

## 1. Love Chose

Have you ever wondered why you were chosen for something? I was in my senior year in high school at Wisconsin Lutheran High School. I had already decided that I was going to go on to Northwestern College in Watertown to study becoming a pastor. As I was going to go off to college, there was something that I was going to need – money. So, I applied for scholarships and grants. At the time, my father worked for one of the major banks here in Milwaukee. That bank would invite employee's children to apply for a \$10,000 scholarship for college. So, I applied. Out of all the students who would apply, two were chosen. To my surprise, they picked me. Yes, I had the grades in high school, but why me? Why someone who was studying to be a pastor? I don't know. But in 1980, \$10,000 was a lot of money. With that money and money from working, I came out of college with no debt.

Why me? Have you ever asked that question about God? Why would God choose you? Why would God want to choose me to be his child? We are not that good, are we? What do we see when we look like inside? It's kind of scary in there isn't it? There are ugly thoughts in there. There are all kind of evil thoughts inside our hearts. We don't always put God first in our lives. We misuse his name. We ignore that time that we should be spending with him. We hate. We steal. There is all kinds of sin churning around inside of us. We might look great on the outside, but inside we are filled with sin.

People today are chosen to receive honors and awards due to their accomplishments. But that doesn't work for eternal life. Sin can only bring death. But God has chosen us. He has redeemed us. He has adopted us as his children. He has done that from eternity. Why? Why would he choose me? It's not found in us or any of our accomplishments. It's found in two tiny little words in our first reading: **"in him."** It is in Christ that we see God's love. It is God's love that chooses us. We read from Ephesians 1: **"For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight."** (Eph 1:4)

## 2. Love Sent

How much are you willing to sacrifice for someone? I suppose, it depends for whom you are sacrificing. Let me ask you the question this way. What would you be willing to sacrifice for your kids and grandkids? That question changes things doesn't it? I'm not sure that there is a parent here today who would not be willing to sacrifice it all for their children. We sacrifice a lot for our children don't we? They take our time. We need to take them from place to place when they are younger. How many hours have you ever spent outside in the cold or the heat watching your children playing some kind of game? You're glad to do it. After all, they are your kids. Think of all the dollars it takes to raise them. I found a quick figure that said: *"The average cost of raising a child born in 2013 up until age 18 for a middle-income family in the U.S. is approximately \$245,340."* (That number was 3 years old.) What would you sacrifice for your kids? That's an easy one isn't it? Everything. On a day like to today, we can give thanks for that love that a mother will so willing give her children.

What would you be willing to sacrifice for someone who you don't like and is your enemy? That one is more difficult, isn't it? If we think about that, then maybe we might be able to begin to understand how much God loves us!

God made a perfect world for his people. Adam and Eve had everything they needed. They lacked nothing. Then they threw it all away. They didn't love him perfectly anymore. In fact, they became God's enemies. Yet, God keeps loving them. He loved them so much that he promised to send his own Son and sacrifice Him. God would do that we would never think of doing. Instead of sacrificing everything for his Son, he will sacrifice his own Son.

Why would God do that? Why would he send his Son? John answers that question in our next reading: **"that we might live through him."** He does all of this FOR US! No sacrifice is too great for him. That is a love that I cannot comprehend. It is a love that all we can do is marvel everyday about it. We read from 1 John:

<sup>9</sup> **This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. <sup>10</sup> This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.”**  
**(1 John 4:9-10)**

### **3. Love Found**

Years ago, when pot-luck dinners were more popular, there was something very noticeable at them. You couldn't always see it, but you knew it was there. Under all those bowls of jello, hot-dish pans and plates of brownies, you could always count on it being there. It was often a piece of tape. Do you know what was on that piece of tape? A name.

Why? People were not trying to show off what they brought for that meal. They just wanted to make sure that they got their pan, their dish, their spoon back. They didn't want anyone else to bring it home. That pan was theirs.

God wrote his name on us. He wants his people back. The people who walked with God in the cool of the day could not walk with God anymore. They were lost. But God didn't give up on them. So, he put into motion this massive plan to bring mankind back to him. He didn't want them to remain lost. He wanted to find them, save them and claim them once again as his. That is what Jesus has done for us. His love found us!

Now that we are his once again in Jesus, he doesn't want to lose us. So, he put a piece of tape on us. Not just an old piece of masking tape with a name scribbled on it. But a piece of security tape. A tape that says this is mine. He put his seal on us through the promise of the Holy Spirit on us. Let's rejoice that God's love found us and made us his. We read from Ephesians:

**“And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit.”** (Eph 1:13)

### **4. Love Returned**

Are you a follower or a leader? Most people are one or the other. Some are much more comfortable to be a follower than a leader. Some find it really hard to be the follower, because they want to lead. Why? A leader often has to take risks, a follower doesn't. A leader enjoys to be in control, a follower is glad to let the leader plow through. A leader likes to stand out in front of the crowd, while the follower likes to blend into the background. Both are needed in the world.

But when it comes to living our lives, there is only one way we can do it. We have to follow. That's hard because my sinful nature wants me to do things my way and not always God's way. Paul says that the only thing we can do is **“be imitators of God.”** Why? Christ loved us. He loved us so much that it is impossible to get our hands completely wrapped around his love. All we can do is return the love that he has poured out on us every day. Let's follow our Leader who loves us dearly.

**“Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”** (Eph 5:1-2)