

The grace, mercy, and peace of Christ our Lord and Saviour be yours this day. The title for today’s sermon is “You are chosen”, and is from the Old Testament lesson, from Deuteronomy chapter 7. Let us pray... . Amen.

The Old Testament lesson is from a beautiful point in history. The children of Israel, the Lord’s chosen people, were set to enter the Promised Land after having been redeemed, delivered, and saved from Egypt, had then spent the past 40 years in the wilderness after leaving Egypt. They would have been in the Promised Land 40 years sooner but because of their unfaithfulness and lack of trusting in the Lord and His Providence they were not allowed into the Promised Land and had to wander for 40 years. God still provided everything they needed for those 40 years. Now Moses was transitioning out and Joshua was coming in to take his place and to lead the people of Israel into the Promised Land. The Lord’s chosen people were about to enter the very long awaited Promised Land.

These chosen people of the Lord were blessed to have seen the salvation of the Lord. God had redeemed them from the hand of slavery in Egypt. The Lord Almighty then also delivered them from Pharaoh’s army sent to destroy them and/or bring them. The single greatest act of redemption, deliverance, and salvation in all the Old Testament they, or I should say their parents and Moses were, eyewitnesses of. After crossing through the water of the Red Sea, God continued to graciously provide for all their needs while they wandered in the wilderness for the past 40. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—The First and the Last—fed them, watered them, protected them, and led them through the wilderness and led them to the Promised Land.

And so, just before the children of Israel take possession of the Promised Land, God through Moses has some final words for them. Most of the Book of Deuteronomy, including today’s text, was given to prepare the children of Israel to take possession of the Land. Already, Moses had already reminded the Israelites of the 10 Commandments and the covenant God made with them to be their God and for them to be His chosen people. God, through Moses, also reminded them why they were being given the Promised Land: it was to be a safe place for them to worship Him; a place to teach His Word to each other and to teach it to their children God’s Word; it was to be a place to proclaim the power, grace, and mercy of God to all who live around them and to remember His redemption of them from the hand of slavery they lived under in Egypt.

And now, as they prepare to take possession of the Promised Land, God tells them not to make any covenants with the locals, nor were they to intermarry with the locals. God didn’t want them to get involved with the local population because God knew they would draw His chosen people away from the One and only God and instead worship the abominations the locals were worshipping; those idols of death masquerading as gods of life. To prevent this false worship, God commanded His chosen people to tear down all the altars to false gods and burn

them with fire, every last one of them. While this may seem strange or harsh in our inclusive world where anything and almost every goes, but God knew that not doing removing them would be worse. God knew if His chosen people did not do as He commanded that they would walk away from Him and abandon His covenant with Him; effectively condemning themselves to His promised wrath for sin and to earthly disaster as for eternity.

Instead, God wanted them to stay holy to Himself, people for His treasured possession. He loved them, He saved them, redeemed them, and He also was also in the process of bringing them into the Promised Land.

But, why did God choose the children of Israel, of all the people of the earth, for this great gift? Were they better than other nations? Were they more faithful? Were they greater in number, or greater in power so to make God look good and powerful? The answer to all of them is no. Positively, unequivocally, and absolutely NO! In fact it was just the opposite for why God chose them. We hear Moses tell the people in today’s Old Testament reading that **“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, <sup>8</sup> but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.”** (Deuteronomy 7:7-8)

The reason God saved them, redeemed them, and chose the children of Israel to be His people is because God is faithful to His promises every single time. God is faithful to His promises even when His people are not faithful to Him. God first promised the Redeemer to the snake, and by extension to Adam and Eve, in the Garden after their unfaithfulness (*Genesis 3:15*). God promised the same Redeemer along with the Promised Land to Abraham (*Genesis 12:3,7*), to Isaac (*Genesis 26:3-6*), and to Jacob (*Genesis 28:13-15*). It was the descendants of this Jacob, whose name would be changed by God to Israel, who made up the nation of Israel as they were Jacob’s children.

So, to establish His presence and salvation among the nations, God delivered His chosen people from the hand of slavery they were under in Egypt where. They were in bondage to the Egyptians with no way to free themselves. In Egypt they were dying, along with their children, at the hand Pharaoh and his men for no other reason than they were Hebrews, kind of like what is happening to Christians in Iraq and Syria. But God, faithful to His promises, redeemed His people by the hand of Moses, brought them out, and saved. God provided all they needed, they may have wanted more but their daily needs, you could say God provided their daily bread for the 40 years between leaving Egypt and arriving in the Promised Land.

So the reason God chose the children of Israel is because that was part of His plan before the foundations of the world to save all people. They were delivered from Egypt and brought to the Promised Land. Yet, the redemption of Israel pointed ahead to the greatest act of redemption and salvation ever that would come through this lineage in the person of Christ Jesus our Lord and Saviour. This is where you and I are brought into God’s story of redemption. God chose us for the same reason He chose the children of Israel. It wasn’t because we are the greatest, most powerful, or have the most to offer Him: It is because of how much God loves each and every one of us.

We bring about as much to the table as did the children of Israel, which is sin and its just reward. But God who is faithful, whose Son came to forgive our sins, still comes to us. Still, out of God’s great love, He came and chose you, redeemed you, saved you, and continues to provide for you all the while leading you toward the eternal Promised Land.

You and I, along with all people were in a much more dire situation than were the Israelites in Egypt. While they were dying at the hands of Pharaoh and the Egyptians, their death was the end of it. For us, apart from Christ, death would only be the beginning of it. Apart from Christ and His redemption and salvation, death is eternal separation from God. It is the punishment originally set up for the devil and those angels who rejected God. We are all children of Adam and have inherited the same original sin, we’ve inherited the same guilt. From the time we were conceived we were guilty for our sins before God. What we deserve is the punishment set up for sin, what we deserve is the full punishment of eternal separation from God, what we deserve is hell.

But we have a loving and faithful God, One who has come down in the flesh for you and me. We have a Redeemer who has delivered us from the hand of slavery to sin, death, and the devil. Christ paid our full redemption price for our sins; He paid for our deliverance with his own innocent life and precious blood and through His death on the cross. Then on the Third Day Christ Jesus rose from the dead proclaiming His victory and the full acceptance of God for His payment.

In this life we are not just being lead towards a physical promised land, we have an even greater Promised Land which the Lord Himself has promised us: one promised us in the waters of Baptism, when God chose us His own redeemed children, marked us as His own and gave us a share in the eternal Promised Land. In it there will be no sin, suffering, death. What there will be is God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in His full glory and majesty.

Just like the nation of Israel, God didn’t pick us because of what we have done; God chose us because of His great love, because of His Promise, because He wants all people to be saved. This is why He sent His Son, Christ Jesus. This is why He continues to come through

His Word—to strengthen our faith and trust in Him through the hearing of His Word and the work of the Holy Spirit. This is why God continues to feed us with Christ’s own body and blood for the forgiveness of all our sins, to give us comfort and confidence as we face this valley of tears and wandering in the wilderness of life. He feeds us and strengthens us as we wait to enter the eternal Promised Land His Son is preparing for all who believe.

Today’s Epistle reading reflects this same hope. **“For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers,<sup>39</sup> nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”**(Romans 8:38-39) There is nothing in all of creation, besides your rejection, which can take God’s gift in Christ away from you.

God has you. Christ has redeemed you. The Holy Spirit through God’s Word and Sacrament bring all of God’s blessings to you. In this we hope and promise we live. God chose you in Christ and loves you this day and everyday. May He lead you in faith to the eternal Promised Land. Amen.

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