

The Festival of St. Andrew, Apostle
St. Matthew 4:18-22
November 30th, 2022
Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Fishers of Men

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

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

The Prophet Jeremiah prophesied that the Lord God would send forth many fishers and hunters to call the impenitent into repentance and proclaim the name of the Lord. He wrote in the Sixteenth chapter, the Sixteenth verse: “Behold, I will send for many fishers,’ saith Jehovah, ‘and they shall fish them up; and afterward I will send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the clefts of the rocks.” The Lord God, Jehovah, would send fishers and hunters into the world, because it had forsaken Him. They had gone after every other sort of false god, and polluted the land that He gave to the people of Israel.

Today, we hear the fulfillment of that prophesy. We are told by the Apostle and Evangelist St. Matthew in the previous section before today’s pericope that the Lord + Jesus began to preach repentance for the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand. The Kingdom of Heaven was found in Him. The Kingdom of Heaven was found in repentance. We know from our catechesis that repentance embraces two parts: first, that we are sorry over our sins and desire to live without sin; to stop commit the sins that plague us day in and day out. The second part of repentance is faith. Faith clings to something outside of itself. Faith never clings to its own ability to believe; faith does not cling to faith. It clings rather to something objective outside of itself. True and living faith clings to the Son of the Most High God; to the Lord + Jesus.

Our Lord + Jesus, the Christ, calls today His first four Apostles: Sts. Andrew, Peter, James and John. This call that is recorded in St. Matthew is actually the second time our Lord called these Apostles. St. John, one of the Apostles called, recounts that it was St. Andrew, and another Apostle (who was St. John) who were called first. St. Andrew told his brother Simon, who would become to be known as St. Peter. We can assume that St. John also told his brother St. James. The Apostle and Evangelist St. John also tells us that it is Sts Philip and Nathanael that are called next. They were also from the same city as Sts. Andrew and Peter. This was the first calling of these Apostles, who all attended the wedding feast in Cana with our Lord and saw the miracle of the water turned into wine. And they all believed on Him.

It appears that the Apostles are just as sinful as we are all, for there was required a second calling, which is recorded for us here in the Gospel of the Apostle and Evangelist St. Matthew. Our Lord + Jesus was walking along the Sea of Galilee and saw Sts. Peter and John fishing in their boats. They

left their nets, and followed Him. He would fulfill the prophesy of Jeremiah by making them fishers of men. Walking along a little further He also saw the sons of Zebedee, Sts. James and John cleaning their nets with their father. He also called them to fulfill the prophesy of Jeremiah by making them fishers of men. And they left their boat and father and followed the Lord. They forsook all and followed Him. They gave up their worldly possessions and worldly father for eternal possessions and an heavenly Father. They were caught up into the boat of salvation by the Lord + Jesus.

That is, of course, how fishing works. Sometimes you get a fish on your line that escapes before being pulled into the boat. On account of the sinfulness of mankind; on account of mankind's impenitence, the fish in this world have a tendency to escape being hauled into the boat. No one likes being called to task for their sin. We like to think of ourselves as basically good people. Oh, sure, we have a few "minor" things we need to work on, but basically, we are good people. That is how we think, but the Lord God does not look over our "minor sins." He requires perfection from us for every thought, word and action we do, say, or think. There is no gray area with the Lord God. If we are not perfect in our keeping of the Law, we have failed in all points. And so, those who want to remain in their unbelief, or remain in their sins escape being brought into the boat of the Church; the boat of the Kingdom of Heaven.

But, sometimes, the net of the Word is cast out and brings the fish—all those who believe—into the ark of Christendom. Just like our Lord + Jesus does with the Apostles called into today's Gospel pericope. Through the preaching of the pure Gospel, we are caught into the net of the Word of God. The Lord + Jesus after His baptism began preaching repentance because the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand. He began to cast out the net of salvation found in Him alone. He called all those who heard His preaching to forsake their false gods, give up their sinful lives, and cling in faith to Him. He was the One true God in the flesh. He was the One Who would fulfill the Law perfectly for mankind. He would be the One Who would offer up His life as a ransom for the sins of the whole world, so that all those who hear this good news—all those who are caught in this net of the Gospel—might believe and be brought into the fishing vessel of the Kingdom of Heaven.

We celebrate today, the Festival of St. Andrew, Apostle. He has the distinction of being the first saint celebrated in the Church's year. His festival begins the Church year, because he was the first to be called by the Lord + Jesus; the first to forsake all and follow Him. This is the example that the Church wants us to hear about as we begin every new Church's year. For he leaves behind the desires of the flesh, he leaves behind his worldly possessions, he leaves behind family and friends; all of the pleasures and concerns of this earthly life in order to follow the Lord + Jesus. He leaves behind all earthly concerns, to grab onto the eternal spiritual rewards which can only be found in the Lord + Jesus, the Christ alone. He left his earthly fishing equipment for the fishing net found in the Church—the Word of God. He left his earthly fishing vessel for the fishing vessel which is the Church—the Ark of Christendom, which carries us over the seas of this life into the heavenly harbor of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Like St. Andrew, and all the Apostle not only called in today's reading, but all those others our Lord would call, the Church of today is also called by our Lord + Jesus to be fishers of men. The Church through the rightly called and ordained Ministers of the Word of God cast out the net of the Word of God by preaching into our ears that salvation is found in the Lord + Jesus, and His works and merits alone. Salvation is found through faith in the Lord + Jesus alone. Faith is borne out of the work of the Holy Ghost, who convicts us of our sins, and leads us into repentance; leads us to the cross of our Lord + Jesus. The Ministers of the Word—the Bishop, Pastors, and Deacons who are rightly called and ordained—cast out the net of the pure Gospel to catch fish into the boat of the Church.

As is the case with fishing for fish, sometimes the fish ignore the net completely. Sometimes they are caught by the net, but resist the net to the point they are not pulled into the boat by the Word

of God. Others are brought into the boat, but because of the cares, riches and pleasures of this life they flop themselves out of the boat and back into the sea of the world. But the Church through her Ministers of the Word continues to cast out the net into this rebellious and sinful and idolatrous world. For this is the task with which our Lord has placed upon us. As the Prophet Jeremiah foretold, the Lord God, Jehovah, would send many fishers and hunters into this world to call this world into repentance. Fishers and hunters search diligently with the Word of God to bring all those who are sorry for their sins and who cling in faith to the Lord + Jesus, the Christ alone, into the boat of salvation.

Therefore, my dear friends, let us rejoice that we have been caught by the net of the Word of God and brought into the boat of the Kingdom of Heaven. Here we are kept and preserved by the Holy Ghost through the means of grace. Here we are continually being led into repentance—continually being reminded that we are poor, miserable sinners who cannot save themselves—but in faith rejoice that our Lord and Savior + Jesus, the Christ, rescued us from all our enemies by defeating death, the devil, and sin on the tree of the holy cross. We have forsaken all worldly possessions for an eternal Kingdom. And our Lord + Jesus, through the preaching of the Gospel, and the administration of the Blessed Sacraments, will guide us safely to that glorious eternal harbor, where we will live safely in joy and peace for all eternity. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Almighty God, be pleased to accompany Thy Word with Thy Holy Spirit and grant that Thy Word would increase faith in us; bring into the Way of Truth all such as have erred; turn the hearts of the unrepentant; and for sake of Thy Name grant succor to all heavy hearts and those who are heavy-laden, that they may through the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ be relieved and preserved so that they succumb not to the temptation of despair but rather that they gain the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil; through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with the Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria!