

St. Andrew's Sermons
The Rev. John D. Rohrs
St. Andrew's Day 2017

I want to start this morning with a test of your cultural knowledge. Who here has ever heard of noodling? I've never tried it myself, but I've seen it done. Noodling, for those who don't know, is a completely ridiculous way of catching catfish. What you do, and I've seen this, is you go to a pond or small lake and first you send your dog into the water to sniff around the sides and the bed. The dog is looking for underwater holes that catfish might hide in, and more importantly the dog is trying to make sure there aren't snakes in there instead.

Then, when your dog thinks it's safe (and it goes without saying that you better have the right dog), you stick your arm into the hole. Let me stop and make sure you understand. You don't use a fishing pole, or a line, or a net, or anything. You stick your whole arm into the hole. And if there's a big catfish in there, it sucks onto your arm with its mouth and you yank it out of there and carry it out of the water, like a flopping trophy to your stupidity. Now, to see that in action, is one of the craziest things you can imagine.

It is almost as crazy as what happens at another body of water in our gospel story today. Today, we celebrate the Feast of St. Andrew, the patron saint of our church. Andrew, of course, was a fisherman, and he was also one of the first disciples. That's where we pick up today. He's out fishing with his brother, Peter, wisely using a net, and suddenly this wondering prophet approaches them. "Follow me," Jesus says, "and I will make you fish for people." Well that makes about as much sense as noodling...but sure enough, they do it! Right then, without a moment's hesitation, without a single question, they drop their nets and follow.

There must have been something about him. Jesus must have had a magnetic personality, or such a compelling vision that it drew them in and made them feel like they were in the presence of God. Whatever it was, they were willing to take that risk, to leave behind their homes and families and their jobs and follow this man. Surely they knew it was crazy. Surely they had doubts and fears. But they did it anyway. They embraced this rabbi's vision, a vision that lifted up the lowly, welcomed the outcast, and pursued the dream of God.

Michael Curry, our presiding bishop, calls this the Jesus Movement. It's a movement that began that day at the Sea of Galilee, and it continues today. It's a movement comprised of people who are willing to take a risk and follow Christ on the path of love and justice and peace. People who are ready to answer the call of discipleship, to leave their nets behind and carry the gospel to a world in need. This is the Jesus movement, and we are all invited to join.

This morning, we welcome the newest recruit, a sweet baby named Greta Scott. She is only at the beginning of her journey. She hasn't had a chance to take risks or make any crazy decisions. She's too little for that. So today, we welcome her as a beloved child of God. Our prayer for her is that she will grow, happy and healthy, and that someday she might have the courage and conviction to choose for herself to follow Jesus. Our job is to show her the way, to renew our own baptismal vows, and to recommit to living as disciples and fishing for people, as crazy as that may be. Amen.