

The First Sunday in Advent/St. Andrew, Apostle – Pr. Faugstad sermon
St. Matthew 4:18-22: “Jesus Calls You into His Kingdom of Grace.”
November 29/30, 2025 | Saude, Jerico, & Redeemer Lutheran Churches

In Nomine Iesu

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Almighty God, by Your grace Your Apostle Andrew obeyed the call of Your Son Jesus Christ; grant to us also the grace to follow Him in heart and life; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one true God, now and forever. Amen.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. (Rom. 1:7, etc.)

The sermon text for today is written in the fourth chapter of the Gospel according to St. Matthew, beginning with the eighteenth verse. We read as follows in Jesus’ name:

While walking by the Sea of Galilee, [Jesus] saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And He said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” Immediately they left their nets and followed Him. / And going on from there He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and He called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed Him. ^(ESV)

These are Your words, heavenly Father. Sanctify us by Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen. (Joh. 17:17)

In Christ Jesus, our King who sits on His throne dispensing the gifts of His grace, dear fellow redeemed:

If someone placed an ad in the paper before local elections, and all that the ad contained was their name, their picture, and the message, “Vote for me!” it would be fair to ask the question “Why?” “Why should I vote for you? What are your qualifications? What are your goals? How will you represent me and work for me? What makes you a better candidate than the others?” Without this information, it’s hard to imagine saying, “Yes, I will vote for you. I will follow your lead.”

The same question can be asked of Jesus: “Why should I follow Him? Why should I trust Him?” The unbelievers of the world don’t see enough in Jesus to want to follow Him. Some of them believe He was a good person who unfortunately met an untimely end, which makes Him no different than any other significant figure in history. Some say He is just a legend, made up by people who wanted to gain influence. Others say that if Jesus is who He said He was, the Son of God, then why didn’t He do more to address injustice and suffering in the world?

They would be surprised to read the account before us today of Jesus calling Peter, Andrew, James, and John away from their fishing nets to follow Him. And immediately, without hesitation, they left their nets and boats—and in James and John’s case, their father—and followed Him. What convinced them that Jesus was worth following?

Well this wasn't the first time that Peter and Andrew, James and John, had seen or heard of Jesus. John tells us in his Holy Gospel that Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptizer. He had been attracted to John the Baptizer's preaching of repentance and must have been baptized by him. He believed John's message, that the Savior was coming and was even now present. So when Andrew saw the Baptizer point to Jesus and say, "*Behold, the Lamb of God!*" (Joh. 1:36), he and another disciple followed Jesus and spent the day with Him. Then Andrew went and got his brother Peter, telling him, "*We have found the Messiah!*" (v. 41).

So the brothers Andrew and Peter had met Jesus and listened to Him before He walked along the sea and called them away from their nets to follow Him. They believed that He was the great Prophet, Priest, and King foretold in the Old Testament Scriptures. They believed that He was God in the flesh, the promised Savior from sin, death, and the devil. Or did they? Sometimes they were unsure. Jesus did not say and do what they expected. They expected Him to set up an earthly kingdom. They could not imagine how His death could accomplish anything good.

An earthly kingdom with earthly glory is probably what was on their minds when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. He was surrounded by adoring crowds who shouted, "*Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!*" (Mat. 21:9). The people welcomed Him as their King. He would heal all their sicknesses! He would feed them! He could even keep them from dying or at least raise them from the dead—Lazarus from Bethany was proof of that! Who could stand against Jesus? His time to reign had come!

They were seeing what they wanted to see. But they were not looking at Jesus in the right way. Really they were thinking too small. He wanted them to see the big picture. Their most pressing problem was not sickness, food, or the rule of the Romans. Their most pressing problem was sin, death, and the rule of the devil. Jesus came to rescue them from these big things—and not just them, but the whole world, all people of all time.

