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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
December 20, 2015
4th Sunday in Advent

Scripture Lessons: Isaiah 2:2-5, Luke 1:26-38

Hymns: 90; 96; 106; 313:1

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: 1 Corinthians 1:26-31

For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*.²⁷ But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty;²⁸ and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are,²⁹ that no flesh should glory in His presence.³⁰ But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—³¹ that, as it is written, “He who glories, let him glory in the Lord.” (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God my Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Choosing teams --

You see the implications of people's choosing beginning in the playground when children are still quite young. There are two captains and they have to choose teams the biggest and best players are chosen first, and the scrawny or less fit children, you know the

ones that aren't so physical, they watch others get chosen as they stand there with a sinking feeling in their hearts. Then it might be that the kids that are popular will be chosen and the kids that aren't "so cool" are still standing there waiting, hoping to be chosen, hoping that they won't suffer the disgrace of being the last chosen, the one deemed most worthless by everyone else standing there. Finally, begrudgingly, the team captain with the last choice says the child's name with a tone of disappointment that his team got stuck with the loser.

This actually only becomes more pronounced after the kids grow up and enter "the real world" the professional ranks, be it sports or business. The one deemed the strongest, the one that bring connections and more business, the one who shines with a persona, even if its phony, is the one chosen.

On this last Advent Sunday as we look forward to celebrating the birth of our Savior, we remember that the Child of Bethlehem also comes into our hearts and rules the world until His final coming, let us --

THEME: Consider What God has Chosen.

The brightest and the best was not high on the Lord's list of considerations. The Apostle Paul lays that out for us with this challenge, --

I. "Consider Your Calling."

When looking at the Corinthian congregation what was evident? There weren't many of the philosophers, although a couple may have been included by the Lord in the congregation. There weren't many of the wealthy businessmen and women, although there is evidence within the epistle that there were a few that were able to afford to bring some of the finer food stuffs to their fellowship meals. There weren't many from the noble classes, the ruling classes of the Greeks, although there were a couple of local officials or dignitaries among them.

There were a good number of working class people and small merchants, and then there were slaves, a good number of slaves were included in their number. What did these slaves have to offer

to the Lord? Nothing! Not a thing! That was the point the Lord wanted them all to grasp, not just the slaves and underclass working stiffs. He wanted them all to understand, they weren't chosen by God because they were so smart, so fine, so powerful, or had so much to offer the Lord that they simply couldn't be overlooked. God chose those whom He had chosen simply because of grace, simply because He chose to save them and call them to repentance. And so Jesus came to them and took possession of their hearts.

Consider your calling, brothers and sisters in Christ. Consider your calling; why in the world would God ever choose you? Is it because you are so good looking? Is it because you are smarter than average? I imagine some among us might be, but we are far away from those who are considered the wise of this world. People aren't eagerly coming to us hoping to find the answers to this world's problems. They consider us as ignorant as others, or even more so. There aren't many philosophers, there aren't many scientists, there aren't many billionaires, there aren't many of the mighty rulers of this world who have been chosen.

God has chosen you. God has chosen me. We are despised as troublemakers at best by this world. We are thought of as ignorant, and even pronounced to be so by many scientists. We are considered to be bigots by the powerful of this world because we refuse to embrace and celebrate the sins of this world. We are considered inconsequential or "small time" by those who are the real "movers and shakers" of this world.

Consider your calling brethren! No, we may not be especially bad people, and we do indeed enjoy the privilege and blessing of living in an affluent society in the world, so that we live quite comfortably, but that is not because we have earned or deserve it. It is a gift from generous and kind God, and our American citizenship has nothing to do with why God chose us.

When we look at the calling of the Lord in our foreign mission programs, there are some among the educated, and a small number who have some wealth. However, for the most part, God has chosen the working class and the poor, and the down trodden, and even those who are despised, even thought of as "untouchable,"

because of caste or disease. God has chosen the orphans, and those who are AIDS victims. These God has chosen! And when you look at their faces in the pictures in *The Lutheran Spokesman* or in a CLC mission newsletter, what do you see? You see joy at knowing the love of God and hearing the wisdom of God that saves them from their sins.

Consider what God has chosen.

II. Consider How God Put to Shame the Great of this World .

1 Corinthians 1:27-28 “But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; ²⁸ and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are.”

