

Ephesians 1:3-14
“Blessed, Chosen and Sealed”
Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

July 15, 2018
First Lutheran Church, Glencoe, Minn.
Pastor Peter Adelsen

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen!

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

[Intro]

After five years of trying to have a child of their own, Aunt Ruby and Uncle Arnie adopted a baby boy. To their surprise, a short time after the adoption, Aunt Ruby discovered she was pregnant, and she would later give birth to a boy.

One day when the two boys were eight and nine years old, a woman asked Ruby, “Which boy is yours Ruby?”

Ruby replied, “Both of them.”

But I mean, “Which one is adopted?”

Ruby said, “I’ve forgotten.”

[Blessed, Chosen and Sealed]

In this morning’s epistle reading, the Apostle Paul reminded the Ephesians and us that we are indeed blessed, chosen and sealed through the grace of Jesus Christ.

We are blessed, because God the Father *“blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing.”* (Ephesians 1:3)

We are chosen, because God the Father *“chose us in (Christ) before the foundation of the world.”* (Ephesians 1:4a)

We are sealed, because God the Holy Spirit sealed us in our baptism, which *“guarantees our inheritance until we acquire possession of it.”* (Ephesians 1:14)

This is some great news! We are blessed, chosen and sealed!

Through all of this, everything is granted to us through our Lord Jesus Christ. There is no longer any darkness between us and God. For all the darkness has been taken away through Christ's light, which is the Gospel.

[No More Mystery]

Now, when Paul wrote this letter to the Ephesians, there were ideas floating around about secret knowledge that was being kept from Christians.

This secret knowledge, or *gnosis*, was no secret at all, but only served a way to divide Christians and cause conflict between them. This is where we get the false teaching of *Gnosticism*, which proposed that Christ didn't do enough for us and stated that our human bodies were evil, and our soul is only what matters.

This led many to deny the importance of the human body relative to the soul.

Today, this Gnostic heresy has returned. So, instead of knowing the truth that we were born as a boy or girl, we now argue over what is a boy and what is a girl. We argue about gender rules and norms. This is denial of truth in favor of Gnosticism.

You see, the goal of the Christian life is not to be liberated from the body, but to live as who God created you to be. After all, when Jesus ascended into heaven, he did so with His body. He still has His body as He lives and reigns until He returns again – again with His body.

True wisdom is found only in Christ and not in any false teaching. For Christ gave us all knowledge through the Gospel. All we have to do is repent and believe and salvation is given to us.

[Holy and Blameless]

Through Christ's blood shed on the cross, we are "***holy and blameless before him***" (Ephesians 1:4) and "***in love he predestined us for adoption***" (Ephesians 1:5).

Now, some people misconstrue this. They say that since we are "***holy and blameless***" through our baptism into Christ's death and resurrection, we can sin all the more without any penalty, because we are predestined to heaven anyway.

They say, “*Since God has foreseen his elect to salvation ‘before the foundation of the world’ and since God’s foreknowledge does not fail, nor can anyone change or impede it, if then I am foreseen to salvation, it cannot harm me if I practice all kinds of sin and vice without repentance, despise Word and Sacrament, and have no concern for repentance, faith, prayer or godly living.*” (FC-SD, Art. XI: Election, p. 642-643)

Well, even when we are chosen, we can still reject God’s eternal promise. When we choose full well to sin and continue sinning with no concern for repentance, we are choosing sin over God’s grace.

You see – for some – they see Baptism as a “free pass into heaven” card. In reality it is not. Yes, Baptism saves you, for you receive faith in this Sacrament. But, Baptism is not a guarantee into heaven. For if you deny the Christian faith, you are denying your Baptism.

But, if Baptism isn’t a guarantee, what is? Following God’s Word is the guarantee.

You see, “***All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness***” (2 Timothy 3:16).

Scripture presents this teaching for no other purpose than to point us to the Word, to admonish us to repent, to encourage godliness, to strengthen our faith and assure us of our salvation. (FC-SD, Art. XI: Election, p. 643)

And as Christ says, “***My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand***” (John 10:27-28).

You see, the sheep that follow Christ are His flock. They are the elect.

Everyone is predestined to adoption through Jesus Christ, but it is those who respond to His Word, who follow His Word, these are the people who are His flock.

[God’s Grace]

Our Triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – desires everyone to be saved. He does not desire anyone to damnation.

This is why Jesus the Christ came in the first place. He came to save.

“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace” (Ephesians 1:7).

This was God’s plan from the very beginning – before the foundation of the world.

The Triune God foreknew that we would need a savior, for we could not be ***“holy and blameless”*** through our own merit. So, God the Father sent His one and only Son, so we could be ***“holy and blameless”*** through Christ’s blood shed on the cross and through Christ’s victory over sin, death and Satan.

Only through Christ are we blessed, chosen and sealed.

So, like Aunt Ruby and her two sons, God chooses to forget our sins, to forget our wayward past, and gives us the full inheritance of salvation, life everlasting and forgiveness of sins through Christ, our Lord.

By grace through faith, we are blessed, chosen and sealed as God’s holy people. Amen.

The peace of God which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

✠ SOLI DEO GLORIA ✠