WEEK TWO**: You Are Chosen**

 As followers of Christ, we have been chosen by the God of all creation as His possession. We are chosen and set apart through Christ our Savior. This has all happened for a specific purpose which is to allow us to proclaim the goodness of God to those who still find themselves in the darkness.

**Scriptures that we will be referencing this morning are;** - **1 Peter 2:9-10, Jeremiah 32:38-39, Acts 9:3-5**

(Story) Perhaps you were very good in sports growing up, or maybe you were a good debater in English class**.** I often got picked when someone with either a loud mouth or long arms was needed.

The reason you were picked is because you had something valuable to bring to the group...You were of value to the team that picked you. The reality today is, God chooses people to use for His Kingdom and oftentimes, the people He chooses are outcasts, forgotten about, not wanted, leftover.

And this is consistent with how and who God chose in days past. **Which means, no matter where you find yourself, or how you view yourself, God wants you!**

If you have doubts about God choosing people that we may not choose, just leaf through the Bible and you will discover that God does in fact choose those that we would overlook!

Today, we are in week 2 of our series, **“Don’t be a Chameleon,”** **all about standing out rather than fitting in.**

Last week, we discussed the difference between conforming to the world around us and being transformed as God defines it. Once we choose to be transformed by God, we then allow God to use us for His purposes, which we will talk about today.

**The title for today; “YOU ARE CHOSEN!”**

So if you have a Bible please turn with me to 1 Peter 2:9-10. This is where we will be camping out for most of our time together this morning.

**READ 1 Peter 2:9-12**

***“But you are a CHOSEN RACE, a royal PRIESTHOOD, a HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE for GOD’S own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;***

***(10) for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”***

Now, in order to understand the significance of what Peter just said, we have to understand the context in which he is writing.

When Peter writes this letter, he does so to a group of Christians who are scattered throughout the northern part of Asia Minor. These Christians are “aliens” or “foreigners” in the land they find themselves in. They are not blended in like the chameleon. They are clearly standing out. That’s exactly how the Lord wanted it! Had they not been chased out of Israel the good news of the Gospel would not have spread as quickly. And only did so because those who were scattered did not fit in with their surroundings, but stood out!

Many of them are facing suffering because of that. Therefore, Peter is seeking to encourage them in their faith.

Within the passage we just read, I believe there are three things in particular that Peter is trying to do:

**1) Remind us**

**2) Challenge us**

**3) Strengthen us**

**If we can receive each of these things for ourselves today, we will understand the significance of God choosing to use us.**

**We will be eager to achieve greater things in our walk with Christ than ever before.**

 **God reminds us of our past.**

As I said, the first thing we see Peter do when he is writing to his audience, is simply trying to remind them of the past. He says**, “You are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, and** **God’s very own possession.”** The key phrase to sum up all that Peter is trying to remind these Christians of is the final thing he says: that they are **“God’s very** **own possession**.” I want to pause right here. I want us to sit in silence for a few moments, thinking about this phrase:

 ***You are, we are God’s very own possession.***

**Read Jeremiah 32:38-39**

**“And they shall be My people, and I will be their God; and I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me always, for their own good, and for the good of their children after them.”**

You see, this is a promise God makes to His people all the way back in the Old Testament, before Jesus arrives.

 A promise that still stands in 1 Peter because of the pathway Jesus made for all people to have access to their Heavenly Father.

