

"YOU DID NOT CHOOSE ME BUT I CHOSE YOU"

John 15:12-17

It was Wednesday, April 19, 2000. I took our two daughters, Rebecca and Ashley, out of school to beat it to the Pittsburgh International Airport to welcome home my brother and sister-in-law, Tod and Mia, who were coming back from Vietnam. They didn't travel half-way across the world to take a vacation; they travel to the capital city, Ho Chi Min City, to go to an orphanage to collect a new bundle of joy, their new son, Jeremy Tod Ruppert. We got there just in time to see them and to great our new nephew and cousin. I have a picture in my wallet that was taken right before I had the honor and privilege to baptize Jeremy at the Memorial Park Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh. It is a picture of Jeremy dressed up in his national attire, the same outfit he wore the day of his baptism. I still remember holding him in front of the congregation and reciting a verse from our scripture reading today, "You did not choose me, but I chose you...." I remember mentioning that we are all the adopted daughters and sons of

God. Paul writes in Galatians 4:4, **“But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.”** Adoption- do you ever think of yourself as adopted?

Probably not, unless you are like my nephew. But the point is that we are all, we are all adopted daughters and sons of God if we are in Christ.

The first point is this: Those words of Jesus from John, “You did not choose me, but I chose you”- they are powerful words to me and I hope to you as well.

I think it is important for us to catch what Jesus is saying in our passage in verses 14-15 for He tells His disciples that He is no longer going to call them servants, and if you have a footnote in your Bible what is the other word that could be used? **Slave**, that’s right. No longer does Jesus call them servant or slave but what? **Friend**. The relationship has moved to a deeper level. You see, the slave or servant could never be a partner.

The servant or slave was defined in Greek law as a living tool. In other words, the master would never open up his mind to the slave or servant. The slave was at the master's beckon call and had to do whatever he was told to do, without explanation. But now Jesus is making a huge shift, for **Jesus is saying to them, "Fellows, you are not my slaves.**

You are my partners. Jesus is telling them I have told you everything, there are no secrets. I have told you what I am called to do, what I am trying to do, and why I am trying to do it. I have told you everything that God has told me.

And Jesus is saying the same to you and to me. You are my partner, you are my friend. And I, Jesus, am giving you the honor of making you a partner with me in my task. And the unbelievable choice that is set before us is that we can accept or refuse this partnership with Christ in His work of bringing the world to God.

On Sunday, June 8 we ordained/installed or installed 7 Elders and 5 Deacons. Today we finish up installing the last two Deacons. These 14 people were selected by the Nominating Team, where called by God and the voice of this church in a Congregational Meeting to serve Jesus Christ in a special way. And as soon as this sermon is over Rosemarie Conti and Elaine Miller will stand before God and this church and answer important questions as to what they believe and what they will do. They were "called by the God and the voice of this church." There it is again- "you did not choose me but I chose you." Isn't that wonderful, isn't that unbelievable, isn't that great?

Now I cannot speak for you so I will only speak for myself- the fact that God chose me, the sinful person that I am, the broken person that I am, the flawed, quirky, type-A, trying to reform micro manager, somewhat obsessive-compulsive, loyal Pittsburgher that I am, the fact that God chose me is mind-boggling.

And to bring it home to all of you- the fact that God chose you, the fact that He chose any of us is a mystery, it is mindboggling, it is amazing, it is a miracle.

The fact that we are now friends, only proves that the love of Jesus Christ has broken down the walls which once separated us from Him, the walls that once separated the master from the slave, the rich from the poor, the white from the black or the red or the yellow, the one who comes first and the one who comes last.

The second point is this; **Jesus chose us and appointed us to be His missionaries or ambassadors.** You see, Jesus has chosen us to do something with us- **to send us out.** Jesus said in verse 16 that he appointed us to go. **To go and do what?** To go and bear fruit. He did not choose us to live a life sitting back in our easy chairs, retiring from the world, but he wants us to get off our "duffs" and do something- to represent Him to a hurting world.

