

Pentecost 6a July 9, 2023
CHOSEN Pastor Greg Pufahl

Dear Jesus, today we are reminded that we are chosen by you. What a blessing! But Lord, help us to not stop there. Show us what that means to be called, chosen, and set apart. Amen.

Can we start in a different way? I am looking for three brave people to volunteer and come up here. Anyone willing to do that? I know it can be a little scary in front of all these people. And unfortunately, I can't pick from y'all in the balcony...just logistics.

How do you feel about being picked? It can be an honor to be picked, right? But did you notice I didn't tell you WHY you were picked? If I told you that you were picked out of all these people to receive a free vacation to Wisconsin Dells, to the waterpark of your choosing...you would probably feel honored? Or if I told you that you were picked for a special \$1,000 gift, you would probably feel honored, right? Well, here is what you were picked to do. Each one of you gets to...scrub all the toilets in the building and we will need you to use your own toothbrush to do it. We need those toilets spotless! Do you still feel honored? Probably not.

Our focus today is all about being picked, or rather being CHOSEN. After our fun little toothbrush/toilet experiment, you may all be a little hesitant to *want* to be chosen now.

A little refresher...our current series is on Fighting the Urge to Fit In. Last time we discussed not conforming to the world. It is tough. The world wants us to conform. We discussed the difference between conforming to the world and being transformed by God to actually be different. Today we are focusing on the fact that we have been chosen by God and what that means. Let's look at God's Word:

1 Peter 2:9-10 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Before we unpack that section, a general question for everyone here today: Raise your hand if you feel it is a great privilege to be chosen by God. Let's see if you feel that way in a little bit.

Peter, the author, was writing to a bunch of Christians in the northern part of Asia Minor. They were foreigners in that land, and most were under suffering because of that. Chosen by God, yes. Under persecution because of that...yes.

Remember the toothbrush/toilet illustration? Those people were chosen and at first, probably felt special. Until they realized what they were chosen to do.

I asked you all if you felt honored to be chosen by God. You raised your hand. So often we focus on the positive side of being chosen. "Jesus loves me! I am chosen by the Almighty God of the universe." All great, right? But what does it actually mean to be chosen? Do you ever think about the other side?

Let me read a section from John 15 to you. Think about what it means to be chosen by Jesus. Jesus says these words: **"If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. ¹⁹ If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. HATES! Chosen and hated! – how would you like that as a sermon theme? Jesus continues: ²⁰ Remember what I told you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. ²¹ They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the one who sent me.** In other words, don't expect to be treated by the world better than Jesus was treated. And remember what the world did to Jesus! **²² If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin. ²³ Whoever hates me hates my Father as well. ²⁴ If I had not done among them the works no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. As it is, they have seen, and yet they have hated both me and my Father. ²⁵ But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: 'They hated me without reason.'** That is a lot of hate going to the God of love!

What does this show us? Chosen does NOT mean you will be loved by all. It does NOT mean you will have an easy life. And it does NOT mean God will keep all problems and persecution from you. In fact, one item it DOES mean is that you should expect persecution. You should expect hatred.

Raise your hand if, knowing all that comes from being chosen, you still feel honored like you did a few moments ago? It is a little more difficult, isn't it. Remember what Peter said we were to God. We are his "special possession!" Why would God allow his special possession to go through such difficulty!?

Let's put it back into perspective. What does God owe you? When we are chosen by God, there is a great temptation to believe that means the God of the universe should only allow great things to happen to me. "God owes me that!" Does he?

I think of my own life. I have been chosen by God since before the creation of the world. There isn't a moment in my life that I know what it is like to be on the other side, meaning, to be without faith in all God has done. Baptized as an infant. Raised in the church. WELS grade school, high school, MLC, seminary. Surrounded by God's Word and his love each moment of my life. How have I

shown appreciation for being chosen? I have broken every single commandment. Every one. God's simply asked me to show my appreciation for being chosen by keeping his commands, right? That is what keeping the commands are now to us. **We love because he first loved us.** We don't keep the commands to earn heaven. Can't do it. We don't keep the commands to earn God's favor. Never could happen. We keep them out of love and appreciation for all God has done...including the fact that he has chosen us. How have I acted in appreciation? I have broken every command. "Yeah, thanks God for choosing me. I am going to just do whatever I want now." Shame on me.

But it gets worse. I also am tempted to believe that God OWES me all happiness, all riches, all (fill in the blank). Let me stop there to clarify. I am NOT saying that God doesn't protect me from harm at times or refuse all riches to me because I have sinned or committed any specific sin. No. I am just pointing out the reality. God chose me. And the way I respond at times is to sin against him and then complain to him that I am not being treated as his "special possession."

Again, being chosen does NOT mean God owes me anything, nor does it mean that God will give me always what I want and will keep all problems and persecution from me.

God doesn't owe me anything! But the reality is...God has given me everything! I know that sounds completely against all I have said already. "Pastor Greg, didn't you just say that we will be hated, called names, and will be treated even worse than Jesus? How can you say that we have been given everything?!" **You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.** Think about what that means. There is a reason why the world wants to continue to persecute and hate you. It is because the world is still in darkness. It doesn't know any better. It sees you as different and wants to exploit you as different. Ever walk around in complete darkness? Even if you do it in your own home and you know where all the furniture may be, it can still be a scary thing. You walk around slowly with your arms out, waiting for something to be in the way. Well, turn on a light...not scary anymore. You can see everything.

Jesus chose you to be out of the darkness of sin to be in his wonderful light of mercy. The dark world sees that as different. And in fact, sin hates the light. It is the reason why the world will hate you. And you may even be tempted to want to shut off the light switch of Jesus' wonderful light so you can fit in with the dark world. God's encouragement for you today is to fight the urge to fit in, or in other words, to not shut off that light switch but instead to see the wonderful blessing of being chosen. **Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.**

I know it may make you a little sad to know that being chosen does NOT mean no problems and no persecution. But did you catch what it does mean to be chosen? It means you now live in Jesus' light. It means you now have received mercy. It means you are now God's special possession.

Do you know how you became God's special possession? In order to possess something, a price needs to be paid. If a child wants to possess a toy, there is a price to be paid. If you want to possess a home, there is a price to be paid. If God wanted to possess you, there was also a price which needed to be paid. And that price was paid. Read these words with me: **For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.**

Your eternal life was paid for by Jesus' blood on the cross. That is how much he wanted you to live with him. When Jesus chose you, it wasn't as simple as picking someone for a kickball team. He went to the cross in order to choose you. And because he went to the cross, this is the result. Read this with me: **In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.**

Remember this passage from earlier: **But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters loved by the Lord, because God chose you as firstfruits to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth.**

So, let's review. Being chosen does NOT mean you will have all happiness and riches in this world. It does NOT mean you will experience no problems and no persecution. But it DOES mean you are loved, forgiven, and given the promise of heaven. It does mean that Jesus went to the greatest lengths to make you one who could be chosen. He went to the cross for you. And it does mean that God couldn't possibly love you anymore than he loves you right now. Oh how blessed to be chosen!

But there is one more thing Jesus asks us to do as those who are chosen by him. He tells us in John 15:16: **You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.**

Jesus wants more people to know about his incredible love. And he wants you to tell others. You don't need to know every last passage in the Bible to share his love. You simply just need to know what you already know.

Chosen – to be loved, to be forgiven, to get heaven. God bless you all in your ministry work as one chosen by God. Amen.