 DO YOU GET THE POINT? **When God chose us, it did not just mean that we are His people, *but it also means that He is our God!***

**No matter what others think of you, God chooses you.**

**I was one of those, (like the song) “Long haired freaky people need not apply.”**

**But God said, “I want you to apply. Although the world may not care about you, I love you!” God says that to all of us.**

**The world, may reject us but God looks beyond what the world thinks and reasons, He looks to our hearts and can mold us to His kingdom.**

If we look closely enough, all throughout the Bible, there seems to be a trend: frequently, for God to take us where He wants us to be, He often has to ***remind*** us of His faithfulness in the past. Peter is doing the same thing here. A little paraphrasing,

 **“I know it’s tough. I know there is suffering and persecution all around, and you are probably on the brink of giving up, but I need you to remember: God CHOSE you! Not so that He could leave you, but so that He could USE you!”**

**Remember this today: You are His...God *chose* you!**

**Secondly, Accept the Challenge.**

This leads us to the second thing I believe Peter sets out to do in this passage. That is, to challengethe scattered Christians. He gives them their mission, and in doing so, it becomes our mission as well!

He just finished reminding his readers, God chose them, and he goes on to tell them,

 “*Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God***.”**

 **He is saying, don’t be chameleons, and conform to your new surroundings but be transformed and stand out for the cause of Christ!**

As an elder I have been confronted from time to time by some who are upset that they didn’t receive credit for something they did. This verse we just read puts that in proper perspective. **“they may see our good** **deeds and glorify God!”** God is to get the glory not us!

We are not saved by our works, we are saved to work for God’s glory!

Flock, a lot of us tend to receive God’s blessings in our lives convinced that they are only for us and we think we can keep them to ourselves.

Psalm 67 says it like this; “*May God be gracious to us and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us, that Your ways may be known on earth, Your salvation among all nations.”*

We ask for His blessing and grace and we are not to stop there, **we are to make His salvation known to all. That is our challenge.**

And our passage from Peter also speaks about the concept of advancing the Kingdom of Heaven, oftentimes by simply living a righteous lifestyle. The choice God made to choose us was ultimately to bring glory to Himself. The way we live is so important because the truth is, people are always watching. The way we live our lives is one of the loudest testimonies we will ever share with others.

St. Francis of Assisi is quoted as saying it this way, **“Preach the gospel at all times, and when necessary** **use words.”** Our deeds and works are preaching on our behalf even when we aren’t saying anything.

If that makes us uncomfortable, maybe we need to do some self-reflection!

Peter is addressing a group of believers who are watched all the time. Why? Because they are different, they are standing out. People are intrigued by their message and therefore want to see how they are living. Peter then throws out a challenge to use this for the Kingdom’s advantage.

 **The same challenge applies to us today.**

I wonder who in our daily lives are watching the way we **live**, the way we **speak**, the way we **spend our time,** and the way we **treat other people**, and a recent one, what we post on social networks! because they are interested in what we believe.

This is the amazing privilege we have as God’s chosen people...to show the world around us what Christ looks like: to stand out, to proclaim the light that overcomes the darkness.

I’m reminded of the song we sang so many times at camp; “Humble Yourselves in the Sight of the Lord” Are we truly humbled when we consider that God chose us for His work?

If we consider this a task that we are unable to meet,,,GOOD, Then we will rely on God to provide. Just like the Apostle Paul, “When I am weak, then I am strong.” When these early Christians put their trust in the Lord, they then achieved great things for the Lord.

The Lord will do the same for us as well.

**Read Matthew 5:14,15**

**“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under the peck-measure, but on the lampstand; and it gives light to all who are in the house.”**

Are we a reflection of Christ to those around us?

 Do people see the light of Jesus through us?

Talking about what Christ looked like, I once had a lady that worshiped with us say to me that we have a screen on one side, the cross in the middle so we need something on the other side of the forward wall. She then suggested that we put a mural of Jesus on the blank side.

 I said that might be a good idea if we knew what He looked like. She gasped and said sure we do, we have pictures all over of Him! I said to her that Jesus wasn’t a blue eyed handsome white guy, that to know what Jesus looks like we must look to the scriptures. We just need to look to ourselves! Are we being a reflection of the Lord to those around us. Are we standing out from the world as the light?

**We must open ourselves to the encouragement and strength that God freely offers!**

This leads to the final thing Peter says in this passage as he writes, he encourages the people of God.

