

Matthew 4.18-22; Isaiah 52.7-10; Romans 10.12-18  
Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> November 2015 – St Andrew's Day  
(1<sup>st</sup> Sun. of Advent)  
St. Andrew's, Totteridge 8:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m.

*Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts always be acceptable in your sight, O Lord my strength and my redeemer (Ps 19:14)*

This time last year there was trouble in Jerusalem over proposed changes in the arrangements for prayer and worship in the Holy Sanctuary, leading to the murder of Rabbis at a synagogue. This year we have witnessed indiscriminate bombing in Syria and elsewhere, the downing of aircraft in Sinai and the atrocities in Paris - and we could be forgiven, I think, for feeling a little despair at how and why humanity must inflict such horrors on one another. A little despair, perhaps, but by no means abandonment of hope!

St. Andrew's Day gives us an opportunity to reflect on a rather better way to spread the good news of faith. It is relatively early in Jesus' ministry. He is walking by the Sea of Galilee and he sees two brothers casting their nets. There is no record of any conversation, there is no exchange. We simply hear Jesus say, 'Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.' Somehow, was it in seconds or minutes, we're told it was immediately, the brothers, one of whom was our Andrew, drop everything and follow our Lord. Somehow, they were able to recognize the imperative of that call, such that they had no excuse, no alternative, no other choice they could possibly make.

Was it possible that in his eyes, through his voice, in his presence, they were able to see that all the years of blood, sweat and death that humanity had endured to get to this moment in their lives, - that all this was going to be defeated. That this man had come to bring us life, and life in abundance at that. According to John's gospel, when we think of St. Andrew, we can remember a man

whose first action on encountering Jesus was to find his brother and bring him to Jesus.

And according to Isaiah, 'How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation...' I think Andrew was granted a vision of this, the essential quality of what he'd discovered in Jesus, such that he couldn't contain himself, he just had to fetch his brother, Simon Peter. He had to share the good news.

Most references to Andrew in the New Testament simply include him on a list of the Twelve Apostles, or group him with his brother. But he appears acting as an individual three times in the Gospel of John. When a number of Greeks wish to speak with Jesus, they approach Philip, who tells Andrew, and the two of them tell Jesus (Jn 12:20-22).

Before Jesus feeds the Five Thousand, it is Andrew who says, "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish." (Jn 6:8f). And the first two disciples whom John reports as attaching themselves to Jesus (Jn 1:35-42) are Andrew and another disciple. Having met Jesus, Andrew then finds his brother Simon and brings him to Jesus. Thus, on each occasion when he is mentioned as an individual, it is because he is instrumental in bringing others to meet Jesus.

The need for us to bring people to God is arguably even greater today than it was in Jesus' day. There are billions more people alive in the world today than ever before. The need for them all to be made aware of the love of God is not someone else's responsibility, it's ours. The need to help people realise that they are loved, cared for, prayed over and valued by a God who loves them, and a worshipping community of God-loving people who do the same, is greater today than ever before.

That's why last year we met in the parish hall. That's why Revd Jeanette came to help us identify a vision for our future and to identify some priorities for this outpost of people who want to bring God's kingdom to earth. Who, metaphorically speaking, want to do what Andrew did and run to bring our brother, our sister, our children, our friends, to know the love of God made manifest in Totteridge.

And so having identified priorities, of 1) developing our outreach, of 2) making this church more accessible, of 3) developing our work with children & schools, and of 4) offering a good range of music & worship that we attract as many new disciples as possible, we will continue to explore over the years, ways we can bring these aspirations to fruition.

But we cannot be concerned solely with our own situation, as individuals or as a church family. It is said that faith is caught and not taught. We have to be concerned about being 'kingdom' people, interested in all of human behaviour and everything God has made. We have to note how *all* human affairs, including our stewardship of creation, are saturated with spiritual meaning and Kingdom significance, not just our own. ***We have to be concerned about getting the church into the world rather than just getting people into church.***

We don't have to be clever evangelists, or know our bibles inside out or be good at theology. But we can pray to have the gift which Andrew seemed to have in abundance – of showing his friends what a difference Jesus had made to his life, thereby ensuring that they caught the faith as well. In this world so filled with evil passions, compounded by doubt, despair and misfortune, the reason we have to do this is made clear by the word of Christ and we have to share the good news - 'Follow me, Jesus said, and I will make you fish for people.'

*Spoken in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

## **Matthew 4.18-22**

### **Jesus Calls the First Disciples**

18 As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the lake—for they were fishermen. <sup>19</sup>And he said to them, 'Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.';

<sup>20</sup>Immediately they left their nets and followed him. <sup>21</sup>As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them.

<sup>22</sup>Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him.

## **Isaiah 52.7-10**

<sup>7</sup> How beautiful upon the mountains  
are the feet of the messenger who announces  
peace,  
who brings good news,  
who announces salvation,  
who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns.'

<sup>8</sup> Listen! Your sentinels lift up their voices,  
together they sing for joy;  
for in plain sight they see  
the return of the Lord to Zion.

<sup>9</sup> Break forth together into singing,  
you ruins of Jerusalem;  
for the Lord has comforted his people,  
he has redeemed Jerusalem.

<sup>10</sup> The Lord has bared his holy arm  
before the eyes of all the nations;  
and all the ends of the earth shall see  
the salvation of our God.

## **Romans 10.12-18**

<sup>12</sup>For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. <sup>13</sup>For, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'  
<sup>14</sup> But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? <sup>15</sup>And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!' <sup>16</sup>But not all have obeyed the good news; for Isaiah says, 'Lord, who has believed our message?' <sup>17</sup>So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ.

<sup>18</sup> But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have; for  
'Their voice has gone out to all the earth,  
and their words to the ends of the world.'

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