I am told that back in jolly old England that when a knight came to the court of King Authur, that knight did not come to spend the rest of his living days in knightly feasting and in knightly fellowship there. He would come to the king and say, "Send me out on some great task which I can do for chivalry and for you." (*The Gospel of John*, vol. 2, William Barclay, p. 179)

If you are sitting back in your easy chair unless you physically or emotionally or even spiritually are not able, then a spiritual check-up is in order. Jesus chose us, first to come to Him, but then we are to go out and "do" in His name.

Jesus commands us to go and in our going to bear fruit- what kind or fruit are we bearing and what does this fruit look like? And if we are not bearing any fruit, why not? What do we need to do to get on board, what do we need to do to get with the program and get on the team and get equip to do the work of Christ? What changes do I need to make?

Maybe it is come alongside a person who has been at this Christian faith a while and shadow them and work beside them so that we can be the disciples that Christ wants us to be who are bearing fruit.

Look with me again to verse 16. Jesus says, "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you...." Let me stop right there. Jesus "appointed". Do you know that the word "appointed" in this verse is the same verb that Jesus uses when He speaks of "laying down His life?" So what this means is that Jesus' death will empower these disciples of His to go out and carry out their work in His name. Not in their name but His name. And the same is true for us. Jesus set aside His very life and set His disciples out to do their work, and the same is true for us.

Being a follower of Jesus Christ is not easy stuff, it is hard stuff, it is demanding, it is gut-wrenching, it is glorious, it is marvelous, it is all of the above and more. It is not for the faint-hearted, nor the sissy. It is not for the weekend warrior or the arm-chair quarterback.

I look around and I see those in the congregation who have been willing to roll up their sleeves and do as Christ commands us- to be missionaries, to be ambassadors, to be advertisements for Him.

The only way I know how we can spread Christianity is to go out and be what we claim to be, namely, Christian. The way to attract others to Christ is to model it and to show them the fruit of the Christian life. We cannot coerce, we cannot connive, we cannot manipulate, we cannot threaten. We must live it out, daily, as hard as that may be and will be. To get back up when we fail, when we fall, when we sin and mess up. To pick ourselves up and dust ourselves off and start back over again.

Friends, if you remember nothing else from what I say today, please, remember this: Jesus said, "You did not choose me but I chose you." Remember we are the adopted daughters and sons of God and no one can ever take that away from us. And when you are on the mountain top of life rejoice and thank the Lord.

And when you are feeling down and depressed and wondering about all this Christian faith stuff and doubting remember this story.

Watchman Nee, a Chinese Christian author and church leader during the 20th century, tells about a new convert who came in deep distress to see him. "No matter how much I pray, no matter how hard I try, I simply cannot seem to be faithful to my Lord. I think I'm losing my salvation." Nee said, "Do you see this dog here? He is my dog. He is house-trained; he never makes a mess; he is obedient; he is a pure delight to me. Out in the kitchen I have a son, a baby son. He makes a mess, he throws his food around, he fouls his clothes, he is a total mess. But who is going to inherit my kingdom? Not my dog; my son is my heir. You are Jesus Christ's heir because it is for you that He died." We are Christ's heirs, not through our perfection but by means of His grace.

"You did not choose me but I chose you." Amen. Amen.

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John 15:12-17

Introduction: A trip to Pittsburgh International Airport to welcome Jeremy Ruppert from Vietnam

Jeremy's baptism

Adopted daughters and sons of God

First, Jesus said, "You did not choose me but I chose you"

**Vs. 14-15 No longer does Jesus call them servant or _____
but _____**

The servant or _____ was defined in Greek law as a _____ tool

Jesus is saying, "Fellows, you are not my _____. You are my _____."

Second, Jesus chose us and appointed us to be His _____ or _____ - to _____ us out vs. 16

To go and do what?

Vs. 16 Jesus "appointed"...

Conclusion: Watchman Nee tells about a new convert in deep distress- we are Christ's heirs, not through our perfection but by means of His grace