What was true in Greek society remains true today. Human nature hasn't changed. Man is filled with pride concerning the great accomplishments of science. After all, we have mapped the human genome! Where else will one find such great knowledge and wisdom? We have sent space ships to the distant planets and we have determined their make-up, and now man thinks he knows the great and ancient age of the universe and how it all came to be with a big bang. We are so sure of this knowledge because man is the source of knowledge and wisdom, and science rules the world and determines mankind's destiny. In this way man considers himself to be God, though he may declare that there is no God, not really. It is as Paul wrote in:

Romans 1:21-22 “Although they knew God, they did not glorify *Him* as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Professing to be wise, they became fools.”

God puts to shame those who think they are so smart. God puts to shame those who think they are so powerful that they rule the world. God puts to shame those who are so wealthy, or so esteemed and idolized that think of themselves as being above God and what they perceive to be His petty rules for life called the Ten Commandments. God puts them to shame while He chose the weak

and the humble and the lowly to serve Him and be saved to eternal glory.

Although God did chose the Wise Men from the east who were both wealthy and intelligent, they willingly humbled themselves before the Lord. But God did not chose Herod, or the chief priests, or the governors of the land. God chose a lowly unknown teenage girl to be the virgin mother of Jesus, our Lord. God chose a lowly carpenter, a working class man, to raise Jesus, and provide a roof over Jesus' head, and to teach Jesus a trade. God chose the shepherds in the fields of Bethlehem to be the first to hear about the Savior's birth and to come and worship Him. And God has chosen you, whose name is not likely ever to be found in any history book or the annals of "Who's Who in America." God chose you to put to shame the wise and the mighty of this world. He chose you in His grace and love, not because your lowliness made you more desirable or less sinful. He chose you in His grace.

So this week when we are going to exchange gifts, and I hope that we do so in the name of in in memory of the greatest gift, our dear Lord Jesus, will you –

III. Consider What God Chose to Do with You.

God chose you so --

1 Corinthians 1:29-31 "that no flesh should glory in His presence. ³⁰But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—³¹that, as it is written, 'He who glories, let him glory in the Lord.'"

At first this kind of hits the old ego doesn't it? I mean we know we aren't Donald Trump or Hillary Clinton, or Bill Gates for that matter, but really, am I that low that by saving me God is showing that it is all Him, and I contribute nothing, nothing at all? Yep, that's it exactly. And so you are blessed by His grace!

You are blessed because God chose you to be in Christ Jesus. God chose you, and brought you into Christ's sphere of influence and grace, and look what God has done for and with you! In Jesus we gain the true wisdom from on high, the wisdom that is found in the foolishness of the cross, the wisdom that saves us from sin and death. We cannot be saved by works of righteousness which we

have done because apart from Christ we have no righteousness. Apart from Christ we soil and spoil anything and everything we do because of our pride, because the imagination of man's is only evil continually (Genesis 6:5, 8:21). Apart from Christ we can't do anything to God's glory because apart from Christ we don't even know the only true God who is revealed to us in His Son, Jesus born in Bethlehem, Jesus who was crucified for our sins on Calvary, and rose again for our justification. It is in connection with all this wondrous wisdom of God's plan for the salvation of fallen man that God has chosen YOU!

And so it is that now Jesus has become for us righteousness and sanctification and redemption. Jesus fulfilled the law's every demand. He was born under the law so that He could redeem those under the law. He was born under the law in humility so that He could serve as our substitute and do that which we could not do, and do it for us, and present His perfect righteousness before the Father in heaven for us, for our salvation. He did all that was necessary to overcome the world and the sin in this world, and to take us out of this world, and make us His own special people

Titus 2:14 “*He gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.*”

Yes, this is what God chose you for, that you might be separated out from the corruption of this evil world. In spite of our daily sinfulness God keeps this true and valid for you because in connection with Christ God brought you redemption. Your every sin has been paid for. Your soul has been purchased by Christ to be delivered to His heavenly Father. We are the Lord's, and so it shall be here in time and hereafter in eternity.

And so we confess with the Psalmist: “**This is the Lord's doing. It is marvelous in our eyes**” (Psalm 118:23)! “**He who glories, let Him glory in the Lord.**” That is what we are to be about this Advent and Christmas season. We will sing the glories of our Savior, born in Bethlehem. We will sing of the great and free salvation which He has brought into this world. We each will praise the God of our salvation that what He has chosen includes ME!

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.