

Sermon  
Saint David's Episcopal Church  
Roswell, Georgia  
Diocese of Atlanta  
Text: St. John 15: 9-17  
Title: "God Chose You First"  
Preacher: Father Paul Winton, Rector of Saint David's

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Surrounded by a very old wrought iron fence the orphanage sat back on the lot and on a bit of a rise. It was just after breakfast and the large building was fully awake. Even from outside the orphanage – still 20 paces down the long, uneven sidewalk, he could hear the buzz inside. And then – predictably - the faces began to appear at the windows: first a face peeking through the curtains from an upstairs bedroom and then from the den and before he reached the porch, virtually every window on the front of the building had a face peering through the other side saying ever so silently “pick me” ... “pick me”...”please pick me.”

He walked into the building; the old heart of pine floors, clean and polished, creaking under his feet as he made the familiar walk down the hall to the big office, a converted parlor, and there on the several tables – they sat.

Stacks and stacks and stacks of files – some of them thick, some of them with but one sheet of paper –sometimes just a name and an estimated date of birth - scores of files – each one telling a story – a human story - some of them very sad.

The truth be told, there was probably a reason why each one of these children should not be chosen.

He sat down and began his work, file by file. By the time the day was over he had learned about every child. Weary, he rose and walked to the kitchen to have of cup of coffee with the director – and as he stirred some sugar into his coffee the director peered anxiously across the kitchen table and said: “Well?”

Putting the old mis-matched spoon on his saucer he smiled a broad, full smile of genuine glee - threw open wide his arms and said –

“I’ll take them all, every one.

I choose them all.

From this day forward they are all mine.

The sweet and kind,  
the mean and cruel,  
the beautiful and the crippled,  
the brilliant and the not so smart,

the strong and the weak  
the ones that smell sweet and  
the ones who don't

the one's who will love me back and  
the ones who will not –

I'll take them all. From this day forward you may call them mine.

I choose to love them – every one.”

Thus says the Lord. This you see – is the very nature of God..

We can go through life fooling ourselves – especially us religious people – that out of some great conscious act we stepped out in faith and chose God – saving Him – presumably from a life of loneliness without us – when the fact is that God chose us.

God chose you.

God chose you.

From the boundaries of his Lordship beyond time and space God chose you to love.

And what's in it for him? Only the love that we return to Him and others in his name.

The awesomeness of this Divine choice is that he chose you knowing about you. True love is always a choice. The falling in love part is the stuff of emotion and attraction. It is wonderful stuff but it is just to get us started. Real love is a choice. We choose to stay in relationship with someone even knowing some things about them that are unlovable.

So it is with God and His choosing to love us..

God knew you from before you were in your Mother's womb says Jeremiah, and yet God chose you to love.

I am not, this morning, going to ask you to do anything.

I am not, this morning, going to ask you to change anything.

I am not even going to ask you to give anything this morning.

What I am going to invite you to do is walk around the rest of the day saying to yourself:  
“God chose me.”

“God chose me.”

You can even say: “God chose me because he thinks I’m wonderful, beautiful, intelligent, gifted, treasured, precious...”

“That’s right, God chose me!” In spite of all my stuff – God chose me.”

“Hey there buddy, did you hear – God chose me.”

Stick out your chest, raise up your head – lift your voice and say “God chose me.”

I suspect that if we can internalize that truth – that God looks down over all that He made and chooses us – one soul at time to cherish and love – in this life and the next -if we can embrace that truth and live into the joy and gratitude such grace surely produces –

Everything else we need to change – will take care of itself.

Amen.