

January 19, 2014

HALLELUJAH JESUS CHANGED MY NAME

by Pastor Clarissa Martinelli

Does anyone know who Reginald Dwight (Elton John) Steveland Judkins (Stevie Wonder) Nicholas Coppola (Nicolas Cage) Caryn Johnson (Woopie Goldberg) David Robert Jones (David Bowie) Jacob Cohen (Roger Dangerfield)?

As we go through life, many different people call our name. And it's amazing to me just how many different messages that can be conveyed to us, depending on just how people call our name:

- When we're growing up, our parents call our name. Sometimes that is done in a very calm, gentle, loving manner. But other times, especially when they use our full name, it conveys a completely different message.

Share with a pew neighbor a special name that you are or have been called!

Mine was LADY BUG

- Then when we go to school, our teachers call our name. And the way they call our name can convey all kinds of emotions – from delight to disgust, from reward to reproof.
- When I call Marty's name it can either let him know I'm in an amorous mood or that he's in big trouble.

That brings us to our text: **John 1:40-42**. One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his brother Simon and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah' (which is translated Anointed). He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, 'You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas' (which is translated Peter).

We're introduced here to a man named Simon. Now, I want you to see Simon the way the world saw Simon - he was useful. This was a man who was

- a skilled fisherman
- he knew boats
- he knew nets
- he knew the sea

- he knew fish.

He was

- Confident
- Likable
- Outspoken
- Highly opinionated
- Leader
- a contributor to his community

But now, here is Andrew bringing his brother Simon to Jesus. It doesn't say anywhere that Andrew gets the chance to say: "Jesus, this is my brother Simon." The first words that are uttered are by Jesus: "You're Simon."

It is as if Jesus were saying: "I know who you are. I know you're a skilled fisherman, a man's man, a leader among your peers... BUT then Jesus says: "You shall be called Cephas."

Jesus not only knew who Simon was, Jesus also knew who Simon could be (potential within), and Jesus gave Simon a new name that reflected what Jesus saw as Peter's inner quality.

It's intriguing. Whenever God wants to do something special in person's life, he often gives them new name.

- Abram becomes Abraham.
- Sari become Sarah.
- Jacob renamed Israel.
- In the New Testament, Saul turns into Paul.

And the Bible tells us that when we become Christians, we're given a "new name." So, when Jesus gave Simon a new name, he was saying He intended to do something special with him.

Andrew is the disciple that everyone has heard of and nobody remembers. At least 5 times he is listed as a disciple, and three of those times he is remembered as Peter's brother. It seems that even though Andrew brought Peter to Jesus-- he will always be remembered in the light of his more charismatic brother. We know that Andrew was a simple fisherman with Peter and in partnership with John and James. They were close friends and business partners (**Matthew 4:18-20**). We also know that he was a disciple of John the Baptist before following Jesus. In this story we read of his first full day with Jesus and how he introduced Simon to Jesus.

Andrew can't keep Christ to himself. He goes and finds his brother Peter. When he tells him about Jesus, he tells him "We have found the Messiah." Joy compels him to share the good news of what he has found with those he loves.

Andrew was always bringing people to Jesus. When the 5,000 were hungry and in need of food in **John 6:8**, it was Andrew who brought the young boy to Jesus with five small loaves and two small fish. When the Greeks wanted to see Jesus, Philip told Andrew and together they took their request to Jesus (**John 12:22**).

Andrew never sought the spot light for himself. He was content to point others to Christ. Yet, because he was faithful and unselfish in his witness, Simon came to Christ and his name was changed to Peter. This is how our neighbors and friends and family will be won to the Lord - one at a time. I may not be able to reach everyone, but I can reach someone for Christ.

Andrew was one who sought the truth. When he found the truth in Jesus, he couldn't keep it to himself. His heart was filled to overflowing at joy. He told Peter "We have found the Messiah". Messiah means Christos in the Greek, or anointed one. Simon saw something in his brother that day. He saw he had been with Jesus and so he went with his brother and they both became disciples. Later, when Jesus calls them both to become fishers of men, there is no hesitation. They drop their nets and leave their boat and follow Him without reservation (**Matthew 4:18-20**).

A story is often told about a young salesman who was disappointed after losing a big sale. As he talked with the sales manager he complained, "I guess it just proves you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink." The sales manager replied, "Your job is to make him so thirsty they will have to drink."

I think this is why Jesus referred to us as "salt" in **Matthew 5:13**. We should whet people's appetite for Jesus Christ. With all the wonderful chefs we have here, they all can agree that just a little salt – a pinch – can make any dish – Delizioso.

