

“I Choose You” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Second Sunday after Christmas – January 2, 2022

- I. **Ephesians 1:4-5** – “[The Father] chose us in [Christ] before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us for adoption to Himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will.”
- II. **Adoption is such a beautiful picture of our Scripture today.**
 - a. Regardless of how good a little child is, or if they have an opportunity to somehow encourage their potential parents to adopt them... it’s really up to the prospective parents.
 - i. On more than one occasion I spoke to adults who were adopted, and they felt a deep sense of gratitude and love for the parents who chose them.
 - ii. The alternative is a tough life of foster parents and moving through a system that doesn’t always keep siblings together – or give stability.
 - iii. I’m sure that many kids in the system try to be good so they have a chance at being adopted.
 - b. I saw a “good news” story a couple of years ago that showed some foster parents giving a present to a little girl who looked to be about 10 or so.
 - i. As she opened the gift, inside was a note that said they were adopting her and her two younger siblings...
 - ii. She couldn’t even say the words, “I’m adopted...?” without choking up with tears... It was so touching as the future parents assured her that they loved and wanted her and the other kids to be in their family.
 - iii. What do you think was going through her head?
 1. Relief? Joy? Gratitude? Peace?
 2. Her future was so much more secure than just moments before
 - c. The choice to call someone our own child is a huge commitment, but for the child, he or she becomes “family”
- III. **St. Paul gives a wonderful, “Good News” story for us today...**
 - a. He uses words like “chose,” “love,” “adoption,” “grace,” “redemption,” “forgiveness,” and “guarantee of our inheritance.”
 - i. This section of Scripture is one of the best places you will find to outline God’s work and grace through Jesus.
 - b. Some people have described this passage as a “Great Doxology”.
 - i. A doxology is the description we use for a writing, song or poem of praise to God for all He has done
 - ii. We sing the doxology, “Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow” frequently when we give thanks to God – like the completion of our new Community Room.
 - c. In this doxology today, we see all three Persons of the Trinity at work –

- i. The Father chooses us to be His children from before creation
- ii. The Son, or Jesus, redeems us by His blood to be the Father's children
- iii. The Holy Spirit seals us in this relationship so that all of these gifts are accounted to us now... and forever.

- IV. **Did it ever occur to you that God chose you** long before you were born?
- a. It is a mystery because we can't really conceive of how we could be chosen before the foundations of creation...
 - b. Yet, we also know that God is all-powerful and all-knowing, so He is more than capable of loving us before we came into existence.
 - c. It always baffles me when people say that they "chose" to believe in Christ... or they made a "decision" to have faith.
 - i. It's almost like saying, "I choose my parents," or "I decided when I was born."
 - ii. The truth is that God does the acting – the decision making – the reaching out – and we receive His love and grace in spite of our limitations.
 - d. You see, it is human nature to want the power and control that comes from making our own decisions.
 - i. In fact, we trick ourselves into thinking that we have some control over God's decision to love us and redeem us.
 - ii. To illustrate, consider the little girl who was adopted... she might have done everything in her power to get those parents to love her and adopt her – but no matter how perfect she was, she would always fall short if it were not for love... love from the parents to her
 - 1. Think of the burden and weight she would carry to be the perfect child so that her foster parents would accept her as their own.
 - 2. No, it was the love the parents had for her that made the decision – and had the power and authority to follow through
 - e. We can fall for the same error in our faith life too.
 - i. I remember visiting with a life-long Lutheran during my time in seminary...
 - 1. He was on his deathbed, and one of his final comments to me was, "I hope I've done enough to get into heaven."
 - 2. All his life, he took with him the false notion that being good enough or doing enough good things could get him eternal life.
 - ii. As a pastor, my goal has always been to give the congregation I serve a strong sense of their salvation in Christ – in spite of their sins and brokenness.
 - 1. When I say, raise your hand if you are going to heaven when you die... the hands should shoot up with confidence!

- a. NOT confidence in ourselves or how good we are – because that should make us bow our heads in shame!
- b. We have confidence because of the Scripture we read today – God chose us... and “in [Jesus] we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace” (vs 7)
- c. Notice – it doesn’t say anything about what we have done

V. **God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit did it all...**

- a. It is by the Father’s love from the beginning of time, and that He desired a relationship with us enough to save us, that we are called His children...
 - i. Listen to 2 Timothy 1:9 – [The Father] saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of His own purpose and grace, which He gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began.”
- b. It is also by the Father’s love that He sent Jesus in the flesh – God the Son became a human being to do the work that was impossible for us...
 - i. Jesus lived the perfect life and became the “Chosen One” (Luke 9:35)
 - ii. Jesus was born into the world, but even as a baby was destined for the cross – and by His shed blood – by HIS work we receive redemption and forgiveness (vs 7)
- c. And finally, it is by the power of the Holy Spirit that all this is made ours...
 - i. Long ago, before many of you could do or say anything, the Holy Spirit claimed you in the waters of Baptism.
 - ii. I say this all the time, but God chose us to be His adopted kids through Baptism.
 - iii. When the water poured over your head, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit – a miracle took place that gave you an adoption into the family of God – along with an inheritance – the crown of life (Revelation 2:10)
- d. These blessings are all ours by the gift of faith through God’s love.
 - i. We take no credit for them, and we simply praise God for all He has done to call His children – especially the peace of knowing we have nothing to fear because He will care for us now and forever.

VI. **How many people out there have absolutely no idea God loves them?**

- a. God’s love and grace are for everyone – but not everyone knows!
- b. As God’s chosen ones, we cannot help but share His name with those around us.
- c. Just imagine that little girl who was adopted not telling a soul what happened?
 - i. That is unimaginable! How could anyone not tell what happened? It’s the most wonderful, joyful news ever, and she was probably skipping all over the place telling her friends or anyone who would listen!

- d. In giving thanks to the Lord for all He has done, a part of that is sharing the Good News with those who desperately need to hear it.
- e. God's love is for all people, and what a privilege and blessing to share the story of salvation that happened to us... and happened for all.
- f. Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow, Amen.