

Sixth Sunday of Easter
Sermon Text: John 15:9-17
Related text: 1 John 5:1-8
Date preached: May 13, 2012

Most of us know what it is like to go through a job interview. There is so much that goes into the process of looking for a job.

First, there is the issue of how we present ourselves. Is our resume good? Will it stand out among other applicants?

Second, there are the emotions of the application process. Will I get an interview? If I do, will I do well enough? Will the employers give me a chance coming right out of school, or will the employers feel confident in my abilities?

When it comes to hiring, the choices are made by the employer. He or she is going to choose the best possible candidate for the job. That choice in a large part will be determined by the things within our control. Did we portray ourselves in the best possible light?

However, imagine how it would be if everything about us was completely known. We certainly don't want all the things about ourselves that employers may not like to be known. We don't want our faults from years ago to be

known. In fact, if every mistake we have ever made in our life were known, we might never be employed. Yet, of more concern, what would our relationships look like?

Not only might it be difficult to find work, but it may be difficult to form friendships. When it comes to our relationship with God, there is nothing about us that He does not know.

God knows everything about us. He knows the gifts he has given both in terms of our talent and our qualities. He knows every unspoken thought, word spoken and deed done that is both pleasing and incredibly sinful and displeasing to God.

In high school gym classes, I was invariably the last one chosen regardless of the sport. I was small. I was not an athlete, nor was I anywhere close to being popular. I was finally chosen to be on a team, not because I might do well and help the team to victory, but I had to be on someone's team.

Some of you may know those feelings. We may remember what it is like not to be selected. Yet, in the sight of God, each and every one of us is chosen, not because of what we can do, our qualifications, or our

personalities. We are chosen simply because God loves us.

Jesus words recorded in the 15th chapter of John are clear. “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide...”

Yes, knowing full well our sinful selves God still chooses us. He makes this choice for one reason. Love. God loves you. God desires life for us.

Now there are some who might say that God loves us “just the way we are.” That is not true.

God does not like our sin, regardless of the nature or specifics of our sin. God does not like our arrogance, our conceit, our hypocrisy, our behaviors that run against God’s teaching or the changes we wish to make to God’s teaching when we say, “oh, that doesn’t mean what it used to mean.”

God could very easily turn his back. In his righteous judgment, we cannot withstand it based on our merits, no matter how good we do in life, or how many friends we’ve made.

What God does do is choose us based on what our Lord has done for us. We are chosen because God sent his son into the world, that we would see his abundant love in our lives through the giving of his only Son. Gazing upon Christ we see the fullness of love displayed on the cross. There Christ made the choice to love God to the point of death, so that those for whom he died would be chosen and set apart.

In the sacrament of Holy Baptism, God chose us out of his pure grace for the sake of Christ. In Holy Baptism we are dressed in the righteousness of God. Thus, Christ makes us worthy to be chosen. For he is the fulfillment of God's covenant, to make with us a new heart and renew a right spirit within us as paraphrased from Psalm 51.

God loves us and chooses us because we have been made right with him through the precious body and blood of Christ, given and shed for us and for our salvation.

Having been chosen by God, we are set free to abundantly love one another. We proclaim the love of God which is a costly love. We give testimony that the love of God changes us, that changed and given a new

identity as his children, we may go forth in faith and love of God.

“For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. For everyone who has been born of God (everyone whom God has chosen) overcomes the world. And this is the victory that over comes the world—our faith.”

God loves you and has given you the gift of faith to believe that Christ has died, Christ is risen, and Christ will come again. God has chosen you to bear witness to the redeeming love of our Lord, who forgives sin and loves us through our most unlovable times. God has chosen you to love, and love bids us to give testimony to his abundant grace that transforms and redeems us. AMEN.