He says, ***“He called you out of the darkness into His wonderful light. ‘Once you had no identity as a people; now you are God’s people. Once you received no mercy; now you have received God’s mercy.”***

Peter once again takes us down memory lane to the time in our lives when we were stuck living in darkness. Chances are, because we are all human, we have experienced what this feels like first hand.

One of the most striking biblical examples of God’s mercy and grace over a person’s life is found in the transformation of Saul the Pharisee to Paul the Apostle.

Saul was present during the stoning of Stephen, he was hunting Christians from house to house, and God intervened literally as Saul was traveling from one persecution to another. His story picks up in Acts 9:

***“As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” “Who are you, Lord?” Saul asked. “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,” He replied.* Acts 9:3-5**

Quite a scene, as even those present with Saul were speechless.

Saul was walking in darkness, and the light of Christ met Him in the midst of his journey. God not only had mercy on Saul, but loved the gentile nations so much that he chose Saul to be their appointed apostle and bearer of the gospel.

Saul deserved death, but through Christ he received life. We are no different in that regard.

And he traded the rest of his earthly life to serve Christ.

**Are we to do any less?**

***I have a short video that makes this point.***

***Is our lives like that of Paul’s or are we like this short video just pretending. Are we giving our lives to serving Christ or do we just fool ourselves by fitting into our busy lives a little extra time to the Lord?***

This is the kind of thing God can do with any and all of us. This is the kind of kingdom transformation Peter is encouraging in his letter. He’s challenging his original readers to remember who and whose they are. He’s challenging them to step into their calling and represent Christ to others around them both in their words and their works.

**He is challenging them to not be chameleons and blend in with those around them but to stand out, and to stand out for Christ**!

***Does this not speak to us as well? Of course it does! These words are encouragement to all who hear them!***

**Again, It has been said, “We are not saved by our good works but we are saved “to” good works.”**

And the bottom-line encouragement for all of us is this**: God can use any of us. He can redeem any life and bring all the lost sheep home.**

**If God can turn a Saul into a Paul then just imagine what He can do in and through our lives.**

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### Conclusion

Peter makes it clear: God does not simply choose us strictly for our benefit, but ultimately to benefit others around us. Maybe we have been keeping the seed of salvation all to ourselves. Maybe it’s time to expand our comfort zones a bit and share the good news of redemption.

The truth is, there are people in our daily life, maybe even in our inner circle, that do not know there is a God who loves them and would choose to use them for a higher purpose than anything this world could possibly offer them.

The world is watching us as we walk the path of faith.

They are observing our responses.

Our reactions to suffering and adversity.

Our joy, our peace, our patience, and our kindness.

Let your life preach such a powerful message that those close to you have no other option but to praise God in heaven.

Who comes to mind when you think of those close to you? Who do you think might need to hear the good news of Christ? What can you do this week, in word or deed, to proclaim the good news to those around you?

As you consider this challenge, remember;

You are chosen and redeemed.

You are an ambassador of Christ, a messenger of the greatest news the world has ever known. And the same God who raised Christ from the dead will raise you up in your time of need. He will never leave you nor forsake you.

And speaking of “Ambassador,” That will be our topic for next Sunday.

Let’s pray together.

Father, we thank You for your scriptures that teach us, that encourages us, that give us hope and meaning for our lives. We thank You that through Your word we are remined of our past and how You have brought us out of the darkness and into the Light through our Savior, Your Son, Jesus. Give us the courage to accept Your challenge to be that light and let it shine for all to see. We thank You for the strength we have, for the assurance we have through Your words of life. May we have the strength to not blend in with the world but to stand out, to stand out for what Jesus came to freely give to all. AMEN

We have a tradition of closing with a song of invitation. As we stand and sing, if you would like to have prayer that God would grant you the strength to let your light shine or you have decided to follow Jesus and be forgiven of all sin take this opportunity to come forward and be baptized into Christ. No time like the present.