

**Sermon – July 11, 2021**

***“God Chooses Us”***

**Crown of Life Lutheran Church, Rigby, ID**

**PASTOR DAVE SCHILLING**

Grace, mercy, and peace be to each of you from our expectant Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen

Let's pray as we open ourselves up once again to the teaching of God's authoritative Word ...

PRAYER: O Lord, speak in this place, in our minds, in our hearts, by the words of my mouth, and in the thoughts we form. Speak, O Lord, we, your servants, are listening. Amen.

Welcome church! We are excited you decided to worship with us. Today, I'm not sure what you brought with you, but I believe that God desires to shed light into the darkness, and free you from having to carry baggage or burdens alone in this life.

The pursuit of righteousness; the life of faith; these are not things we have to do alone, which is what we learned from last week's teaching.

And today we continue in our series on the book of Romans...“the most systematic and developed doctrinal book of the Apostle Paul.”

There is much to learn from Romans, so much in fact that we could easily work for the next year through each chapter and verse.

Instead, we have chosen some highlights from Romans, like sin, righteousness, unity with Christ, and today we've got an even more powerful insight to share from Romans 9.

It is clear right up front in our text that God is the final authority. He gets to choose who He shows mercy to and whose heart He hardens.

And sometimes, we don't understand that. It's hard to imagine God would harden anyone's heart for any reason. And yet, we are called in faith to simply trust that His ways are greater than ours. We will not ever fully understand God this side of Heaven.

I have two younger sisters. And I have been sharing the love of Jesus with them and their families for decades. Only recently did my youngest sister begin to take notice of Jesus through my daily devotions and our live streaming worship services. And I am so grateful.

My other sister remains a non-believer to this day.

Sometimes I ask myself, “God, why won't she and her husband come to know you? Why is their heart so hard towards you?” Of course, there is no answer ... only they would know.

It is a reality for all of us that we don't fully understand how God works. However, there is one thing that we can be absolutely sure of ... God **CHOSE US**.

And this is the topic I want us to move forward with today. There are some key components to God's choice of us, and His call to us as His "special possessions." First, we were...

### Created in His Image

Even from the beginning of creation itself, God chose to create human beings differently than all the rest of creation.

Genesis 1 reminds us...

"God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them." Genesis 1:27

And then in Genesis 2, God says how He created us...

"Then the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being." Genesis 2:7

It is incredible to read about how God formed us. He did not speak mankind into existence like He did ALL the rest of creation.

He knew He wanted us to be intentionally set apart. God wanted us to be different. But since Genesis 3, when sin entered humanity, we ALL let God down. We all fall short of His standard for us.

Even though we allow sin in our lives to distort God's image, there is some really good news. God's image on each of us is not destroyed.

Just as our Romans text teaches us, God decides who and what He uses to accomplish His purposes.

And for some reason, even amidst our flaws and our sins, God chose us to be used by Him.

That truth should allow us to feel joyful, honored, and privileged. However, the key components amidst all of this is that we are still broken beings.

God chose to enter into a broken relationship with broken human beings in order to bring about redemption and reconciliation. What a beautiful and poignant example of GRACE.

We are Broken, but God's Purpose is Beautiful

Paul, in our Romans 9 passage, talks about a potter. He claims the potter has the right to choose what he does with the clay, no matter how it looks, or what its purpose is for.

God could have easily passed us by and accomplished His purposes some other way. But He wanted us. He wanted to love us. He wanted to use us as the stewards of His creation.

And here's one BIG reason why I think God uses us in this broken world ... for when BROKEN people are used by God, He gets ALL the glory.

Look at our second lesson about the famous conversion of Saul. This Saul figure is the same guy who wrote Romans, Paul.

This was a man who once persecuted the Christian message he was now preaching. He killed believers in Jesus Christ, because he thought it was the most righteous thing for him to do.

He thought their message was contrary to God's message. But then Paul had an ENCOUNTER with Jesus Himself. And the rest, as they say, is history.

Paul went on to become one of the most effective people for spreading the gospel message in history, because he knew he had a story to tell.

A story of how Jesus saw him in his sin and flaws, and wanted to use him anyway. God turned Paul into an empowered and impassioned man.

And this type of story doesn't have to stay in the Bible. I believe, just like Paul, God desires to rewrite your story today as well. Maybe you've been questioning whether God even loves you anymore because you feel as if you are too far gone.

Maybe for some, you have believed the lie that God could not use you because you are not perfect.

But think about this, it is in His use of imperfection that He receives the most glory. He has been doing it this way for thousands of years, from the first pages of the Bible to the last.

His love, grace, mercy, and compassion are given freely because of His deep love for us ... people created in His image.

And because of this fact, there is nothing we can do to earn more or less from Him. Here's the truth ... you and I cannot earn God's love.

That is why we call His love Grace because it is ...

### Undeserved

Think about it like this ... God loves us as much RIGHT NOW as He ever has, or ever will. He is not a God who fluctuates back and forth depending on how we respond.

He does not love us less when we screw up, or more when we preach a good sermon, tithe, or volunteer in our community.

And it is the same with His mercy. Paul makes it clear that we CANNOT DO anything to work for God's love.

If we could, we would be driven by a performance-based Christianity which all of us already fall short of, since "All have sinned and fallen short of the Glory of God." (Romans 3:23)

It is God's JOB to be perfect, NOT ours.

God's gift to us is this ... He chose us before we even had the opportunity to choose Him. He knew us before we ever knew Him.

He knew our strengths and weaknesses, our victories and defeats, everything. Jeremiah 1:5 says it like this...

"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."

In Jeremiah's case God formed, knew, and set him apart before birth. Now, you and I are not prophets appointed to bring God's words to Israel, but this idea of being formed and known runs congruent throughout the Bible.

Formed. Known. Chosen.

These are powerful words to help us understand our identity as NEW creations, ALIVE with Christ, and REDEEMED by God.

God's plan for your life originated long before today. His love for you is not based on the fact that you decided to come to church today.

In fact, it is not based on anything you have or haven't done in your entire life. It was His choice. His prerogative. His decision entirely.

There are numerous examples in history of God choosing ORDINARY people to accomplish His EXTRAORDINARY purposes.

We talked about Paul earlier, but there are so many others that come to mind.

King David.

Ruth the Moabite.

Mary the Mother of Jesus.

Peter the uneducated fisherman turned Chief Disciple.

Not to mention all of the examples of those people outside the pages of the bible that God has empowered and used for extraordinary purposes.

And today, I believe He still desires to USE us. He chooses us, His ordinary people to do His EXTRAORDINARY work in this world today.

Of course, it won't always be easy. As we have already said, it will require sacrifice, but it will be worth it. The life experienced in Christ is better and more beautiful than anything we can experience otherwise in this broken world.

So, what I'm asking you TO DO today is to accept God's choice of you. No matter your circumstance or situation, you can and will be used for extraordinary things in the hands of the Almighty God.

He chose to love you.

And this invitation is for new and old believers alike. Often, the longer we walk with Jesus the more complacent and comfortable we become.

So, it is important that we all take time to consider the life that we have been called to and redeemed into as a result of our life with Christ.

Spend some time in prayer, worship, solitude, whatever it takes, to reconnect with your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ this week. Spend quality time with Him this week. Amen

Closing pray:

“God thank you for choosing us. For choosing love when we were lost in sin and disobedience. Help us to accept your love and mercy today as gifts that you have so freely given to us. We pray in Jesus precious name. Amen”