

Our Mission:

To share Christ with the world
and grow disciples for Jesus



Loving God and Loving Neighbor as Ourselves

Background:

Paul is writing to a congregation located in a major trade center of the Roman Empire. Ephesus and the congregation located there represents the multi-cultural reality of the empire. Yet the Apostle is stating that they have been chosen by God (remember Israel is supposedly the chosen people of God) since before creation itself. As we have seen in other letters written by Paul, he sees Christ as the bridge that not only reconciles us to God but to one another as well.

Theology Connection:

We might find ourselves stuck when it comes to loaded words like 'predestined.' Luther's understanding is that God's intention is to reconcile the world to him. This is God's design and our destiny. Yet, out of love for us, God grants us the freedom to choose otherwise. We are incapable of deterring God's choice for us, but by God's own design, we are free to live outside God's will.

Application:

Even in the early church, there were those who thought they were on the inside track, and others were outsiders. Paul upsets this thinking by saying God's choice for us far predates any choice we might make for God. In other words, this is a message of complete grace. If God can show grace toward us, God can use us to show grace toward others. Might we be on the lookout for opportunities in the week ahead?

The Text: Ephesians 1: 1-14

¹Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To God's holy people in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus:

²Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

³Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

⁴For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love ⁵he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— ⁶to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

⁷In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace ⁸that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, ⁹he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, ¹⁰to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.

¹¹In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, ¹²in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.

¹³And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit,

¹⁴who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.

ADULT

We can all remember a pick-up game or some other activity where two captains were picking their teams. None of us wanted to be humiliated by being picked last. In the early church there were those who said that the Gentiles could join, but they were less privileged than the sons and daughters of Abraham. Have you ever experienced that attitude in an organization, or have you ever been a part of such? What can we do to be more welcoming as well as accepting?

YOUTH

Please read Ephesians 1: 1-14

Can you think of something that is a regular part of your life, but you really don't understand how it works? Does it bother you that you don't understand it? Does that keep you from using it?

This first chapter of Ephesians is a presentation of God's plan. He has chosen to provide redemption and forgiveness, exalting His name forever—and we are right in the middle of it.

If you exist "for the praise of His glory," then throw yourself into worship. Take time on your own to sing, dance and pray. This is the good news...

Let us pray:

Dear God, your grace is without limits. Thank you for your never-ending love. Please help us worship you and remember your glory. In Jesus' name, amen.

CHILDREN'S

Our lesson today is about being chosen to be in the family of God. How would you like to be in God's family?

The Bible tells us that before He even made the world, God loved us and chose us! Before we were even born, God decided to adopt us into His own family. Why do you think God wants us to be in His family? Do you think it's because we are so good and wonderful? No, it's because He is so good and wonderful! We needed an eternal home, and He provided us a home in heaven. We needed someone to help us to grow and He is there to help us each and every day. We needed someone to love us and He loves us more than anyone ever could! God has chosen us, how cool is that? When we confess our sins and put our trust in Jesus, we become God's adopted children, and He makes everything work out according to His plans for us! I am so glad that God chose me to be a part of His family, aren't you?

Think:

1. In what ways do you spend time with God?
2. How can you show God's love to others in your life?

Pray:

Dear Father,
Thank You for choosing us and for sending Your son so that we could be a part of Your family.
Please help us to live in a way that is pleasing to You. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen