

## Message: “Even I Didn’t Recognize Him”

**We’re going to do something different this morning.** Our reading from the first chapter of John was filled with names. We read different names for different people. Names have meaning, so we’re going to take a few minutes to learn some names and see what they mean.

For example, we learned different names for Peter:

- Simon (English) in Hebrew, שִׁמְעוֹן Šim‘ôn means listening or hearing
- Cephas (Latin), כֶּפֶז (kēpā) in Aramaic, Κηφᾶς (Kēphās) in Greek means stone or rock (note the “k” sound, not the “s”).
- Peter (English), Petrus (Latin), Πέτρος (Petros) in Greek also means rock

John’s narrative shows us that a number of people who became Jesus’ disciples knew each other. Some were related. They weren’t just random strangers selected on a whim.

**Does this surprise you?** That’s important. We’ll look at why that’s the case in a few minutes. To help us learn a bit more about Jesus’ followers, we’re going to play a game. Yes, it’s the first ever Corona Family Feud! This is a chance for you to participate. There are a couple of ways you can do so.

- I need a couple of helpers, one to keep score and one to record the answers. Volunteers?
- We’re going to organize into four teams according to where you sit. I invite the band and choir to go down and sit in the chairs. We’ve named the teams North, South, East and West.
- I’m going to give you a couple of minutes to talk with the others in your section. Please choose four players. They will stand in front of your section. One note: staff members are not allowed.

*Please do so now.*

Now that we have our players, here are the rules.

- Each team has a sign with the name of their team on it. I’ll ask a question. If you know the answer, please raise your sign. The first person to do so gets to answer.

- If you answer correctly, your team gets a point. If you answer incorrectly, the second fastest team gets to answer. If we aren't sure who that is, we'll pass the advantage from North to East to West to South.
- After each question, the sign will go to the next person on your team. It keeps rotating until we're done.
- You can consult with your teammates. You have 15 seconds to answer. No cell phones are allowed. I urge the audience not to shout out answers, as it will help the other teams. Let's show good sportsmanship.
- If there is a tie at the end of regular questions, we will go to tie breaker questions.

**There is a prize for the team with the most points.** All of the people in your section are invited to sit at a special table with the District Superintendent at the February potluck. You get to choose the main course and you have first pick of the desserts. **Are there any questions?**

**The topic for today is the names of Jesus' first twelve disciples.** Please give me the name(s) of a disciple as an answer. Let's start.

- **Which of the gospels were written by disciples?** Matthew, John
- **Who was Jesus' first disciple?** Andrew
- **Who is his brother?** Simon, called Peter
- **Who were the sons of Zebedee?** James and John
- **Which two disciples first followed John the Baptist and then followed Jesus?** Andrew and John
- **Which disciple was from the same hometown as Peter?** Phillip
- **Which disciple was invited by Phillip?** Hint: he's known as the disciple who was sitting under a fig tree. Nathanael.
- **Which disciple was a tax collector?** Matthew, a zealot
- **Which disciple was also called the twin?** Thomas
- **Which disciple betrayed Jesus?** Judas

- **Which disciple was Mary's sister's son (Mary of Clopas)?**  
James, son of Alphaeus
- **Which disciple is the least well known?** Simon the Zealot
- **Which disciple is known as the patron saint of lost causes?**  
Thaddeus, also known as Judas Thaddaeus. He's most often known by the name Jude to prevent confusion with Judas.
- **Which disciple was martyred for converting the king of Armenia to the Christian faith?** Bartholomew. According to tradition he was flayed alive and beheaded upside down.
- **Which disciple first saw Jesus after he was resurrected?** Mary

Let's have a hand for all our players!! What's the score? Tie breaker questions:

- **Who replaced Judas as a disciple?** Two were nominated: Joseph, also called Barsabbas and known as Justus and Matthias. Matthias was chosen (Acts 1:23).
- **Who was the thirteenth disciple?** Paul
- **Who was known as the son of encouragement?** Barnabas

**So the list of the 12 disciples of Jesus, called the apostles is:** Peter and Andrew, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew, James, Thaddaeus, Simon and Judas, who was replaced by Matthias.

**Why take the time to play a game about the names of the disciples?**

Two reasons: first, it's a fun way to learn something about the people who were closest to Jesus. Second, we can see the lives of Jesus and his followers were intertwined. They knew each other.

**Too often we think of Jesus and his followers from a Western, okay, southern California view point.** We see them as separate people, who spent a lot of time apart. The reality is they lived and breathed life into each other's lives every day. They knew each other. Their parents knew each other. They traveled, worked and lived together. They gave sweat, blood and tears together. They lived in small towns without the benefit of television, cable, the internet or phones.

**That's why it's so surprising to hear John the Baptist's words** when he sees Jesus on the bank of the river Jordan. *"Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"* (v29). *"Even I didn't recognize him"* (vv31).

**John had a relationship with God.** He knew God called him for a purpose. John was fulfilling his purpose while waiting for God to reveal what was going to happen.

**So John went to work, every day.** He recruited a team of like-minded followers. Together, they shared the message God gave them. John helped people realize they needed God in their lives.

**When John said "even I didn't recognize Jesus," he wasn't saying that he didn't know Jesus.** They were cousins. John was six months older than Jesus. Of course they knew each other.

**What John didn't realize was this: Jesus was the Messiah.** Jesus didn't walk around with a halo. He didn't adopt a Buddha-like pose and meditate the day away. Jesus was a real person with real family and friends. He worked for a living as a carpenter. Jesus was fully human.

**Jesus was also fully divine.** He was part of God in a way no one has been or ever will be. Jesus knew it was time, time to reveal who he really, truly was. Not just in private, but publically so the whole world would know and benefit.

**Jesus revealed himself first to the one called to prepare people to receive him, his cousin John.** John saw the Spirit of God come down on Jesus and heard God's voice, revealing Jesus for who he was: the Son of God, sent to save us. And John boldly and openly shared that good news with everyone, particularly with those who followed him, his family and friends.

**The word spread from there.** John's disciples, some of their family, friends, co-workers and acquaintances all gathered at Jesus' invitation. He called them to follow, living a new way, a way that was spiritual and human, the way of life, here and now, a way to live for all eternity.

**Jesus calls us the same way.** We, too, aren't isolated. We have family, friends, co-workers and acquaintances. We're called to gather, to see and understand spiritual things, to live a new way, the way of life, a way that will guide us to eternity. Most of all, we're called to invite others to come and join us. When we do, we discover an amazing thing: Jesus is here with us, right here, right now.

**Let's recognize him, embrace his love and share the gift with others.**

*Let us pray...*

**John 1:29-42 (CEB)**

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is the one about whom I said, ‘He who comes after me is really greater than me because he existed before me.’ Even I didn’t recognize him, but I came baptizing with water so that he might be made known to Israel.” John testified, “I saw the Spirit coming down from heaven like a dove, and it rested on him. Even I didn’t recognize him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘The one on whom you see the Spirit coming down and resting is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ I have seen and testified that this one is God’s Son.”

The next day John was standing again with two of his disciples. When he saw Jesus walking along he said, “Look! The Lamb of God!” The two disciples heard what he said, and they followed Jesus.

When Jesus turned and saw them following, he asked, “What are you looking for?”

They said, “Rabbi (which is translated *Teacher*), where are you staying?”

He replied, “Come and see.” So they went and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o’clock in the afternoon.

One of the two disciples who heard what John said and followed Jesus was Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter. He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which is translated *Christ* ). He led him to Jesus.

Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon, son of John. You will be called Cephas” (which is translated *Peter*).