

Matthew 4.18-22; Isaiah 52.7-10; Romans 10.12-18  
Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> November 2014 – 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)*

As I'm sure you've all heard, there's been trouble in Jerusalem recently over proposed changes in the arrangements for prayer and worship in the Holy Sanctuary that is now topped by the Islamic Dome of the Rock. This has led even to the murder of Rabbis at a synagogue, one of them being a Brit from North London. Given that this site is of such religious significance to all three Abrahamic faiths, Muslim, Jew and Christian, I suppose we shouldn't be surprised that some are prepared to resort to murder in order to express the passions these places inspire.

Whilst we must always be in sorrow for acts of indiscriminate murder, there is something awesome and wonderful about the three faiths having to share this site and that, for the most part, this has been achieved with relative peace. It isn't always so now, and it wasn't always so in ancient history. Not many will know that, under the rock of sacrifice that remains from the site's use as a Jewish Temple, there is a drain through which the blood from the endless round of temple sacrifices flowed out into the valley below. The blood sacrifices sanctioned by mainstream religions are no more in our day and age, indeed, Herod's Temple is no more, but people are still dying thanks to religious fundamentalists who think homicide is an acceptable step in the enforcement of faith.

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. When we think of St. Andrew, we remember a man whose first action on encountering Jesus, according to John's gospel, was to find his brother and bring him to Jesus.

**'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.

But the people of that age were coming from a very different place to you and I, a place of blood, sweat and toil, of numerous and seemingly indifferent tax-collectors, military, priests, a whole pantheon of gods even, who seemed not to care unless the tribute was paid, and even then not very much. And then along comes this different dispensation, this man who talked about how much God loves us, how much he cares for us, how much he wants us to love

and obey him, rather than assume we are in control and wholly responsible for all the gifts life has to offer. For those first disciples it must have seemed as though heaven itself had come to earth – healing, wholeness, the love of God, personified in this one man.

We live in an age where people consider themselves responsible for all the gifts they've been given, through financial or genetic inheritance, through hard graft and maybe a ruthless attitude in making money, through defiance of the laws of nature, the seasons, and the vagaries of an unaccountable and indiscriminate life – *'the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.'* We live in comparative security, we benefit from a fairer tax system, a functional NHS, a network of structures, supports and helplines both public and private that endeavour to catch those who need help. But still people slip through. Still we have poverty, hunger, sickness, depression and broken spirits.

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 we met last week 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 these 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 next five years, ways we can make some of these happen.

We came up with some really good ideas last Wednesday, many ideas under each of these four headings, but as Jeanette said, we won't succeed with everything, and nobody can do this on their own. It will take all of us making some kind of effort to make our aspirations real. But in this world filled with passions driven by doubt, despair, evil and misfortune, the reason we have to do this is clear - *'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.'