

“MY CELEBRITY LOOK ALIKE: IT MATTERS TO BE CHOSEN!!”

THE SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST--B

Pr. 10; LECTIONARY 15

July 12, 2015

Peace Lutheran
Grass Valley, CA

THE FUNNY:

Last week it was so hot that:

Seat belt buckles made pretty good branding irons.

When the temperature was less than 93, it felt chilly.

There was “instant” sun tea.

Drivers learned how to steer the car with only two fingers to steer.

The Fair Oaks Roosters had to use potholders to pull worms.

The Fair Oaks chickens were given crushed ice so they didn't lay boiled eggs.

TEACHING POINTS:

1. Being able to be a celebrity look alike is a big deal—even a web site.
2. It matters that we reflect the image of our “spiritual look alike”, Jesus, the one who chose.
3. It matters to be chosen—blessed
4. It matters to be chosen—we don't have to choose to sin any more.
5. It matters to be chosen, we can reflect Christ and bring Christ glory.

THE MESSAGE:

The three readings today are an interesting set. Jesus isn't even in the gospel, which is actually a flash back to the dramatic ending of the life of John the Baptist. The prophet has some interesting words as well.

But it is Ephesians that captures my attention. Words like “chose”, “destined”, “obtained”, “marked” and “inheritance” seem to leap out of the reading. These words proclaim the basic status we hold with God. These are the words that Paul uses to start of his letter to the Ephesians. These words encourage us in our ongoing status with God. They can be our encouragement today!

It is interesting to be a “celebrity look alike”. One can do the “impersonator circuit” perhaps, dressing and acting to portray a “celebrity look alike.” Or, one can have “bragging rights” or one can just play along. Some who are regularly mistaken for their “celebrity look alike” sign autographs and pose for “selfies”.

“Celebrity look alike” stuff is fun enough one can even upload a headshot to a website, <myheritage.com>, to compare one’s face with a database of some 2,500 celebrities. One learn, then, which famous faces one looks most like. Again, an opportunity for “bragging rights” — I look like... (Name celebrity here).

So, here’s the deal. Who is your particular “celebrity look alike”? Fact is, it doesn’t matter. It doesn’t matter who you might most resemble in terms of physical characteristics.

What really matters is your spiritual look alike. What matters is how we reflect the image of the one who chose us, Jesus the Christ. What matters most is how we compare to Jesus, the one who graced and blessed us in life for the world. What matters is if others can see the Jesus in us!!

The first Chapter of Ephesians helps us to see that God wants us to look like Jesus. That God wants us to be people whose lives reflect our Lord -- “mirror images” of Jesus, our Lord.

Looking in the mirror what do you see? Do you just see yourself, your image? Do you see the person who might look like someone important or famous? Do you see yourself in the image of what God made you to be? Do you see a reflection of Jesus? Can you imagine yourself as a “Jesus look alike?”

Paul message is that matters that we look like Christ. It matters that we are chosen. It matters that we’re adopted. It matters what we reflect in life, in our daily lives of faith.

So, it matters to be chosen because we are blessed. As Paul speaks to the people in the community of Ephesus, in what we now call Turkey, Paul speaks clearly about us being blessed. Paul speaks to the fact that “in Christ” we have been “luckier” than others. We have “hit the jackpot” as it were. We are a blessed people because we are chosen. As chosen people, we are grace filled people. Grace filled means that in being chosen we don’t get what we deserve. God gives us all that is undeserved and un-earned. God blesses us with grace because that’s God’s forte. There is a bumper sticker out there somewhere that says simply, “Christians aren’t perfect, just forgiven.”

As the blessed ones of God. As the chosen ones of Jesus. As the adopted children of our Creator, then, our lives are marked by stories of the grace of God. We are to reflect God’s grace. In the mirror we see God’s grace. We see God’s love that blesses and does not burden. As chosen ones our lives reflect the same grace as we live it out—giving, serving, blessing the world around us.

It matters to be chosen because in being chosen we are blessed with the grace of God.

It matters to be chosen because God intends for us to be holy people. The church term is “sanctified.” What it basically means is that because we are chosen we don’t have to choose to sin any more. You see, in our un-chosen state, before we are redeemed and adopted into Christ, we have to choose to sin. When it comes to sin, there is no other choice. It’s all we can do. But now, we are blessed and chosen for blamelessness. We are blessed and chosen for perfection. So, we don’t have to choose to sin any longer. We do, of course, but we don’t HAVE TO.

Some have trouble with the “predestined” language here in Paul’s letter. However, we need to understand that this isn’t about what we might call pure predestination — there is no choice. No, Paul is using the term in a sense of more like as chosen ones this is God’s dream for us. It is about how God has created and designed us and knows what’s best for us. About how God knows what will satisfy us deeply and what will not. About how God knows what will hurt us and what will not. It is about God’s holy standards for us.

So, God dreams for us to be a holy people. God intends for us to mirror God’s own holiness. God intends, because of the blessings and grace of our chooseness that we might come close to the dream (predestination) God has for us.

So, in total matters to be chosen; we can reflect Christ and bring Christ glory. Two stories:

A young lady was soaking up the sun on a beach when a little boy in his swimming trunks, carrying a towel, came up to her and asked her, “Are you a Christian?”

She was surprised by the question, but replied, “Why, yes, I am.”

Then he asked her, “Do you go to church every Sunday?”

Again her answer was “Yes!!”

Then he asked, “Do you read your Bible and pray every day?”

Again, she replied, “Yes!”

At last the boy sighed and said, with obvious relief. “Oh, that’s great!! Well, since you are a Christian, will you hold my quarter while I go swimming?”

A favorite story in our family is about our step-grandmother, Esther. Esther came into our lives when she married Grandpa D. quite late in life. She was a wonderful loving soul. We were glad to have adopted her as our Grandmother — the only Grandmother that our children knew on that branch of the family tree. What we liked to joke about, though, was that Sarah inherited her red hair from Grandma Esther. There were two pieces to make this fun —Grandma Esther had “artificial” red hair, and, obviously, there wasn’t a direct bloodline for that “inheritance” to be true.

But for the parties concerned, it mattered. It mattered to be revered and honored and a grandmother — chosen and adopted as a grandmother. And it mattered to look like Grandma Esther.

For you and I, It matters to be chosen. It matters that we’re adopted into the family of Jesus. It matters to look like Jesus.

It matters that our lives reflect Christ. It matters that in this world we “look like” the one who has chosen us, the one who has died for us, the one who has promised to bless, to grace us.

So, when you look in the mirror, what do you see? A celebrity?—perhaps, you are a child of God. A person who is blessed?—hopefully because you’re chosen and it matters to be chosen. A redeemed one?—of course, God dreams of our holiness. Jesus?—we should, Jesus is our celebrity look alike-- a spiritual, not a physical, brother—Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.