

Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> July; Trinity 7 - Benefice Holy Communion  
Oswaldkirk

“Who am I?” A question which we ask many times in our lifetime. Many of us search for our identity on ancestry websites. Many visitors who come to our churches travel vast distances to visit a grave of one of their ancestors. Genealogy is big business.

A significant aspect of counselling is about discovering who we really are, or what is described as ‘self-awareness’, which is defined as “having a clear perception of your personality, including strengths, weaknesses, thoughts, beliefs, motivation, and emotions. Self-Awareness allows you to understand other people, how they perceive you, your attitude, and your responses to them in the moment.”

St Paul was someone who you could describe as being self-aware you might think, but when he blesses God in this passage from Ephesians, what is the first thing that he thanks God for? He thanks God for choosing us. Blessed be God because “*he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world.*” So even before the world was formed, God knew you, was aware of you. God had already planned to create you and decided to have this beautiful, loving relationship with you. You and I have been chosen to be part of God’s family. It is an amazing, freeing, truth, when we really embrace it.

God chose us, in Christ, and even when our plans for this life don’t work out, we can be assured of this knowledge; that God has chosen us, and no choice of ours takes this away. St Paul uses some majestic words in this passage that describe this relationship with God and how it has come about; spiritual blessing, holy, blameless, adoption, glorious grace, redemption, forgiveness, given with all wisdom and insight, inheritance, destiny, purpose, and we are marked with His seal. What a list!

However, being chosen doesn't mean life will be easy and that we should go about with an inflated entitled attitude, as if we have been given a first-class ticket to Heaven and everyone else needs to be told they have to be like us and come to church to get a ticket too. When we think of being chosen, we concern ourselves with people that we think God has not chosen, because everyone is chosen! What St Paul is talking about here, is that we have been chosen *in Christ*. The ones who have accepted being chosen, the church, have been chosen to be a light to the nations. We have been chosen to do God's work on this earth - to care for the poor and the sick, to feed the hungry, to bring hope to the hopeless, to strive for justice and peace, and to do all of this in the name of Jesus. That is what we have been chosen for. That is the Mission of God that we have been created to take part in.

All we must do is accept, as the next verses go on to remind us, we have been adopted into God's chosen family through Jesus. We have redemption through his blood, forgiveness of our sins, and an inheritance promised to us. God has chosen for us to be part of His family. So even when life gets confusing, and we question our choices at times, and we are hurt by other people's choices, in the midst of the confusion and chaos that sometimes swirls around us, there is this wondrous fact: that we have been chosen in Christ, to be like Him, and to do His work called to love people into His Kingdom, to help others realise who they are, valued and loved by the Creator of the Universe and that they too are chosen.

We may struggle with self-awareness and the question of who we are; we sometimes think we are not all that we want to be, and we can get discouraged with lonely questions that mock us and trouble us. But at the end of it all, whoever we are, we are God's. God has chosen us.

What a powerful truth to rest in, and to build our lives on, no matter who we are. We have been chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. Every one of us is God's treasured possession, a light to the world, to live for the praise of God's glory. Blessed to be a blessing to ourselves and to others.

I will end with some words from a contemporary Christian song which will be played during Communion. *“Not because of who I am, but because of what you've done, not because of what I've done, but because of who you are. And you've told me who I am, I am yours.”*

Thanks be to God. Amen.