei Lutheran Church

250 Fox Hill Road ■ Hampton, Virginia 23669

January 18, 2026

The Reverend David E. Fox

Second Sunday after Epiphany (Year A) 2026

John 1:29-42

Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ. Amen.

Tomorrow, we celebrate the work and life of Martin Luther King Jr., especially his work as a Civil Rights Activist. He was the voice and the headliner of the movement. Even if we do not know the whole speech, most of us can say his “I Have a Dream” speech in part. Oftentimes we look at the work of only the Key Three: Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks, and Malcom X when it comes to the Civil Rights Movement. However, there were a lot of very important folks that did the behind-the-scenes work so that 250,000 people could attend the peaceful March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. One of those folks was Bayard Rustin, a man that Martin Luther King, Jr., called “friend.” Rustin may very well have been one of the most influential people in the Civil Rights Movement and yet the least publicly recognized.

Rustin was influenced by his Quaker upbringing and the teachings of Gandhi making him a lifelong advocate of nonviolent resistance. In fact, in the 1940s, Rustin was beat by police officers for sitting in the front seat of a bus. Rustin knew that his role was not going to be out where everyone could see, because of who he was as an openly gay man in the sixties, and because in his younger days he was part of the communist party, though he later denounced such ties.

Rustin's biggest role, though few know, was in 1963 as the chief organizer of the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. Bayard, with the help of others, coordinated the transportation of 250,000 people, trained volunteers – including police officers – in nonviolent conduct, negotiated with government officials, and ensured that the day would be peaceful from start to finish. Dr. King would have not successfully delivered his powerful “Dream” for all the world to hear, if it were not for Rustin's leadership.

There is a movie that was done in 2023, which now streams on one of the major streaming platforms – and I will say it is not for children. However, it gives you the broader story that I do not have time to give – of course with Hollywood flare.

Bayard Rustin's legacy is a reminder that history is often shaped by those who work behind the scenes – quietly, sacrificially, faithfully – people who make a way so that others can be heard. Bayard Rustin was the Andrew, not the Peter; the architect, not the voice; the disciple, not the headline.

Andrew, in our reading and throughout the Gospels, doesn't get a long speech either. Pastor Stoffregen comments, "Andrew is never mentioned just by himself. Twice he is called Simon Peter's brother (1:40, 6:8). We are told that Philip came from the city of Andrew and Simon (1:44). Andrew and Philip go and tell Jesus about the Greeks (12:22). It may be that being named as the first follower of Jesus ([only] in John) was the first time that he had ever been first in anything." It is worth mentioning that his brother Peter does seem to get a lot of credit (in John, Peter is mentioned 32 times, compared to Andrew's three). Though he doesn't stand up to share a speech like his brother does in the book of Acts, Andrew was working behind the scenes and bringing people to Jesus. All three times that he is mentioned in John, he is at work – bringing people to Jesus.

Andrew's legacy is a reminder that faith is often shaped by those who work behind the scenes – quietly, sacrificially, faithfully – people who make a way so that others can be heard.

People of Gloria Dei, I want you to never underestimate the things you do in the name of Jesus, no matter how small you claim them to be. King would have never made his speech in front of a crowd of 250,000 people if it weren't for all of the folks like Rustin. Peter would have never been the disciple and speaker that he was if it weren't for Andrew and for others. Your church cannot be what it is and what it can become without each of you working behind the scenes, coordinating, inviting, welcoming, assisting, listening, encouraging, organizing, preparing, supporting, caring, guiding, advocating, equipping, connecting, showing up, following through, making space, bearing burdens, practicing patience, and loving faithfully – even when you think no one notices.

If it weren't for Barbie picking me up in her blue Honda Accord week after week, I would have missed being with my community of faith on Sundays. I loved going to Sunday school and to worship as a child, and that woman's quiet service made sure that I didn't miss out.

If it weren't for members who make guests feel like they belong, we would be closing our doors alongside so many churches that have quietly fizzled out.

So today, we give thanks for our Andrews—the ones whose faith shows up in faithful, often unnoticed ways.

To those who unlock doors and turn on lights. Who straighten and stock the pew racks. Who run audio and visual, sing, and make music. Who pass out bulletins, point someone to the bathroom, smile, and say, "*Welcome.*" To those who make coffee, teach, read Scripture, help lead worship, and quietly look out for others while we worship. To those who talk about the weather, pray with one another, bring treats for after worship, and invite others to come and see. Thank you. Because of you, look at how many new faces we have welcomed at Gloria Dei. It is truly beautiful to witness.

And to everyone—longtime members and those who are new—know this: when you are here, this community is richer. When you are not, we miss what you uniquely bring. Each of you is valued. Each of you is loved.

This isn't about packing pews—though we wouldn't complain if that happened. It's about building community. It's about belonging. And it's about serving one another in love. Now let me unpack those three things for you.

It's about building community—the kind of community that begins when someone points beyond themselves and says, “*Look—the Lamb of God.*” Like Andrew, we don't build community by being impressive, but by helping people see Jesus, by creating space where questions are welcome and lives are gently gathered together around him.

It's about belonging— because before anyone understands everything about Jesus, he turns and asks, “*What are you looking for?*” Belonging begins not with having all the answers, but with being known, named, and invited: “*Come and see.*” Here, people belong not because they fit a mold, but because Jesus first calls them by name.

And it's about serving one another in love—the kind of love that brings someone else along, that walks a sibling or a stranger to where Jesus is, trusting that transformation is the Holy Spirit's work, not ours. Like Andrew, we serve not for recognition, but because love compels us to say, “*We have found the Messiah,*” and bring others to meet him.

Brothers and sisters, faith is often shaped not in moments of recognition, but in lives quietly given in service.

Jesus continues to gather his people not through spectacle, but through faithfulness—through those who prepare the way, who notice, who invite, who love.

When you leave from here today, trust that Christ is already at work in your daily lives, using even what feels small or hidden to draw others into the grace you yourselves have come to know.