You are not looking for Jesus to free you from the Romans. That kingdom collapsed long ago. But you might be looking for Him to work things so that the right leaders get elected who can fix all or most of the problems that trouble our society. You might be looking for Him to make your life more prosperous, your relationships more fulfilling, and your body more healthy. It is not wrong to want these things, but it is wrong to view these things as the most important things.

Jesus did not come especially to make your life better on earth. He does not promise that you will have a happy or carefree life, that everything you pray for will become yours, or that you will die with more wealth and honor than you were born with. Think of His closest disciples. After His resurrection, the chosen Twelve told the truth about what Jesus had done and said, that they themselves had witnessed. They took this message all over the known world. And for their hard labors, their preaching of salvation by grace, they suffered, were persecuted, and if tradition is accurate, they died violent, painful deaths.

Christ's kingdom is not of this world (Joh. 18:36). We should not expect it to be established here. His kingdom is greater than this world. You are a member of it, a citizen in it, but you cannot see it yet. Now you "*walk by faith, not by sight*" (2Co. 5:7). "Walking by faith" means trusting that

Jesus is who He says He is, and that He has done what He said He would. "Walking by faith" is what Andrew, Peter, James, and John did when they left behind the family business on the Sea of Galilee and followed Jesus.

When Jesus said, *"Follow Me,"* the word translated "follow" is literally, *"Come! Come after Me!"* He used the same word to call His disciples to rest with Him after He sent them out to preach His powerful Word. He said, *"Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while"* (Mar. 6:31). He called them to rest with Him again by the seashore following His resurrection, *"Come and have breakfast"* (Joh. 21:12).

He calls us to the same rest with Him using the same word, *"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"* (Mat. 11:28). "Come away from your fruitless labor to get ahead in this world. Come away from the burden of trying to be the best, of trying to prove your worth, of always having to win. Come away from the sin and guilt that weigh you down. Come away from the devil and the darkness of this world. Come to Me and have rest."

You come to Him when you open your ears to hear His Word, when you gladly hear and learn what He tells you. You come to Him when you repent of your sins and humbly listen to the absolution He speaks, "I forgive you all your sins." You come to Him when you kneel at His table and receive His holy body and blood given and shed for you for the remission of your sins. You come to Him when you trust in Him, confidently pray to Him, and confess His saving name.

This is not so much an act of your will as it is an action of His grace. Yes, the disciples followed Him, but it was His Word that drew them away from their nets, *"Come after Me!"* So it is His call that brings you to Him. He takes the initiative. He says, *"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me"* (Joh. 10:27). And again, *"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit"* (15:16).

His Word comforts us and compels us. His Word opens our eyes, so that we see Him. We see who He is, the eternal Son of God who took on flesh to save us. We see why He came, to keep God's holy law for us and to suffer and die to save our souls. We see that He finished the work He set out to do in perfect obedience to the will of His Father. We see that He rose in victory over our sin, our death, and the devil.

Jesus asked His disciples, *"Who do people say that the Son of Man is?"* (Mat. 16:13). He is not, as the unbelievers say, just a good person who lived and died and stayed dead. He is not some made up legend concocted from people's imagination to gain worldly influence. He is not some flawed deity who failed to do anything significant for the world. Andrew's brother, Simon Peter, had learned the right answer, *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God"* (v. 16).

That is who Jesus is, for the whole world and for you. He is the Christ, God in the flesh. He came to save you. He came to shed His blood to cleanse you from your sins. He came to share His heavenly inheritance with you. That is what He rode into Jerusalem to do, as the prophet had foretold, *"Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey"* (Mat. 21:5).

This King, your King, still comes through His Word and Sacraments calling you to lay aside the sins that ensnare you and weigh you down, calling you to come and follow Him, calling you to find rest in Him. He never stops calling you to be and remain in His kingdom of grace.

And when He returns in glory on the last day, He will speak that word again, "Come." He will say to you and all believers in Him, *"Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world"* (Mat. 25:34). Then like Andrew and Peter leaving their nets, immediately you will leave your labors and burdens here and will joyfully follow Him, singing with all the saints: *"Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"*

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, forevermore. Amen.

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