

ANDREW

My name is Andrew and I was, or rather am, a disciple of Jesus who is called the Christos, the Messiah. I am not famous like my brother Simon – you probably know him by another name, Peter – a name Jesus gave him after asking all of us what people thought of him and who he was.

Our family was in the fishing business that had been handed down for several generations to our father, Jonas or John. We had several boats and other partners like James and John and their father Zebedee. We have worked together all our lives – washing nets, repairing them, catching fish and selling them to families around Galilee. It's hard work but we live comfortably.

Fishing could be tricky too. You never knew when you would have a good night of fishing, or catch nothing or when a storm would suddenly arise in the middle of the night. It could capsize your boat and you could lose all the fish you had caught. But we loved the challenge and the smell of the sea air and the pull of the nets was in our blood. I vividly recall the size of the catch when Jesus was with us on a couple of occasions.

I've always had a hunger for spiritual things. My brother and I heard about a man named John the Baptizer and wondered if he could be the Messiah. We left our boats one day and travelled into the desert to hear him preach.

REPENT was his message. He urged everyone to repent – whether they were ordinary people, tax collectors or even roman soldiers. There were even some from the religious council in Jerusalem who went to hear John. They had the same question, 'Are you the Messiah?' Our people had longed for a deliverer for hundreds of years.

John the Baptizer answered the question when he called himself the forerunner of Christ. He said he was just the one sent from God to prepare the way for the Messiah. John, my brother and I decided to follow this baptizer for a while, to hear more of what he had to say. We told him up front that we wanted to meet and follow Messiah – whoever he was. One day as John the Baptist was speaking, he paused and blurted out, 'Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.' That was the day we left him and started to follow Jesus.

'Where do you live?' we asked Jesus. 'Where are you staying?' His answer surprised us. 'Birds of the air have nests, and the foxes have dens, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.' It was late afternoon when we first met Jesus but we stayed for hours listening to his words.

Shortly after that we went back to fishing. We'd stayed away as long as we could. I could hardly wait to tell Simon my brother about meeting Jesus. 'I really believe that we have found the Messiah, Simon.' You have to come with me to meet him for yourself. I've never heard a rabbi speak as Jesus does.' Simon said that if ever Jesus came to Capernaum he would listen to him.

One morning, after a long night, we were busy repairing our nets when Jesus saw us working. He walked across to us – Simon, John, James and me, Andrew – and offered us a new job. We could be ‘fishers of men’ if we followed him. Remarkably all four of us left our fathers and our jobs and became disciples of Jesus. I’m sure that our families thought we had lost our minds, leaving a thriving business to follow an itinerant preacher. But we did.

One day when Jesus was talking to us twelve he said, ‘Who do you think I am?’ I said, ‘Some think you are Elijah.’ Another said, ‘Others think you are John the Baptizer reborn or Jeremiah.’ Then Simon said, ‘ You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.’ Jesus said, ‘Blessed are you Simon, son of Jonas. No person has revealed this to you, but my Father in Heaven. I am going to give you a new name. Your name means **reed**, I’m going to change it to **rock**. Your name from now on your name is Peter.

I remember another time when I brought a little boy to help Jesus. We’d been out with Jesus for hours and crowds were with us to listen to Jesus. We were worried about them being hungry at lunchtime. I saw that this young fella had brought a packed lunch. I told Jesus and he accepted the fish sandwiches, prayed to His Heavenly Father and organized for the food to be handed out to everyone. Amazingly there was more than enough. And there were so many people there!

I really enjoyed introducing people to Jesus.

I was there when Jesus road into Jerusalem. The crowds cheered, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’ Little did we know that a few days later, Jesus, our Messiah would be arrested, tried and executed on a cross. We were devastated, disoriented and destroyed. It seemed that three years of our lives were wasted. We all felt like failures. Then some women came to where we were huddled together and said that Jesus body had gone from the garden tomb. Mary of Magdala had seen him. If only we could see him for ourselves so we wouldn’t have to take someone else’s word.

We were in a locked room worrying about all this when Jesus came in. He was alive! We saw Jesus a number of times after that but not on a regular basis. So Peter, my brother spoke up one day and said he was going back fishing. James, John and I decided we would go also. We were out all night but didn’t catch a thing. Coming into shore we saw a man who yelled out and told us to put our nets on the other side of the boat. We had nothing to lose, so we did and caught so many fish that our nets stared to tear. Peter knew Who it must be and he jumped in and swam to meet Jesus.

When Jesus returned to heaven we were there. After that we went back to Jerusalem. After Pentecost the followers of Jesus went their separate ways to tell our stories. I travelled north, above the Caspian Sea and just brought more people to Christ. And so as I close my story, I would ask you to do what Jesus asked me, Andrew, to do – just bring people to Jesus. AMEN

