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## Twelfth Sunday After Pentecost (23 August 2020)

**Lectionary Reading:** Matthew 16:13-20

What's in a name? Have you ever wondered what your name might mean? Well I've been doing a bit research and here's a couple I've come up with....

In Hebrew the meaning of the name **David** is: *Beloved* or *friend*.

**Anne**, is a representation of the Hebrew Hannah, which means 'favour' or 'grace'.

**Margaret** is of Greek origin meaning "pearl".

In Hebrew **Jocelyn** means 'Supplanter', in Latin it means 'happy'.

The name **Andrew** is derived from the Greek meaning, "brave", "strong", "courageous", and "warrior".

The name **Tom** short form of **Thomas** is of Greek origin. Also a Hebrew name meaning 'innocence' or 'purity'.

**Patricia** is a common female given name of Latin origin. Derived from the Latin word patrician, meaning "noble."

When we were choosing names for our children, how many of us as young parents stopped and thought about the name we chose for our child -- how might the name we gave them affect our child later in life maybe even their future success in life?

Spare a thought for recently named twins **Corona and Covid**. And **Sanitizer**, whose parents name him as a reminder of the pandemic!

Do our names determine our destiny? People in Bible times certainly believed that the given name would help to develop the person's personality and help to describe to the world their calling their destiny. Your name told people which family unit you belonged to the tribe you were affiliated with or whose son or daughter you might be.

Many times, as God called men and women into his service God changed their name to fit their calling. Abram's name was changed to Abraham when he faithfully followed God to a new land -- (Abraham means the father of many!) Jacob who even stole his brother Esau's birthright after a night of wrestling with an angel of God... his name was changed to Israel

the father of the twelve tribes of Israel. Saul persecuted the new Christians. He was on his way to Damascus to further kill or throw into prison more of those new Christians when God called his name he became a great teacher and preacher of the good news of Jesus Christ.

Would any of us go to a dentist whose name was Dr. Pain or have an accountant or banker named Mr. Crook. I think we would think twice... before sitting down in a dental chair with a Dr. Pain telling us to open wide or depositing our life's saving into Mr. Crook's bank! Well, Dave's orthopaedic surgeon was called Mr Butcher, perhaps unsurprisingly he pronounced it Boucher!

Consider then our scripture for today, the changing of the name of the fisherman known as Simon into one of Jesus' disciple named Peter. As our gospel reading for this morning opens Jesus is preaching and teaching and healing people. Proclaiming all over Galilee the message. There is a new order of things to come! A new kingdom is coming a new kingdom is upon us, a time of grace. A message of God's great love for the world and no one is more excited with Jesus' teachings than Simon.

Simon senses that in Jesus he has aligned himself with a winner. He doesn't understand what kind of kingdom Jesus is talking about but he likes to hear the message about a great kingdom that is coming, the kingdom of God. Simon and all the disciples think that Jesus is talking about an earthly kingdom and Simon knows he wants to have a leading role in the coming of this kingdom.

In the beginning Simon the fisherman had no idea what this coming kingdom would cost him. He would not only have to leave his fishing nets to follow Jesus, but in his following of this teacher, this preacher, this healer, this worker of miracles called Jesus, he would eventually become a new man. He would leave his old life behind and eventually he would lose his life for the message of this kingdom that is to come.

Jesus needed Simon to make the transition from being a fisherman into a disciple (the word disciple means a student, a learner, a follower, a witness and then to eventually become an apostle which means one sent forth to teach, to preach, to heal, to be a leader, to recruit new disciples.

This is a journey that every one of us makes. We start out as a disciple of Jesus, we are learners, we read and study, we grow in our relationship with God, and we become an apostle. We realise that we are sent to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ to others.

For Peter it would be a difficult journey. One day Jesus asks his disciples - Who do people say that I am? The disciples' answer, Well, some say you're John the Baptist come back to life! Some say you are Elijah; some say you are Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.

Then Jesus asks, But what about you who do you say that I am? Simon's response is " You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God." And Jesus says "Blessed are you Simon son of Jonah for this was not revealed to you by men but by my Father in heaven, and I tell you that you are from this time on to be called Peter." (Petra...the rock.)

This was the defining moment of Peter's life, Jesus had named him Peter, the solid rock.....

Many of us can see ourselves in the life of Peter. With Peter we can ask -- Is there hope beyond betrayal for Peter denied Jesus three times before the cock could crow. Peter fell away as Jesus was led to the cross. Can the fallen be restored? Can a rock that slips away and hides be forgiven? Can a rock that sinks to the low of denying Jesus can this stone rise to the surface? And the answer comes ringing across the ages -- Yes! Yes! All these things can happen, all things can be forgiven because of another stone which was rolled away on that first Easter morning.

The other disciples were probably surprised when Jesus changed Simon name to Peter the rock. Surely there were others who were better qualified.... John was so warm and loving...Matthew knew books and figures...Andrew was always bringing stragglers to Jesus. But there was something in Simon, something that Jesus recognized, and knew that Simon called Peter would become a leader.

And still today God calls you and me. We often think others are better qualified than we are, but God knows not only who we are, and what we are today, but God knows what we can become!

What's in a name, our name is our destiny, our name is our identity, our name is our calling, our name is our mission. By our name we are known. Think about what has God called you to do and what is your name in Christ Jesus?

The Lord be with you.