

**Preaching Christ....
...by the power of the Holy Spirit
...and the authority of the Word of God**

Date: 01 January 2023
Services: *Across the diocese*
Series: Every Spiritual blessing
Passage: Ephesians 1:3-4
Title: Chosen
Outline:

What it means
Why?
The joys and challenges
What we should do

We all have people at Christmas time don't we, for whom we don't have a clue **what** to buy, because well – they have everything!

There's nothing they **need**; nothing they **want**....

If **this** passage from Ephesians chapter 1 is true... the same thing can be of **every Christian** – every **true believer** – because we read that we have **“every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realm”** – that is, **spiritually** speaking, we have **everything!** //

And Paul encourages us to respond in praise.... That's the main point of this passage... to evoke **praise** to our **generous, amazing** God who has showered us with **abundant** blessings... //

These verses open a treasure chest of blessings... we will spend today and the next 4 weeks over summer picking each one up, exploring them in turn : trying to **understand** them, getting our **heads** around them, seeing what they **mean** for us... and responding the way Paul **wants** us to respond – with **heartfelt and joyful praise to God!** //

Have a look with me at v3 *Praise 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. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.*

He **chose** us **in** Christ **before** the **creation** of the **world**...

So let's look at...

1. What this means
2. Why?
3. The joys and challenges
4. Our response

1. WHAT THIS MEANS

God hatched a plan – before he put the sun and moon in the sky – before he separated the land and the sea – before he placed the fish in the sea – the animals on the land – and the birds in the air... before he put humans together... he had a **plan**...

His plan included **Jesus the Messiah** and **us**

His plan was to **choose** us (who didn't exist yet) to be adopted as his own sons and daughters, through the **rescuing** work of his **Son** (which hadn't **happened** yet)!

His choice was both **corporate** – to have a people of his own – who would be holy and blameless –

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...and **individual**... that is, he set his heart on **you personally** (if you are a true believer) and wrote **your** name down in his book of life. //

Now, this may be a surprise to you. /

You may reply saying – now hang on Mark – when I was a teenager on a youth camp – I definitely decided to ask Jesus to forgive and save me... **I chose him**... OR – it was when I was in my **40s** – I definitely decided Jesus is for real and I turned my life over into his hands... //

...But God in his word is teaching here that whether you turned to Christ at a certain age... or if you've **never** known a time when you **didn't** know and trust and serve him....

...you **chose God** – you **turned** to **Jesus** – you **repented** of your **sin** – /// because **God** – before **creation** – **chose you!** //

Now that may raise a whole **other** set of questions for you – and some of those I'll get to in a minute....

But just think about this for a minute...

God chose you! ///

It's what God does.

He'd chosen **Noah** to be saved in the **ark**.

He'd chosen **Abraham** way back to be the father of a special nation.

He'd chosen **Israel** as his people

Why? Because Israel were **attractive**? – no Deuteronomy 7 says

*It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, & but it is **because the Lord loves you***

simply because he loved them. They weren't the cleverest. The largest nation. The best nation. It was not because **they** were lovely. But because **he** is love!

and just so **YOU** don't become arrogant because the Lord has chosen you... read what it says – he chose you to be **holy** and **blameless**... **implication?** – you were **neither**... you were **unholy** and **full of blame**...

no – he set his heart on you NOT because **you** were lovely – but because **he** is **love!** ///

Do you remember lining up to be chosen for a sports team at school...? That was always a terrible experience for me... soccer... no one **EVER** wanted me... “unco” – short for ‘uncoordinated’... **always** picked last...

God's choice of you - was not on **merit**... not even on **potential**... **NOT** because he **foresaw** you were intended turning to him...

...merely because of his **love**... his **grace**... his mercy...//

you are **his**... **now** and for **eternity**...

2. **WHY?**

But this begs the question... why?

Well – we're **told**... so that as his chosen people we might be **holy and blameless**...

Set apart for him... and all our **blame** having been **removed**.

Just as Israel were to be a nation set apart to be God's own people – a **distinctive** people... **holy** – **special** – to **delight** in God – to show the **other** nations the **brilliance** of God....

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...so God has chosen **disciples** of **Jesus today** – to be **radically different**...

Do you recall our Titus passage from Christmas Day – Jesus Christ gave *himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.*

our being **chosen** to be **his**... is to rescue us from the mess we are in from shutting him out... and so that we might then *declare the praises of him who called us out of darkness into his marvellous light* (1 Peter 2) ///

ok – we've looked a **little** at what being **chosen** before the creation of the world **means**... a little about **why** he would do that...

...but this does throw up some **challenges** for us... so I want to spend a little time on the

3. THE JOYS AND THE CHALLENGES

The joy of this is – **knowing** where you stand with God – and realising that this has **nothing** to do with **you**...

This has been called a '**comfortable**' doctrine... because it's full of **comfort** for the believer...

