

## Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> May; Easter 6, BCP HC Stonegrave Minster

We continue in our readings today hearing the wonderful words of John in his letter and Gospel, on how to live in loving relationships and friendships with one another, and with our Saviour.

“You did not choose me, but I chose you.”, Jesus said to his disciples in today’s gospel reading. ‘Chosen’ is an interesting word. The dictionary definition of it is ‘to pick out someone or something as being the best and most appropriate’. It’s worth taking a moment to reflect on this truth. Jesus chose his disciples, and when he did, he was continuing a long tradition that we see throughout Scripture, and throughout the history of the church, of God choosing unlikely people to accomplish amazing tasks. The disciples were no different; fishermen, tax collectors, not a religious leader among them. None of them were experts in God’s teachings, or academic scholars. By our standards, if anyone was asked to pick a team to start the church, the disciples would probably not have made the third team squad. But, following our definition of the word, they were the best and the most appropriate, because they had one thing going for them: Jesus chose them - and that was all that mattered. They were maybe ordinary people, but they were made extra-ordinary by being chosen.

The condition of being chosen was that Jesus commanded them to love one another. He reminded them to abide in him, and he told them that he would be leaving soon, to prepare a place for them. They really didn’t know what to think of any of this. They needed to remember that Jesus chose them to continue to bring Jesus’s message into this world, and to bear his fruit, fruit that will last. They may not have felt particularly qualified to do this, or very confident that they were even capable of such a task, except for one very important thing: Jesus chose them.

How many times, would they come back to that assurance? How many times would they remind themselves that they didn’t choose Jesus; he chose them? When they were ignored or laughed at, they were hated and persecuted, imprisoned, when some of them were even killed, how many times did they remind themselves that God’s own Son chose them, and he chose them for a reason? Jesus chose them and entrusted them with his mission, to go and bear the fruit of the kingdom, and he promised that if they would abide in him, they would do just that, and they did.

But they’re not the only ones. In fact, if Scripture tells us anything, it is that each and every one of us has also been chosen by God for a particular purpose in this world. The words that Jesus spoke to those first disciples; he speaks to every one of us today:

*“You did not choose me, but I chose you, and appointed you to go and bear fruit.”*

In other words, Jesus has appointed us to go and change the world and love people into the Kingdom of God. As John says in the Epistle, “*Who is it that conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?*”

By being chosen people we then become friends of Jesus and through this friendship, God has chosen us to help perform His divine purpose, to bring Joy, to express acts of love, to be his hands and feet and voice in the world. Loving others as God loves us is at the heart of Christian discipleship and Christian life can only exist through loving human relationships in demonstrating the fruits of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

So often we forget it is not we who *do* the choosing, *we respond* to the choosing and do as He directs. To be chosen and loved by God through his Son Jesus, is the deepest and most precious friendship of all. We choose our friends and all friendships are precious, even the most insignificant. Friends emerge at the most important points in our lives. How much more precious then is the friendship Jesus chooses to give to us? Everyone is loved and called by God – but not everyone responds and enters this relationship of friendship with Jesus – and for those people, the joy of being connected to God, our creator and source of love - will always be incomplete.

But for those who respond in love and obedience to being chosen, they will discover forever the most glorious friendship with the one who is risen and chooses us to be His friends.

Thanks be to God. Alleluia. Amen.