

Matthew 4:12-22; 1 Corinthians 1:26-31 – “*Seven Desires of the Heart: to Be Chosen*”

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Garrison Keilor is a story-teller whose fictional home town of Lake Wobegon, MN is the backdrop for many of his life tales. Keilor recalls the childhood pain of being chosen last for the baseball teams.

“The captains are down to their last grudging choices: a slow kid for catcher and someone to stick out in right field where nobody hits it. They choose the last ones two at a time – ‘you and you’ – because it makes no difference. And the remaining kids – the scrubs, the excess – they deal for us as handicaps. ‘If I take him, then you gotta take him,’ they say.

“Sometimes I go as high as sixth, usually lower. But just once I’d like Darrel to pick me first and say, ‘Him! I want him! The skinny kid with the glasses and the black shoes. You, c’mon!’ But I’ve never been chosen with that much enthusiasm.”

A lot of us have those memories – of not being wanted when teams were being picked.

We’re in a sermon series on the *Seven Desires of the Heart* – the seven needs we all have – and today the desire is to be *Chosen!* To be desired. Wanted. Selected. “Pick me.”

But I’m just ordinary. You look at my picture when I was in 4th grade. There’s nothing special about that kid. Nothing desirable. Nothing noticeable. Nothing that stands out. An average kid who made average grades.

We all desire to be chosen. We desire to be selected by someone for a special relationship. This longing starts when we’re small, and our love-tanks are filled when our parents let us know that they are glad we belong to them! I remember being scolded or disciplined by my mother when I was young and later she’d come into the room where I was sulking to hug me and tell me that she wouldn’t take all the gold in China for me. I didn’t quite know what all that meant, but I know it felt like I belonged, and that she would choose me over any amount of riches!

In school, we long to be chosen for the team or asked to play. Later we yearn to be chosen for a date, maybe to the prom. And in our adult years we love it when we’re picked to be in a club or chosen to receive an offer from a potential employer!

This need to be chosen is a desire for marriage, we want to be the only one chosen for a very special relationship. The marriage vows still pack a lot of power when our partner pledges, “through sickness and in health, *forsaking all others*, be faithful to her (to him) as long as you both shall live!”

When you feel chosen you create your own internal messages about yourself that are in line with God's truth about who you are: you are beautiful, you are special, you are beloved! But when you are not chosen, you create messages too, distorted beliefs about yourself that betray what God claims about you: I am not enough; I am not loveable and I fall short of what I need to be!

Has it dawned on you that you are so valuable to God that He chose you *early* – and with enthusiasm? **“For He chose us in Christ before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight.”** (Ephesians 1:4)

None of us deserve to be on God's team. We haven't earned it. Nor have we paid the price! Yet, in His grace, Jesus chooses us to be on the best team in the universe! God chosen! And those whom Jesus chose were of no greater quality than you or me!

God called a man, Abraham from his father's house, from a household that worshiped pagan images and gods crafted by human hands. He was chosen not because of anything he had done, but chosen to enter into a covenant with God, and God promised to bless Abraham's descendants.

And later God chose others to bear the message of His grace and mercy, holiness and love. David was one of those chosen by God. After Saul, the first king of Israel turned away from the Lord, God called His prophet Samuel to place His approval on a new king, sending him to the town of Bethlehem, to choose one from among the sons of Jesse.

When the young men appeared before him, Samuel took one look at Eliab and thought, “Surely this is the LORD's anointed!” But the LORD said to Samuel, “Don't judge by his appearance or height, for I have rejected him. The LORD doesn't see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.” (1 Samuel 16:6-7)

And so it went with each of the seven sons of Jesse. But none was found to be the one whom God would choose as king. The prophet inquired, “Are these all the sons you have?” As a kind of afterthought, Jesse replies, “There is still the youngest, but he's out in the fields watching the sheep and goats.”

David! The greatest king the Israelites would ever have! The youngest and least likely!

But David was a man after God's heart! Yes, he defeated the giant Goliath with a simple sling and a stone. Yes, he who wrote so many of the Psalms we use in worship today to express ourselves before God; he who honored God with faith and obedience. But David also made a bit of a mess of his life. Taking another man's wife into his own bed and later abandoning that man on the battlefield to be killed!

David, too, was broken, but God loved him and used him because David's heart was devoted to God.