Just when you are wondering whether you are **good enough**... **this** doctrine says – **no** – of **course** you're **not** – no one can be... but you've been **chosen** by **God**!

When you're wondering whether you can **continue** as a Christian because the way is **hard**... this doctrine says – well – you can't by **yourself**... but you'll remain with the Lord, not because of **your** tentative grip on **Him** – but His **firm** grip on **you** which has been **planned** and **purposed** from **before creation**!!

Just when you're wondering whether or not God is on your **side** because everything's going wrong... or whether he **cares** or whether he can **do** anything about your situation... **this** doctrine says – **you are deeply loved**... you were chose from the **beginning** of **time**... of course you can trust him!! He's on your side. He hasn't changed his **mind** about **you** and is not **about** to!! //

Those are just **some** of the joys of this teaching. //

What about the **challenges**?

I'm sure you could list them for me!

Here's a quick sample

- What about other people? - those he **doesn't** choose?
- Why doesn't he just chose **everyone**?
- That's not **fair**... how can a loving God send people to **hell** just because he didn't **choose** them?
- What's the point of doing evangelism if God's already chosen those who are his?
- **Don't** we have **free will**?

Well the Lord in his wisdom, doesn't always **answer** all our questions – as if he's **accountable** to **us**!

And – I'm not going to tackle **each** of those challenges **individually**... but here are some things to consider...

But... first - either God is completely in **control** of his **world**, or he is **not**.

This doctrine assures us that it is God and **God alone** who is calling the shots in the universe... including those whom he chooses to **rescue** and adopt as his **own**.

That's the **first** thing.

Second - the Bible sees no **inconsistency** in God calling the shots, and yet calling **mankind** into **line** – calling us to **account** – asking us to repent and believe

Look with me at Romans 9:14 – because Paul is assuming that someone is asking the exact same question

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we've asked here – is God unfair in choosing some to be his.

v14 *What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! For he says to Moses "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."*

Who's calling the shots? **God** is calling the shots.

Well hang on; ... that still leaves the question – how can those who are **not** God's people be **blamed**?

Again the Apostle Paul anticipates the question and replies:

Rom 9: 20 *But who are you, to talk back to God? Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, 'why did you make me like this? Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use?*

You see – it is to **God's** glory that he chooses **any** at **all!!**

That he should bear with patience **any** of us who have turned our back on him... is simply **astonishing!**

Cannot God do what he **wants**? And will not the God of all the earth do **right??** // Isn't he **only** capable of doing what is just and fair?

But does this mean then that **we and our will** play no part at all?

No – in the next chapter we read – v9 *If you confess with your mouth 'Jesus is Lord' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.*

Here we discover that it is entirely meaningful to say God **chooses**... AND to say – if you – individual person – **confess** with your **mouth** – if you make the call – if you choose to believe God raised Jesus from the dead... you **will be saved**. //

Well Mark – which is it – **God** or **me??** Answer – **yes!**

Old UK Baptist preacher was once asked – "Dr Spurgeon – how do you reconcile **God's sovereignty** with **man's responsibility**..." to which he answered.... "Why would I need to reconcile two old friends?"

Yes, God is **sovereign**... and **yes**... it is entirely meaningful to call on people to **repent** and **trust** Jesus... and yes – people will be held to account if they **reject Jesus!** ///

There may be aspects of this you can't get your head around – and that's OK – because why would we expect to understand everything of God??

But – we **trust him**.

We know enough of him, to know that he does all things well!

Which brings us finally to

4. OUR RESPONSE

Ok – turn back with me now to Ephesians 1

v3 *Praise 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. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.*

Praise.

That's what we are being exhorted to do.

To respond to God's choosing of us with a heart full of gratitude...

To **thank** him...

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To **praise** him by living lives to his glory... holy and blameless

Those of you who have been long time Anglicans will know these precious words from the General Thanksgiving... do you remember?

*And, we pray, give us that due sense of all your mercies, that our hearts may be truly thankful and that we may declare your praise **not only with our lips, but in our lives**, by giving up ourselves to your service, and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days...*

Oh those words are so wonderful...

It's easy isn't it to be in church on Sunday and praise God in word and song... and join the crowd...

But will you praise him **tomorrow morning**?

And will you **praise** him – will you draw attention to this praise-worthiness in this new year – by living a **radically distinctive life**?

Because **before** the creation of the world... before **time**... God hatched a plan... that you – would be **among his people for all eternity**...

...that you would be part of his holy and blameless people... **to his glorious praise**.

because he chose you... **you** have been rescued... **forgiven**.... Through the death and resurrection of Jesus... and **thereby lavished** with the riches of **God's grace**... and brought into his family as one of his...!

PRAISE GOD!!

Rest and revel in his **choice** of you...

//

A new year has begun.

As we begin...

...know for **sure** that you are among his people... and **praise** him – with your **lips** and with your **lives**...
