

Ps 30; Ac 9:1-20; Rev 5:11-14; Jn 21:1-19
Called, Chosen and Anointed

We meet the Apostle Peter after his denial of Jesus, after the crucifixion and resurrection of the Lord. Peter surely was in a turmoil of emotions – joy and anticipation because Jesus is alive – but also deep conscience for letting Jesus down, right after saying he never would let Jesus down. He denied that he knew Him three times. Peter says, abruptly, “I’m going fishing.” He is experienced at fishing. He has made his living from it. Out there on the lake, he knows what to do – he is an expert – he’ll feel better about everything when he’s out on the lake in the wind and waves, with the seagulls swooping overhead. Why are they called seagulls when they’re flying over the sea? Because if they flew over the bay, they would be called bay-gulls.

Peter and the disciples with him are in emotional overload. We understand this state of tension. We in our time face too much information coming at us too fast. We have pressures and anxieties about self, health, family, work, money. Where will Peter go from here? Will he simply remain a fisherman? What will become of the

little band of Jesus' disciples? Peter is about to understand the gracious will of God for him and for the Gospel.

We are also looking in on the Pharisee Saul. He doesn't look anything like a disciple of Jesus. Quite the opposite. He is very sure that Jesus-followers need to be rounded up and imprisoned. Saul is seeking the high priest's endorsement of his campaign to destroy the movement once and for all. Saul believes that this Galilean rabbi is dead and gone. He plans to take off for Damascus, where there is a group of Jesus-followers. He plans to break up that blasphemous movement. Paul's life is about to pivot and be transformed entirely.

Scripture teaches that God deals with each of us just as our unique character requires. Peter has been hiding out – avoiding the temple authorities. He's not sure about loyalty to his beloved rabbi, Jesus. Peter has been hasty – sometimes rash and lacking in true understanding of what is going on. Sound familiar in any way?

On the other hand, Saul is ambitious and impatient – pious and militant in his defense of the Torah and God’s will, as he sees God’s will. What about rigid judgmentalism in your life? Have you been so sure of being right that you are blind to the reality of Christ’s kingdom? Just asking.

In Peter – uncertainty, self-doubt, overwhelmed by events on all sides. In Paul – rage and rebellion against people doing it wrong – dishonoring God. In his case, entirely certain he is the only one who really understands how misguided and stupid these others are. Both Peter and Paul are the main characters of their own stories. Both are focused on what they feel, what they want, what they will do. They pray for themselves, their needs, their importance.

To Paul, Christ appears in a blinding flash of heavenly light, dramatically getting his attention. The Lord instructs the blinded man to make his way to Damascus. To Peter, Christ, who is still in the world – not yet ascended – shows up on the lake shore, telling him what to do next. He says,

“Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some (fish).” (v 6)

It is the Lord who is the main character in these Bible stories (indeed, in every Bible story). Jesus has chosen very unlikely persons to be His representatives in this world He loves so much. Peter questions his own usefulness, his worthiness to be “the rock on which Jesus will found His church.” Yet, that is God’s will for Peter. Paul has been so sure of his own righteousness – his own superior understanding – that he has no idea of turning completely around and following the Nazarene. But, over time God will transform Paul into the single most effective church planter and teacher of the Gospel ever.

Christ comes to Peter and to Paul – cleanses, forgives – redirects each of them according to His grace and love.

When this life seems to be a continuous cycle of sameness, disappointment, loss and meaningless repetition, our discontent is telling us something very important. We don’t need a self-improvement program, a shopping spree, or a string of

distractions. World-weariness contains the seeds of God's calling in your heart. We do look inward to know ourselves better – as it should be. But, we are also given that heavenly vision John of Patmos left us to inspire and show us our heavenly home. The eternal hymn to Christ resounds – before the foundation of the world – now, this very morning – and forever when time and matter are transformed into something new.

Our passage from Revelation comes to us from John of Patmos. It is an experience of who Jesus Christ truly is. He is the Worthy Lamb – sent by God to make a way for us out of our fallen desolation. When you are given sight to see the desolation of the natural human being, you are being chosen. Your tears and prayers for those without hope or a future are a genuine response to God.

By grace we perceive that Christ is on the throne of the universe and the throne of our hearts. You belong to Him and He belongs to you. By grace you are called and chosen. Why you? He wants you to be with Him. The entire creation sings the hymn. John writes:

¹¹ Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, ¹² saying with a loud voice:

“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain
To receive power and riches and wisdom,
And strength and honor and glory and blessing!”

¹³ And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying:

“Blessing and honor and glory and power
Be to Him who sits on the throne,
And to the Lamb, forever and ever!”

¹⁴ Then the four living creatures said, “Amen!”
And the twenty-four elders fell down and
worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.
(Rev 5:11-14 NKJV)

Sincere worship of God brings the anointing to serve and honor Him. If you hear me today, then you are called, you are chosen. You are anointed by the blessed Holy Spirit. Receiving Holy Communion is our “yes” – our “Amen” to Jesus.