

My earliest memories of being chosen, or not,
were in gym class in grade school.
But that is only the beginning – some of us are
chosen to lead summer camp, chosen for scholarship,
chosen for sororities and fraternities,
chosen for debate, chosen for a job.

In a way, this process of being chosen for
something or everything has become
so common place that we forget
the very first choosing that gives meaning to our lives.

The letter to the Ephesians starts by reminding us
that we are chosen by God –
adopted by God, and heirs of redemption.

Our reading from this letter today is one of the
most magnificent there is in the Bible.
The whole letter of Ephesians is remarkable in itself.

It's a letter that speaks of the eternal intent and
will of God for humans and the world.

It's a letter attributed to the apostle Paul,
but is unlike any other that come to us under his name.

Here Paul tells us that the mystery of God's
will has been revealed in Christ.
God intends to lavish the world with
the overflowing riches of grace.

Paul's wonder and gratitude is so great- he lavishes us with words.
He writes overflowingly of God's will and intent for us in the world.

So overflowingly, in fact, that our entire passage for today is one whole sentence in
Greek – with clauses and participles of course, but one whole sentence.

And Paul starts at the beginning – before the beginning of our time, we're talking
pre-Genesis here – before the foundations of the world were even put in place.
Paul writes that God chose us before the world was even formed.

Choosing before *anything* was, *everything* to be holy and without blame. And our adoption as sons and daughters in Christ would give God pleasure.

So great was this pleasure of God,
that Christ's blood wipes away our sins.
God made Christ the bearer of our sins
and courier of forgiveness.

Paul writes of the mystery of God seen in Christ.
God's intent and will for all the world to
come to God through Jesus.
Not just a few chosen ones, but all things.
Paul writes that God's plan for the
fullness of time is "to gather up all things in Christ,
things in heaven and things on earth."

Some Christians interpret the words "destined" and "chosen"
To mean that God has already decided who is in and who is out,
Who is saved and who is not.
But this is not the sense of the good news we hear today.
Paul simply says that God has always chosen on behalf of humanity.
God is *for* us. God's plan is to make this known until *all* things are one in Christ.

Chosen and adopted by God.
(I will have done a children's sermon on pet adoption)
I started thinking about adopting a pet.
We can go to pet stores, search the web or
newspapers to find just the right pet.
In pet stores we look for the cutest puppy,
the most loving kitty for your lap...
some people however go for the one with a broken or missing leg, blind or
somehow less than perfect.

I found one example of this when Jonathan and I were reading his National Geographic for Kids magazine. There was an article about racing greyhounds that break their legs. The owners that raced these greyhounds are most likely to put them to sleep. But there are some people out there that have a compassion for these animals and pay for their care and keep until someone will adopt them.

We, too, are creatures – gifted, creative creatures, yes, but created beings just like all living creatures on earth.

And sometimes we feel like an animal with a broken leg, or not quite pretty enough, or not quite friendly enough or trusting enough. We are flawed and broken by sin, greed, anger jealousy, fear. But that doesn't matter to God. God has chosen us and continues to choose us. We are not without an owner, not without a caretaker.

The point is, our selection, our adoption does not depend on how cute we are, how loving or on someone having compassion enough to select us – God chose us way before the world was created, way before the earth and all stars, destined us to be children of God. And this gives God great pleasure.

This is God's plan. God has a plan for all the world, including those that we worry about or those of us who worry about our own place in God's plan.

We might, for instance, worry about a family member, friend, neighbor who we know has some questions or resistance to God, religion, the Bible, or the virgin birth. God has a plan.

Some worry about their own place in God's plan if they have been away from the church for a time. Or wonder if they have done enough to keep their place – wonder if they have kept God smiling. I don't think anyone has kept God smiling always, but Paul writes that before anything was, God chose to make all things holy and blameless in and through Jesus Christ.

An animal with a broken leg has a harder time getting to the food, getting to the place they want to go. I remember calves that had casts on their legs –it was painful to watch them. Sometimes they couldn't help but go sideways in their walking. Sometimes that's what our lives feel like. Reaching in one direction for God, yet finding ourselves leaning and limping in an opposite way. Even in those times where you feel like you're going sideways or in circles, this reading reminds us that God comes to us. God brings us to the one that created us, destined us for adoption even before the foundation of the world.

And like a caretaker giving an animal with a broken leg water and food right by their sides, God comes to us and gives us what we need to share this good news with others. We may not be able to walk a straight line all the time, but we do make a difference in the lives of those who pass by our sides, those who stop to

talk, and those who listen. Through our adoption in Christ, our lives give acknowledgement to God's grace.

My God, how wonderful thou art, thy majesty how bright.
How beautiful thy mercy seat in depths of burning light.
How wonderful, how beautiful the sight of thee must be –
Thine endless wisdom, boundless pow'r and awesome purity.

My God, our God, how wonderful thou art. Amen