



# SAINT ANDREW'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

306 N. Division Street, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104 • (734) 663-0518 • [www.standrewsaa.org](http://www.standrewsaa.org)

## Sermon for Sunday, November 25, 2018

*St. Andrew's Sunday*

FR. ALAN GIBSON

Deuteronomy 30:11-14 | Psalm 19:1-6 | Romans 10:8b-18 | Matthew 4:18-22

In the Name of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

In the Gospels we meet fishermen and farmers, shepherds and vinedressers, women who gather water from a community well and government officials who collect taxes in person, to name a few. These are not the people we generally interact with anymore. They have become somewhat romantic figures of a time gone by, and to us their stories are often little more than quaint historical vignettes. But like us, they were all real people who had their own struggles, their own questions about life and faith, their own sadnesses and joys, just as we do. And they still have something to teach us.

When Jesus called his first disciples to help with his ministry he was drawing on people who knew what it meant to work, to experience hardship, take risks and get up every day prepared to meet success or complete disappointment, and then do it all over again the next day. Fishing was not about going out to the end of a dock on a picturesque pond and spending a few hours enjoying the view with a cooler full of drinks. As it is today, in the ancient world commercial fishing was tough, dangerous, and often frustrating work. It is not for the faint-hearted, not if you are going to be any good at it. Why should fishing for people be any more appealing? Fish always put up a fight when caught. Why would people be any different? Catching one of our own is a daunting task, but that is what Jesus asked those first disciples to join with him in doing.

Why did they respond as they did? Why did Andrew, our Patron, step forward to be the first to follow Jesus? There was something that captured and held his attention, something very appealing in Jesus' person, his message, his encouragement, something he found beautiful.

It's probably safe to assume that Andrew was pretty well set in business with his brother. It was hard work, but fishermen could make a more than decent living if they were committed. Yet Andrew left it behind, responded to Jesus' call and after the Resurrection is said to have traveled, perhaps as far as what is now Kiev, telling the gospel story. Andrew is recognized as the patron saint not only of our parish, but of churches throughout the world, as well as Scotland, Russia, the Ukraine, Greece and Romania.

His is one of many lovely, romantic stories we tell of ancient heroes of the Faith, and we often leave them there in the past, as we sometimes do with the stories from the Gospels, pretty and tidy, depicted in one-dimensional stained glass. We forget, or ignore the fact, that these were people who made fateful decisions, whose response to the call of Jesus had real, personal consequences – for Andrew it was a brutal martyrdom. Unless you're met with the choices and circumstances he and other figures faced we can never know for sure why they responded as they did. But we do know that they had been caught by the love of Christ and saw no other way to live their lives.

Jesus' call is an invitation to live into who and what we are intended to be. Jesus set people on their journey by opening a door and giving the strength to follow in his way with individually crafted gifts, (tools you might say), that allow us to flourish as children of God – all as an act of love. That ministry of love is the message of the Gospel which can be lived out in a multitude of ways and places. For Andrew, it was as a faithful preacher who ended his days far from home. Other followers would be healers, teachers, artists and musicians, architects and builders, care givers, pastors, every day laborers who keep things working, and countless other vocations – each being necessary and dependent on each other. None being more important than another for the work of the kingdom, each gift perfect in the sincerity of its offering. It is up to us to acknowledge what we have been given, both personally and from our ancestors in the faith that preceded us and allow us to be here, and then to put those gifts to their best possible use. Not only for the here and now, but as we pass our work and what we have been given on to those who will come after us.

In addition to giving us himself, Jesus gives us each other as a source of strength and vision to carry out his witness. Jesus spent his life letting people know they are loved and valued for who they are, and if that means anything to us, then our response to the world must be in response to being loved ourselves.

Jesus hands us a great gift, a fishing rod, so to speak, and simply says, 'come fishing with me, let me show you what beautiful things we can accomplish together.'