One of the world's greatest treasures of art is Michelangelo's sculpture of David. It took Michelangelo four years to craft his work of David. It is 13-feet tall. He used flawed marble. We know the exact quarry the marble came from. The same block of marble was rejected by another artist because, like David himself, it had breaks and impurities in it. But Michelangelo was able to see that the *core* of the marble was good.

That is a fit description for David. He was broken and flawed. He had imperfections, but God saw who he was at his core. The core of who we are is our heart, who we are when we are

alone. It's the part of us that only God sees. It's where our passions, fantasies, desires, and commitments reside.

God looked at David's core and found someone He could work with. So, like Michelangelo, God began to mold David into a masterpiece. God looks at all of us. He looks at our hearts and says, "I want you to have a heart that I can mold and shape into a masterpiece. I want to make your marriage, your family, your life, your future, and your plans into a masterpiece. Will you let Me? Will you allow Me to mold and shape you into the person I want you to be?"

God would choose the youngest in the litter; the boy even his father would have neglected. But God chose you, too! For He told the world: **"God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish but may have eternal life."** (John 3:16)

Everyone and anyone who believes in Him may have eternal life! God's life!

James and his brother, John, along with Peter and Andrew, were the first disciples Jesus chose to follow Him. Jesus' call motivated these men to get up and leave their jobs immediately. They didn't make excuses about why it wasn't a good time. They left at once and followed.

We wouldn't know this, but fishermen had more income than average people in Galilee, so these four left behind a good job. They were leaving the Sea of Galilee, a lake that is about fifteen miles in length, and from six to nine miles in width. There is no part of Palestine, it is said, which can be compared in beauty with the area around this lake. The shores were described by Josephus as a perfect paradise, producing every luxury under heaven, at all seasons of the year. The waters of the lake are sweet and pleasant to the taste, and clear. The lake still abounds with fish, and gives employment, as it did in the time of Christ, to those who live on its shores.

Chosen by Jesus, little did they know what awaited them when they left their unmended nets to rot on the beach, and followed the unknown and unhonored Jesus of Nazareth. So we know not what awaits us, when we become His followers. Jesus called His twelve disciples. He didn't draft them, force them, or ask them to volunteer; He chose them to serve Him in a special way. And Christ calls us today. He doesn't twist our arms and make us do something we don't want to do. We can choose to join Him or stay behind. When Christ chooses you to follow Him, how do you respond?

Just know that He first calls us into a relationship with Himself! Yes, Jesus is very much alive – and He chooses to set up residence inside of you! His Spirit coming to indwell your life!

We are chosen to serve, but we are chosen also for blessing! You see, those who are chosen by Christ, those who follow Him, have a **confident hope of what God has reserved for them in heaven!** (Colossians 1:5) We are not alone. God is our Provider from start to finish, from beginning to end, for this world and the next! And it just keeps getting better!

So we should go cheerfully when our Savior calls, willing to commit all that we have and all that we are into His hands – come honor or dishonor, sickness or health, riches or poverty, life or death. Be it ours to do our duty, and to commit the results to the great Redeemer who has called us!

Now we might ask why didn't Jesus Christ call some of the distinguished Scribes or Pharisees to publish His Gospel, and not uneducated fishermen, who were without credit or authority? He chose these because it was "the kingdom of heaven" they were to preach, and their

teaching must come from *Above!* For those who were schooled in the ways of God, with a thousand years of scholarly traditions behind them, it would be nearly impossible for them to hear something new from God! Their own ideas were so firmly rooted in their mind – they were going to miss the Messiah all together!

With these fisherman chosen by Christ, we see what humble instruments God uses to convert the world! He chooses the foolish to confound the wise.

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In Closing – When you read the first page of the New Testament, Matthew, chapter 1, you read what may seem like a meaningless genealogy easy to skip through. But don't do it! Among all the names of the men who fathered sons ...we curiously find the names of three women – Tamar, Rahab, and Ruth – all three, along with the wife of Uriah, who were less than spectacular women of the Bible:

1. In order for Tamar to give birth to children, she had to deceive her father-in-law into sleeping with her.
2. Rahab, a prostitute saved from Jericho, was the great, great grandmother of King David.
3. Ruth was a foreigner making her home among God's chosen people.
4. And Bathsheba, who was raped by David, lost her husband to David's deceitfulness.

These are the men and women "chosen" by God in the birth-line for Jesus the Messiah! And you, too, are being called out to follow Him! Is there any excuse you could cook up in order to express that you're not worthy? God doesn't call the qualified; God qualifies the called! And *you!* He is choosing you for great honor and glory!

You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy! (1 Peter 2:9-10)