

“Chosen in / to Love” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Easter 6
May 5, 2024

- I. **John 15:16** – “You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide”
- II. **Obey My commandments!**
 - a. Today sounds like the Lord Jesus is placing a heavy burden on His followers.
 - b. It’s easy to read the Gospel and hear Jesus saying, “Do all the right things, and I will love you and bless you.”
 - i. As long as you obey the Ten Commandments... loving God and others, then you will abide in My love.”
 - ii. Yet, where does that leave us? Lost.
 - iii. The problem is that we don’t obey Jesus, falling short time and time again.
 - c. I teach the confirmation students how they should examine themselves and repent in order to approach the Lord’s Supper.
 - i. We used to have a list of questions in our blue hymnals but have not put them in the new ones yet.
 - ii. In one portion, the questions have us consider our behavior in light of the Ten Commandments.
 1. Where have we trusted in anything other than God – thereby breaking the First Commandment?
 2. Where have we misused God’s name, not kept the Sabbath holy, dishonored authority, and so on...?
 3. As we read each commandment and questions follow, we see the depth of our sinfulness, and our lack of obedience to God’s will.
 - iii. Consider your life in light of the Scriptures... and the Ten Commandments... in light of loving God with your whole heart and loving others like you love yourself.
 1. Perhaps you give a half-hearted attempt at following His will.
 2. Perhaps you claim ignorance – that you aren’t too sure about what the Ten Commandments and God’s Word says, so maybe you feel okay.
 3. Maybe you know exactly what God wants, and you struggle to carry it out.
- III. **Jesus offers us a bittersweet Gospel lesson today.**
 - a. He points out the need to follow Him in obedience, but we are also chosen and friends.
 - b. Remember where these Bible verses fit in the middle of the larger section of Scripture – John 13 through 17 – and it is Jesus spending His last hours with His disciples before dying on the cross.

- i. Chapter 13 includes Jesus acting like a common servant and bending down to wash His disciples' feet... much to their dismay.
 - 1. But He tells them to allow this act of love, and that they should love others as He has loved them.
- ii. Jesus then explains many other things to them, but the central idea is that He will lay down His life for them, and they are to love others in the same way.
- c. The Gospel today has the word love in it many times... nine times, in fact.
 - i. Jesus describes the love between the Father and Him... His love for the disciples... and especially the sacrificial love He shows His friends.
 - ii. Yet I say again, some people might get the wrong idea that Jesus' love has strings attached... in other words, if you do what I say, then you will abide or remain in My love.

IV. **It's important to rewind to the beginning here...**

- a. Jesus begins by saying – I love you like the Father loves Me! (vs 9)
 - i. I can't imagine the kind of love that exists between the Father and the Son... but that's the love that Jesus also has for you.
 - ii. With that kind of love from Jesus, we want to stay there!
 - iii. It's like our reading from last week as Jesus says to abide in Him like a branch abides in a vine – He is the only source of forgiveness, life, and salvation... so where else would we even think about going?
- b. Jesus then clarifies again that it is His love that does the choosing – not ours – “You did not choose Me, but I chose you.” (vs 16)
 - i. We have no spiritual ability to choose God – we are simply dead in our trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1) – and God brings us to life.
 - ii. Once this life is in us... once we believe and have faith... then the love that God has shown us actually applies to us... it becomes ours.
- c. So, before you read this Gospel lesson to mean that you better be a good little boy, or a good little girl, or Jesus won't love you anymore... stop and remember that He loves you like the Father loves Him... and He chose you, in order that He might lay down His life to save you.
 - i. In fact, Paul tells us in Romans 5:8, that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us... He did not die for only those who were good and obedient.

V. **Our Savior calls us more than a servant... but a friend.**

- a. Although rare, we can trust some friends without reservation – in other words, we never doubt that they will be there for us if we are in need.
- b. Jesus is the rarest of friends... in that He is the ultimate in trustworthy... the absolute best friend we can imagine, and He did not hesitate to give His life in place of ours.
- c. With this kind of friendship in mind, consider what it means to reciprocate.

- i. Do you remind your good friend on a regular basis that they better act how you want, or you won't be there for them when they need you?
 - 1. No, we have trust in them because of a long relationship of predictable behavior that leads us to trust them.
 - 2. Friendship includes ways that we listen and respond... and that is our life with Jesus too.
- d. Jesus listens and responds, as He reminds us that we can ask God anything through Him and He will answer. (vs 16)
 - i. Does this mean you finally get a closet full of gold bars because you ask the Father in Jesus' name?
 - 1. The response may be that He knows you don't need that kind of request filled, but He will give you something even better.
 - 2. When our hearts are in alignment with His will, our desires are in alignment with His will too!
- e. Just as Jesus listens and responds, we also listen to Him and respond.
 - i. The love He has poured out on us gives us the desire to follow and obey.
 - ii. The interesting part of this is that Jesus says this will be for our joy (vs 11) – it's not a burden to be a disciple, but a joyful experience.
 - iii. Some of the most wonderful, fulfilling experiences we can have as Christians come while we are walking in the way of Jesus... loving others and sharing Him with those around us.
- f. Many years ago, we had a group of soccer servants supporting our ministry as high schoolers.
 - i. One of the girls joined us for the week, even though she wasn't connected to our church.
 - ii. One night we went downtown to serve homeless people at Night Strike under the Burnside Bridge... and I kept teasing her that she was going to have to wash a homeless guys' feet.
 - 1. Of course, she was horrified and kept telling me she would never touch a stranger's feet.
 - iii. The funny thing was, she avoided the foot washing station most of the night, but happened to be standing by it when help was needed.
 - iv. Someone asked if any volunteers could help with one last person, and this young lady said yes.
 - 1. When I turned around, I couldn't believe my eyes.... there in front of a homeless man, washing his feet, was the girl who couldn't imagine doing something like that a few minutes prior.
 - 2. And as she listened to his story of pain and trials, she began to weep... she let her hair cover her face as she looked down, but in that beautiful moment of empathy and service, there was no thought of being obedient to Jesus... just love for another human being, as she would want to be loved herself.

- g. Jesus chose us in love.
- h. Jesus chose us to love.
- i. Our Savior died and rose again so that by His choosing, we might abide in His love forever...
 - i. We praise God for that love and let it pour out of us... which is never a burden, but a great joy. Amen.