

Gaines Congregational United Church of Christ

January 15, 2023

Old Testament Reading; Isaiah 49: 1-7

Responsive Reading; Psalm 40: 1-11

Epistle Reading; 1 Corinthians 1: 1-9

Gospel Reading; John 1: 29-42

Sermon Title: And He Has Called You

By Rev. Jim Gardner

Summary; When God calls you, don't look around and say' "Who Me?". God's answer is the loving response, "Yes you, I have chosen you".

My sermon title is; "And He has chosen you."

The first question is, who is He, and the second is who is you. And no, that is not an accidental error in grammar. In today's scriptures the three references to "you" are all singular. They are you the Nation of Israel, you the body of Christ, and you the person sitting in your seat. All three apply. And, oh yeah, the He is God.

Many Christians look at the Bible and say that the Old Testament is the story of the Jews and the New Testament is the post Jew/Christian story and nary the twain shall meet.

Nothing could be further from the truth. While the Old Testament primarily concerned itself with the descendants of Abraham as the nation chosen by God to be His special people, the prophets that He influenced saw it different. They proclaimed a new era in which God's son would appear as the holy conqueror of the world in a very different way than most visualized. This "new king" would not conquer the Gentiles, this new king would incorporate the Gentiles into the family of God.

At this point I guess I should confess that I am not sure whether the prophets of old received visions that they themselves did not understand completely or if they were just being "woke" and did not want to offend the pious exclusionists. Whichever it was, those prophecies were remarkably accurate. Having just come out of the Christmas season we have seen many of those relating to the whole nativity scene.

In Isaiah the author starts out talking about Israel and then seems to shift to describing Christ and finally personalizes it to the individual listener, when the passage ends with, "and He has chosen you". Notice that Isaiah predicts the coming of Christ without antagonizing those who were looking for a king that would give their enemies the thumping they deserved.

The Psalm seems to speak to the coming glory of when Christ will conquer death and step out of the “horrible pit, out of the miry clay” i.e. death and the tomb. The Psalm goes on to praise God for all His blessings, that is, “they are more than be numbered”. The Psalmist then tells of how Jesus has stayed true to His faith and expressed it without concern for His own safety. In this way the Psalmist shows how Jesus will set the standard for all of us to try to live up to.

Well, try the best we can.

Oh, by the way, how the heck did the Psalmist know about this Jesus guy who would not be born for hundreds of years? Some detractors say that this Psalm must have been added at a much later date. Personally, I think those detractors are just afraid to face the reality of God. Any who!

In our Epistle, Paul speaks to the Body of Christ, or specifically the church of Corinth and complements them on having received the grace of God as was given to them through Jesus Christ. Paul goes on to say that this gift was confirmed in them so that they would be blameless in the day of the Lord. Paul said God is faithful by whom YOU were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

I think that now we are talking about the YOU that is sitting in your seat as well as YOU the body of Christ.

YOU sitting in your seat. And He has chosen you. God has chosen you, but just what did He choose you to do?

John the Baptist had a really active ministry going on. People from near and far were coming to him to be baptized in the Jordan River. John had his own disciples. John was an important individual by the world's standards. John had reason to strut. He had the reason but not the inclination. John knew that he was not the headliner. He was just the opening act. John was not there to make straight the way of John the Baptist. John was there to make straight the way of the Lord.

Shortly after he baptized Jesus in the Jordan, he saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world."

John's disciples listened to what John had to say about Jesus but by the time John finished his spiel Jesus had passed on by. God does things on His time, and His time is always right. The next day Jesus passed by again and two of John's disciples followed after Jesus.

Jesus saw them and asked them "What do you seek?" They asked Him where He was staying and He invited them to follow Him.

Some scholars believe this was written this way to show that Jesus will receive anyone who asks to know Him.

The two disciples were Andrew, the brother of Simon i.e. Peter, and an unnamed disciple. That unnamed disciple was probably John the writer of this gospel. Scholars believe this because the only disciple that John does not call by name is himself.

Jesus goes on to call all of His disciples individually. I believe that God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit continues to call each one of us individually. I do not believe that God ever says YOU in the plural. I believe that when God calls you, He calls every you one on one.

And He has chosen you. He has chosen you to join His family. He has chosen you to be His child and sibling. He has chosen you to be His advocate. He has chosen you to be His hands and feet and heart and voice. He has chosen you to open the door for the Holy Spirit to work through you so others may know Him and serve Him and be united with Him throughout all eternity.

God has chosen you because you are worthy. God made you, and God does not make junk and God does not make mistakes.

God has made you and God has made me. God says we are family and should be about the family business.

God has made us and God has chosen us. Let us be about our heavenly calling!

Hallelujah and Amen!