

John 1:19-51 sermon
Believe – Jesus the Lamb

- **Do you recognise that face?**

Have you ever had that experience when you're out – and you see someone you know in the distance and you wave and call out "hello!"? You might be in the middle of Woolworths and at the other end of the isle you see your friend, and you all out "Hello John!". And it's at that moment, you realize that it's not John at all. But now she's looking at you wondering why you're waving at her and calling out a man's name.

How is it that we recognise people?

We see their face. We recognise their nose. Maybe the clothes they wear. Sometimes I will actually recognise people when I'm walking down the street who I haven't seen in years. You just recognise them.

And do you know why?

It's because of your *right fusiform gyrus*! That's the part of your brain just behind your ears... apparently. Most of us can remember the faces of up to 10,000 people. Unfortunately, that doesn't always mean we remember the name that goes with them!

- **Who is John?**

John's gospel starts with a lot of "Who are you" type questions. The first 18 verses are about "Who is Jesus?" and "Who is God?" And what we're left with is that Jesus IS God on earth. And that he came to bring truth and grace.

And now in the second half of chapter 1, John the Baptist gets the same questions. A group of Jews from Jerusalem send some priests and Levites to find out who he is.

"Are you Elijah?" John says no.

Are you the prophet? John says no.

O who are you?

You see, what they're really asking is: We know who WE are, but who are YOU?

WE are the Pharisees. The priests. We are the Jews. We are the descendants of King David. We're waiting for Elijah. We're waiting for the prophet. We are the law keepers. We are the descendants of Abraham. But who are you? And more importantly, why are you baptising people?

Baptism wasn't a new thing. People were baptized when they converted to the Jewish faith. Some Jewish believers baptized themselves daily.

But John is baptizing Jews. This is strange. Why are you doing this? What authority do you have? What does this type of baptism mean?

A lot of John's gospel is asking this question of identity and this question of authority. That's fairly important in our society these days too. Just try to open a bank account or register a mobile phone, or get married, or get a driver's license, and you'll find out how important identity is. Because our identity instills authority. If I'm a nobody, then I

have no authority. These Pharisees and priests and Levites had authority. Their identity gave them authority in the religious world. And they come with that authority to John and say “Who are you!?”

And this is what John says: (verse 23)

- *“I am the voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way for the Lord.’”*

John is the one who prepares for Jesus.

You might remember that John is Jesus’ cousin. His mother was Elizabeth. His father was the high priest Zechariah. Mary was pregnant with Jesus at the same time as Elizabeth⁴. So you can see why these Jewish religious leaders are a little interested, and concerned and confused about who John is.

He’s not a prophet. He’s not Elijah. He’s the one who prepares the way for Jesus.

- **Who is Jesus?**

And the next day, in walks Jesus. And John sees him and says: (verse 29):

- *“Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! 30 This is the one I meant when I said, ‘A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.’”*

Straight away John identifies Jesus. Jesus is the lamb of God. The saviour. The one who takes away sin. He is the Messiah they’ve been waiting for.

Then the next day, John is out walking some of his own disciples, and he sees Jesus and again says: “Look, the lamb of God!”

It’s like a game of spotto! Look! There he is again. Now he’s over there! Spotto – Lamb of God again!

But what happens when he points Jesus out to his own followers? They become interested in him. As soon as John says: “Look, the lamb of God”, then verse 37:

- *When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus.*

Andrew was one of these two. He was Simon Peter’s brother. We all know Peter – who became the lead disciple of Jesus’. Well, look what Andrew does next – verse 41:

- *The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, “We have found the Messiah” (that is, the Christ). 42 And he brought him to Jesus.*

And Jesus gives Simon the name Cephas, which means Peter.

Simon comes to Jesus and Jesus gives him a new identity. Of all the things to do, Jesus changes his name... Interesting.

Then Jesus leaves for Galilee.

On the way he calls out to Philip. And Philip follows him.

And what does Philip do? Verse 45:

- *45Philip found Nathanael and told him, “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”*

He identifies Jesus. He identifies who he is and the authority he has. Nathanael doubts this though. He questions if anything good can come from Nazareth. But Jesus speaks with him and wins him over and Nathanael follows him too.

Its all about identity and authority. Who is Jesus? What authority does he have? And surely the greatest who of his authority is actually seen in this chapter. Not only is he identified with being God himself in the opening verses, but Jesus walks around and calls people to follow him... and they do! He has this authority in people's lives. They follow him.

