

I Chose You

Faith Resurrected: Part 5 “I Chose You”

Rev. Cameron D St.Michael – May 9, 2021

6th Sunday of Easter – Mother’s Day

Readings: Acts 10:44-48; 1 John 5:1-6; John 15:9-17

Reflection: Psalm 98

Greeting: Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.

Prayer: Almighty God, through your only Son you overcame death and opened to us the gate of everlasting life. Grant that we who celebrate our Lord’s resurrection, by the renewing of your Spirit, arise from the death of sin to the life of righteousness; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Reflection: Psalm 98

O sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things. His right hand and his holy arm have gotten him victory. The Lord has made known his victory; he has revealed his vindication in the sight of the nations. He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our God. Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises. Sing praises to the Lord with the lyre, with the lyre and the sound of melody. With trumpets and the sound of the horn make a joyful noise before the King, the Lord. Let the sea roar, and all that fills it; the world and those who live in it. Let the floods clap their hands; let the hills sing together for joy at the presence of the Lord, for he is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with equity. (Psalm 98 NRSV)*

We read the words of Psalm 98 and we hear of celebration of the Lord. That God is victorious in all things. That we should sing praise of God’s deeds. How do you celebrate God in your life? Do you share the joy of Christ with others? Does it spark joy in your heart to know the Holy Spirit is with you? How do we share in the joy of our Risen Savior?

Prayer: O God, our sovereign, our banquet, our crown: In the resurrection of your Son you have brought us into your palace. Train us to be heirs to your throne, that we may shield the needy; hear our prayers and have mercy, through Christ our Lord. Amen. Alleluia.

Now let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Sermon:

Our scripture readings for today come from the New Revised Standard Version Bible. Our first reading is from Acts chapter 10, verses 44 through 48.

While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles, for they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter said, "Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" So he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they invited him to stay for several days. (Acts 10:44-48 NRSV)*

Our next reading is from 1 John chapter 5, verses 1 through 6.

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the parent loves the child. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For the love of God is this, that we obey his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome, for whatever is born of God conquers the world. And this is the victory that conquers the world, our faith. Who is it that conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? This is the one who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ, not with the water only but with the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one that testifies, for the Spirit is the truth. (1 John 5:1-6 NRSV)*

Our last reading is from John chapter 15, verses 9 through 17.

As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete. "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another. (John 15:9-17 NRSV)*

This is the word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

We continue our Easter series entitled "Faith Resurrected" with our next message "I Chose You." Every message in this series is going to be using a phrase from the Gospel reading for that week. This week we look at what it means be chosen to be loved.

We start today with our Gospel reading. When we find Jesus addressing the disciples, and he's talking to them about love, that joy may be made complete. And there's one phrase that stood out to me as I was reading this, and it was that when Jesus talks about the disciples, he says something that I think applies to all of us. "You did not choose me, but I chose you." He's saying "I picked you. You're the one I've selected. Go out and bear fruit, do good. And I chose you so that you could go and love." I found that interesting. On Mother's Day, I often reflect about the mothers in my life. The one who birthed me, and those who have chosen me. I've been blessed by all of them in my life and I am eternally thankful for them. But I'm always reminded of something that I learned from my mom. And that was that being a mom to her, is really about being a mom to everyone. And I see that idea in our readings for today. That Jesus talks about how he, he chose the disciples. He chose to love them so they could go out and love. So they could go out and do good, so they could go out and help others.

And we see it reflected in John's first letter. That we have been born of God, as it's sometimes stated, we're God's adopted children. We have been chosen to be loved and we should love in return. And we see it again in our reading from Acts. And this time in a slightly different way. This time, it's the Gentiles that received the Holy Spirit. And the circumcised believers of Israel see this, and the point is made: if they've been chosen, who are we to hold them back? And the Gentiles become the adopted Israelites, so to speak. And a lot of this stirred up in me this recollection that really isn't that distanced because my mother still does it now. The way that she demonstrated love to me and my siblings as I was growing up. And so often that was by loving everyone that came to the house. She was a mom to all those kids coming over to the house as I grew up. I still see her doing it today. That anybody that comes across her path is likely to end up seeing her as a mom. A parent who takes an interest in them, loves them, and helps them. Be it just friendly advice, researching a family tree, or just listening.

My mother was one of the very first examples I had of going beyond the love that was expected. I expected my mom to love me. But it wasn't expected that she would show love to my friends. But they could show up on a summer afternoon and they were part of the family, listening to the stories that were read, being served refreshments at our afternoon games. That even as a young adult, anytime my mom was there, she was everybody's mom. Because she chose to love them. She chose them as Christ chose us. As the Holy Spirit chose the Gentiles. And it made me think about that statement from John's letter. That everyone who loves the parent loves the child. And in my mother's case, that led to an awful lot of children being loved, and the world is a better place for it.

I was thinking about this, because of the way that we often think about the love that's expected versus the love we can give. There's a big difference between the two. When something's expected, we do it and it's just sort of a reflex. But when it's unexpected, it becomes something special. And it's because of that unexpectedness that sometimes it catches us off guard. But I often think about Christ's love in that way. Because, as he said, he

chose us, to love, to guide, to lead, to help. Through him, we think of ourselves as God's children. Christ our friend, when he calls upon his father, he always talks about him as our father. It was that reflection that made me really think about this idea of going beyond what's expected. And it raised the question: who do you choose to love? We all have people that we are expected to care for. But who is it that we go out of our way to choose? As I reflected on this, I started to think that that's one of the key points that's made throughout scripture. That we're not called just to do out of habit, but we're called to do so that we are intentional in how we love and how we love others. And how we show that love to others in unexpected ways, because we aren't simply responding to what's necessary. We're going beyond choose to love. We choose to care. We choose to step in to end injustice, even when that injustice is not against us. We speak up against oppression, even if that yoke is not upon our shoulders. We speak up and feed those who are hungry, even if our belly is full. We go out and we clothe the naked even when we are fully clothed. Not because we are always looking for people that are sharing in our suffering to alleviate it for ourselves, but we look beyond ourselves, where we can choose to do the right thing. And in that we extend Christ's love for us to all. That we go beyond the scope of looking out for ourselves and our own interests. And we step out and we look out for God's interests. Sometimes we are in those groups and sometimes we are not.

