

Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> December, 2018  
St. Andrew's Day / 1<sup>st</sup> Of Advent - Year C

Jeremiah 33:14-16

Psalm 19:1-6

Romans 10:9-18

Matthew 4:18-22

**In the name of the Trinity; Creator, Redeemer, and Life-Giver...**

Welcome to this, the First Sunday of Advent. Although, of course, you could be forgiven for not realizing that it is Advent - after all, there is no purple today, as there should be; and we still sang / said the Gloria, which is not usually done in Advent. And we have beautiful flowers in the church today, not necessarily the case in many churches throughout Advent. Maybe it is only the presence of the Advent Wreath up there in the Sanctuary, that actually gives you the clue. But the First Sunday of Advent it is, indeed.

Advent is a time of waiting and preparation. And one of the ways in which we do this each year in the church is that we tell the story of the coming of Christ. We return again and again to the young Virgin Mary entering the temple in preparation to become the God-bearer. We recount the unique roles of St. Joseph the Betrothed, the lowly shepherds, and the Gentile wise men in relation to His birth.

We remember the Hebrew prophets who foretold and prepared the way for Him, culminating with St. John the Baptist and Forerunner. Even though we know the story quite well, the point is not simply to remind ourselves of historical details.

No, it is to invite us again and again to "come and see," to participate personally and fully in His healing of our corrupt, broken lives. It is, as we will sing in our final hymn (at 9.30am), to "see him come with clouds descending." It is to hear and respond to a life-changing call - to hear and respond, just as St. Andrew did as the very first disciple and apostle. And that is the other most important occasion we celebrate today.

For today, we celebrate the Feast of St. Andrew, the patron saint of our church. Andrew, of course, was a fisherman, and he was also one of the first disciples. That's the Gospel passage we hear today. He's out fishing with his brother, Peter, using a net, and suddenly this wandering prophet approaches them. "Follow me," Jesus says, "and I will make you fish for people."

Well that makes very little sense really - it's almost a bit creepy; but sure enough, they do it! Right then, without a moment's hesitation, without a single question, they drop their nets and follow. There must have been something about him. Jesus must have had a magnetic personality, or such a compelling vision that it drew them in and made them feel like they were in the presence of God.

When I spoke with the school children on Tuesday about St. Andrew, I asked them to think about what it would have meant to take that risk; to leave behind their homes and families and their jobs and follow this man. And the kids suggested all sorts of reasons why Andrew did it; Jesus' reputation, the promise of adventure and excitement; maybe they were bored with fishing; maybe they wanted to get away from their father!!

But they agreed with my assumption that surely they knew it was crazy. Surely Andrew had doubts and fears. But he did it anyway. He embraced this rabbi's vision, a vision that lifted up the lowly, welcomed the outcast, broke down divisions, and pursued the dream of God.

This is what Bishop Michael Curry, the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church of the United States calls "the Jesus Movement". It's a movement that began that day at the Sea of Galilee, and it continues today. It's a movement comprised of people who are willing to take a crazy risk and follow Christ on the path of love and justice and peace. It's a movement made up of people who are ready to answer the call of discipleship, to leave their nets behind and carry the gospel to a world in need. This is the Jesus movement, and we are all invited to join.

Jesus told Andrew and the other disciples that they would be fishers of people. And that's what Jesus then taught his apostles to do. As they followed him around the countryside of Judea, he taught and they learned. Jesus taught them to bring people to Him through love and selfless acts. He taught the apostles, as he taught everyone that to come to God through Him was the greatest act of love there can ever be.

If, like St. Andrew, we want to play our unique role in the salvation of the world, we must embrace the spiritual disciplines of this Advent season with faith, humility, and repentance. In order to become credible living icons of His salvation, we must prepare ourselves - prepare ourselves to be healed and transformed in holiness as the unique people we are.

There are surely times in our lives when to think of ourselves as holy is almost laughable. And yet, we bear within us, that seed of Christ's holiness, planted within us at our birth, nourished by the Holy Spirit at Baptism, fed and watered by God's Holy Word, and called forth from us as we share in the sacramental life of the church.

This is not about personal piety, or the requirement to all become monks and nuns. It is much more accessible, more simple than that. We just have to take the small steps of which we are all capable - being mindful and deliberate about prayer, generosity, repentance, and reconciliation; reaching out in love and mercy to all around us; opening our hearts and minds to what it is God calls us to in our ordinary, everyday lives.

The same Lord Who called and enabled an unlikely group of fishermen to become great evangelists, disciples, and apostles wants to do something equally amazing with us. During the season of Advent, as we prepare to celebrate His birth, the least we can do is to cooperate.

Let us give thanks to God for the example and the witness of Andrew - the first Apostle. Not a great and mighty man, only a simple fisherman - but someone who allowed that seed of holiness to grow within him.

In the name of God. Amen