John's gospel opens with this hysteria about who John is, then who Jesus is. We're hearing about Elijah, the prophets, the Messiah. We're hearing phrases and titles like the Son of Man, the Lamb of God, God's chosen one, Rabbi, teacher, Christ, and finally, from Nathanael – son of God and King of Israel.

Why?

- **Who are we?**

Because this is about 2 things: understanding who Jesus is, but also understanding who **WE** are.

John wants us to know that we are not just dealing with a teacher or a prophet. We are dealing with God on earth. Jesus is someone who not only has the title and identity of someone very, very important, but also has the authority. He is the creator. And he is the King. The Saviour. The Lord.

He wants us to know Jesus, but he also wants us to ask: “Who does Jesus think **I** am? Jesus is an important identity. He has ultimate authority. But what does he think of me?”. So to finish off this chapter, I want to take us back to some key verses we looked at last week – verses 12-13:

- *12Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— 13children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.*

In chapter 1, Jesus is introduced as God himself on earth. We see the importance of John the Baptist introducing Jesus. We see the importance of the Jewish leaders and the priests and Levites and Pharisees. But verses 12-13 actually put US in the picture.

For those who accept Jesus, for those who trust him, for those who believe in his name, they have the **right** to become children of God. The right. Not because of their human descendants – not because of their Jewish ancestry, not because they were born in Jerusalem. Not because of their bloodline. Not because they were born to certain parents of a certain tribe. And not because of human decision – not because some humans decided that they can be called a child of God. Not because a few people at their church decided they were good enough to become members of their church. And not because of a husband's will – not because they grew up in a Christian family, not because their parents said that we were "Christian".

What these verses do is knock out all the authority and identity we have given **ourselves**. What it tells us is that the only thing that matters is the identity that God gives us. And that identity, if we believe in Jesus, is that we are children of God. With all the rights of a child of God.

Jesus doesn't care about human identities. He doesn't care how long you've gone to church or how many of your family have been to church over the centuries. He doesn't care about your church lineage. Or your bloodline. Or which church you were baptized in or married in. What matters to him is that you **believe**.

And that goes the other way too.

"I've haven't' been a Christian for very long." It doesn't matter.

"None of my family are Christian". It doesn't matter.

"I haven't read the Bible 12 times like some Christians." It doesn't matter.

What matters is that we recognise the identity and authority of Jesus. That's it. It doesn't matter what authority and identity we've given ourselves. It says: *"To those who receive him, who BELIEVED in his name, he GAVE the right to become children of God."*

So to those depending on their Christian history... it doesn't matter.

To those who feel a lesser Christian because they have no Christian history – it doesn't matter either.

What matters is believing the identity and authority of Jesus. When we do that, Jesus gives us a new identity...

Receive Jesus. Accept his authority. Believe. And you are children of God. With the rights of a child of God. And nothing else matters.

19Now this was John's testimony when the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. 20He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, "I am not the Messiah."

21They asked him, "Then who are you? Are you Elijah?"

He said, "I am not."

"Are you the Prophet?"

He answered, "No."

22Finally they said, "Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?"

23John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, "I am the voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way for the Lord.'"

24Now the Pharisees who had been sent 25questioned him, "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?"

26"I baptize with water," John replied, "but among you stands one you do not know. 27He is the one who comes after me, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie."

28This all happened at Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

John Testifies About Jesus

29The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! 30This is the one I meant when I said, 'A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.' 31I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel."

32Then John gave this testimony: "I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. 33And I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' 34I have seen and I testify that this is God's Chosen One."

John's Disciples Follow Jesus

35The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. 36When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!"

37When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. 38Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?"

They said, "Rabbi" (which means "Teacher"), "where are you staying?"

39 "Come," he replied, "and you will see."

So they went and saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with him. It was about four in the afternoon.

40Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. 41The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). 42And he brought him to Jesus.

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

Jesus Calls Philip and Nathanael

43The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me."

44Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. 45Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

46 "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked.

"Come and see," said Philip.

47When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit."

48 "How do you know me?" Nathanael asked.

Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you."

49Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel."

50Jesus said, "You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You will see greater things than that." 51He then added, "Very truly I tell you, you will see 'heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on 'the Son of Man.'"