That's not to say that we don't love all. We do, if we're doing it right. But there's a special call for reaching out to the least and the last. To those on the fringes of society, those who have been left behind. Because they're the ones that need love the most. We choose to open our hearts and extend God's grace, often because we see grace has been so lacking. If we do this we open ourselves up to a whole new experience. Because in that we're not simply loving those who are already "in," those who already "belong." But we're going well beyond. We love those who, by all of society standards, are outside of our responsibility to love.

And it is then that I think back to my mom. Over all these years, she has never stopped reaching out and loving. She has never stopped showing a greater amount of care than is expected. And that's always been an example for me of the way that we all need to love. Because when we look at what Christ tells us, it's not that we did something to earn love before we were loved. But we were loved and welcomed in before we knew what to do. We were chosen before we knew there was choosing to do. Sometimes the unexpected are loved. The circumcised believers didn't expect the Gentiles to receive the same Holy Spirit that they had. But they saw that God's love was there for them as well. And it opened up their minds and it broadened their horizons. It changed the way that they saw those outsiders. No longer as outsiders but as children of God. And anyone who loves parent loves the child. Remember that. Remember that on this Mother's Day, that as we go out into the world the love that we show is the love that we feel we are getting from God. That if we can spare little love, is that a reflection that you feel little love from Christ? If we're afraid to love others, is it because Christ was afraid to love us? No. Christ chose to love us, chose to give us a love that would conquer the world. Gave to us a Spirit of truth that would show us that we are all God's beloved children. A friend

who would lay down his life. Someone who loved us, even when we weren't sure how to love him. Even when we still aren't sure how to love him. The love is there for us. So let us show that love to others. Let us love with abandon. Let us show others that we love them as God loves them: wholly and completely. Not expecting anything in return but loving to love. Because we can choose to love just as Christ chose to love us. That we may reflect the care, the patience, the grace, and most certainly the love that we are shown by the Father, Son, the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Prayer of Confession and Pardon: We are reluctant, O Author of Love, to set aside our hurt, our anger, our disappointment. Heal us with your tender touch, that we might be cleansed of all unclean thoughts, all schemes of revenge, all hope of vindictive retribution. Open our eyes to the power of love, shown to us in the unselfish sacrifice of your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Offering: If you are so moved to make an offering, you may send it to the church treasurer, or you may send it to the PO Box listed below. We are still the church, and the church still needs your support to keep doing all the important work that we do.

Lord's Prayer

Dismissal with Blessing: May we go forth reflecting God's love in our lives as we go forth in the peace of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Our Current Series – Faith Resurrected

Our series is *Faith Resurrected*, and each week's title is taken from the words of Christ as we explore what it means to serve a Risen Savior.

April 11th – *Come to Believe* - Acts 4:32-35; 1 John 1:1-2:2; John 20:19-31

April 18th – *You are Witnesses* – Acts 4:32-35; 1 John 1:1-2:2; John 20:19-31

April 25th – *Listen to My Voice* – Acts 4:5-12; 1 John 3:16-24; John 10:11-18

May 2nd – *Abide in Me* – Acts 8:26-40; 1 John 4:7-21; John 15:1-8

May 9th – *I Chose You* – Acts 10:44-48; 1 John 5:1-6; John 15:9-17

May 16th – *Be Sanctified* – Acts 1:15-17, 21-26; 1 John 5:9-13; John 17:6-19

May 23rd – *He Will Guide You* – Acts 2:1-21; Romans 8:22-27; John 15:26-27, 16:4b-15

Prayer List

Rev Charliam Renner	Bishop Frank Beard	Our Conference	Our Healthcare Workers
Patti Corder and the Greenup	Ambulance Crew	Angie Veach	Eric Veach
Cathy Devall	Brock McMorris	Ed & Verna Titus	Henry Catey
Jake Kiser	Cindy Cisney	Nancy Hoke	Don Wells
Tricia Adkins	Ronnie & Elaine Carlen	Don Stewart	Michael & Makenzie Reynolds
Ronnie Winstead	Annie McMorris	Dwight Parsons	Trinity Powers
Lauren Stewart	Charlie Henderson	Rosalee Chancellor	Phyllis Gable
Sage Martin	Dalton McFarland	Family of Davey Yaw	Family of Wilma Clark
Terri Kemper	Darrell Quick	Family of Hugh Eubank	Shelley Murphy
Family of Doris Devall	Family of Doris Devall	Family of Macel Buss	Family of Winona Saathoff
Jeff Davidson	Richard Durham	Kathy Hanks	Nora Werner & Family
Wayne Carrell	Gary & Mary Winterrowd	Leo Smith	Bonnie Hite
Donna Graham	Kevin Drum	Greg Williams	Eloise Buffenmeyer
Martha Roberts	Charlie & Charlotte Baxter	Paul Schulte	Kim Hennes

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