They should be able to tell that we have been with him. Because when you get down to it, our faith isn't about a list of rules and regulations, but about relationship. We should be about the business of Andrew and John the Baptist, pointing others to Jesus. Sharing our faith. Sharing the good news that we have found the Messiah.

Another thing about Andrew's actions is the fact that he brought Simon to Jesus. I envision a personal formal introduction-taking place with Andrew saying "Simon I'd like for you to meet Jesus" and "Jesus this is my brother Simon." Whether or not it happened that way doesn't really matter---what matters is that Andrew, the insider, introduced Simon, the outsider, to Jesus. Again we need to follow Andrew's example. It may be too easy to talk to others about the weather....you may feel comfortable talking about the hope for Packers 2014 season...it may be fun to tell an outsider of some interesting thing that happened at a church – we had this low water pressure and were anticipating a major plumbing bill, when our operational trustee guru Ken and his plumbing guru friend found our water leak...so go ahead and share these joys and concerns if you wish----just don't neglect to talk about the Good News which is Jesus Christ.

I believe also that Andrew went first to someone he thought would take his words to heart and believe that the Messiah had arrived.

Ever hear the story told about the preacher who decided to skip church one Sunday morning to play a round of golf? Every Sunday on his way to church he'd drive by a golf course----and during warm weather he'd often see church members playing golf. It wouldn't have bothered him so much if they'd both play golf and come to church. But that's not what happened. No, they'd go golfing and skip worship. One Saturday evening he decided he'd show those church skipping golfers....if they could do it, so could he. So he called in sick and said they'd have to find a fill-in person for the morning service. Then the next morning before dawn he threw his golf clubs in his car, and he headed for a remote golf course more than an hour away. He figured no one there would know him there. By the time he arrived, the sun was up and it looked as if it was going to be a beautiful morning. He paid to play and alone he went to the first tee. Now an angel had been watching this preacher and was asking God what he was going to do with this man who had lied about being sick and was now preparing to hit his first shot. God said just watch. The angel was thinking "oh man this guy's gonna get it." She waited with great anticipation as she imagined God zapping him with a bolt of lightning at the peak of his backswing. But there was no bolt of lightning, no earthquake, no rain---just a perfect shot---a hole in one in fact! The angel couldn't believe it---what? How? "But, but, God!" the angel blurted out. "How could you let him hit a hole in one---I thought you were going to punish this man?" God said, "I am---who's he gonna tell?"

Do you ever wish YOU had a new name like Peter? Do you sometimes long for a completely new start? A new identity in which all your failings and

disappointments and bad circumstances are left behind and you can start again with a clean slate? Sometimes a complete change of identity might seem like the only way out. For someone with huge debt, or a criminal record, or whose misdeeds have been spread all over the social media, leaving the old name and the old life behind might seem very attractive. Moving on without any consequences. A new name and a new start. It happens all the time in crime thrillers, doesn't it: fake passports, fake ID, an anonymous life.

God has a record. He has a list of our debts. He sees and knows every misdeed, every unclean thought in our minds and hearts. And they are all in our book with our names, waiting to be read out in judgment against us on the last day. How can we escape? If only we could have a new name! We pray to appear before God with a new name so that when God turns to our page, and finds all the old junk filed against our old name, he finds the page blank with no charge against us. A clean record; the old record against us lost forever. This is exactly what Jesus promises us.

Revelation 2:17

Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches. To everyone who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give a white stone, and on the white stone is written a new name that no one knows except the one who receives it.

In the ancient world, jurors at a trial would vote with stones: black for guilty, white for innocent. Jesus says that at our trial before God we will be declared innocent. Not because we are innocent, but because we will be tried under a different name, a name with no record attached to it. We will be given a white stone, with a new name on it. All our failings, all our crimes against God, will be lost forever, recorded against the old name. Our record will be clean.

How do we get this new name that we need so much? In just the same way as Simon became Peter. If we encounter Jesus for ourselves, if we continue to trust that he is the Christ, that he is the only one who can save us, then he will give us a new name and a new start.

Peter was just as fallible as you and I, and yet Jesus made him the rock on which he built the church and gave him the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Jesus gave him a new start, time and time again, which he signified by giving him a new name.

If we keep on trusting that only Jesus can save us, then, like Simon Peter, he will give us a new start and a new name.

Turn to your neighbor - MY NAME HAS BEEN CHANGED!

[Ben Edgington](#) Darren McCormick