

St. Andrew's Sermons  
The Rev. John D. Rohrs  
16 Pent B; Sept. 16, 2012  
Gospel: Mark 8:27-38

## Crazy Christians

This past week was an eventful one for many reasons, and one of them, as the techies can attest, was that Apple had a release party. They have these events a few times a year to debut their newest products, and each time it's like the world stops to see what they unveil. Years ago, it was the I-pod, then the I-phone and I-pad. Earlier this year it was a watch. This week, though, was a bit of a letdown. There were some tweaks to existing products but no new gadgets and no big surprises.

The fact that it was a letdown is a testament to what a high standard they've set. Apple has tapped into some hunger we have for creativity and imagination and change. And most of the time, they live up to it. The last decade or two, their products have been revolutionary. It reminds me of a commercial they used to run. I'm sure you'll remember it. The tagline was "Think Different." It showed a montage of famous people – Bob Dylan, Amelia Earhart, Muhammed Ali, Jim Henson, Mother Teresa, Albert Einstein, Martin Luther King. As their faces flashed on the screen, a voice read these words:

*Here's to the crazy ones. The misfits. The rebels.  
The round pegs in square holes.  
The ones who see things differently.*

*They change things. They invent. They imagine. They push the human  
race forward.*

*Maybe they have to be crazy. How else can you stare at an empty  
canvas and see a work of art, or sit in silence and hear a song that's  
never been written?*

*While some see them as the crazy ones, we see genius. Because the  
people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world are the  
ones who do.*

Michael Curry is soon to be the next presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church. He's written about that commercial from Apple, and he says that we need that same spirit in the church. We need boldness and creativity. What we need, he says, are some crazy Christians. There's too much at stake for anything less: too much poverty, too much violence, too much suffering. In a world where a three year old refugee can wash up on the seashore alone, we can't afford to aim low. We need a revolution of love and compassion. We need some crazy Christians who believe they can change the world.

In today's gospel, Jesus issues a challenge to his disciples. First he makes sure they understand that he is the Messiah, and then he presses them on what that means. It's not a life of comfort, he tells them. He's destined for a grave, not a throne. And he's saying this because he wants them to understand the risk. He tells them straight up: "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."

Those are not reassuring words. They make us uncomfortable. I don't at all like the idea of denying myself. It doesn't sound right to our modern sensibilities. But I think what Jesus means is that we have to embrace the risk of discipleship. We have to be bold. We have to think differently. We have to want to change the world and to believe that it's possible. And to do that may require sacrifice. It may look a little crazy at times, but perhaps that's what the moment demands.

Today is our Kickoff Sunday. We have a ministry fair and Sunday School registration. The choir is back and our fall programs are underway. It's a busy and exciting morning, but it's important to remember what it's all for. The reason we do all of this is because each one of us in our small ways is called to live the gospel – to make it real, to make it matter. We are called to follow Jesus, as crazy as that may seem. Because the people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world are the ones who do. And what the world needs know are some crazy Christians. Amen.

*The title, theme and trajectory of this sermon are drawn from The Rt. Rev. Michael Curry's book Crazy Christians, pp.1-7 (New York: Morehouse Publishing, 2013).*