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Sermon 435 - 1 Peter 2:9-17, 22-25

DIFFERENT CALLING IN A DARK WORLD

There is glory and honor in being chosen. It was my Sophomore year of high school, and I was chosen and asked to be a part of the SHO team in our Lutheran high school, Lakeside. SHO team stood for Students Helping Others. It's a group that would go around to our Lutheran grade schools and talk to kids about how to say no to certain things like drugs and alcohol. We were able to encourage them about good clean fun. We were able to share Jesus with them as well. And the best part - we got to skip out on school to do all of this. I would leave class with my friends still in them, busing around to different grade schools - eating lunch at McDonalds all the while they had to have lunch at our horrible cafeteria. I ate Big Macs while the best thing the cafeteria served was bread with peanut butter and honey. That's a good life, and I was so thankful I was chosen - out of all the Sophomores only 2 that year. And I was part of the team. Playing hooky, endorsed by the school, all the while helping others.

Have you ever been chosen to do something significant? I am curious how many here have ever been chosen for jury duty? I see former President Obama is returning to serve as a juror. That's one kind of choosing. Noble albeit not convenient perhaps. I was watching the World Series, saw the Astros win. In 2012 the Astros chose Carlos Correa in the draft, who was an integral part of the Astros win. And while being interviewed about the World Series win he used that spotlight to make a choice of his own. He asked for the hand of Daniella Rodriguez in marriage. Smart man using the moment to choose his spouse, and there is glory and honor there. Perhaps you remember when someone chose you for a date, perhaps someone who called you on the phone to tell you you won something, or you were chosen for the promotion. Yes there is glory and honor in being chosen.

Well as we gather in this place to consider the things of God, I wanted to welcome our guests, visitors, those new to church. You're welcome to have questions, kick the tires of the church, not have it all together. But one thing I would tell you and all of us is this. God has chosen you. He is calling you and all of us, and he is wooing us, to see his goodness and grace. And how does he choose us? He puts us in places like this to hear about the Savior of the world Jesus. He gives us experiences like Baptism and Communion to receive the full and free forgiveness he won. And how awesome to celebrate the baptism of Emelia Hope, of Riley and Kamden this morning. The message of Jesus, these sacraments is God's calling to us to be saved and to have hope that lasts for eternity.

I consider the worlds of Martin Luther over how God chooses or calls us. He said about the Holy Spirit, "But the Holy Spirit has called me by the gospel." He has called us to be his through the good news of Jesus as Savior. You and I are chosen by God for something more significant than the SHO team, the MLB draft, or marriage. We are chosen to be his children now and for eternity, and live forever some day in a world without sin. How awesome that he chooses us! That he chooses you!

We consider this as we are in this series called different. We've been studying the book of 1 Peter, and it's amazing how many times Peter refers to being called or chosen by God. And we are going to dig into day to see all that we have been chosen by God for. So let's get into it, and I encourage you to follow along. Could you turn to the person next to you and say, "You've been chosen to shine."

This past week was an annual opportunity to get to know the neighbors with Trick or Treating. Anyone go. And the costume of choice had to be - at least in our neighborhood - some form of Superhero. In fact a quick poll raise your hand if you or your children went as Superheroes. I was doing some Facebook stalking over our members and say this awesome pick of the Bosley's. And it just confirms to me that our culture has a fascination over Superheroes. With a new Thor movie out this weekend, and Justice League being released soon. And how many of us don't want to be know as super people. I wrote this sermon while drinking out of my Spiderman mug.

But what do we do when we are known not for being super, but for having a bad reputation. What do we do when we are much maligned and our name is drug through the mud? That's the obstacle the Christians were facing while Peter was writing. They weren't known as Super people. but weird, counter-cultural people. Nero had blamed the burning of Rome on them, and was persecuting them. So mass media giving them a bad name. They were misunderstood by those who didn't know. Some thought of them as cannibals as they taught about eating body and drinking blood. They called their gatherings love feasts which even today doesn't sound very good. They were known for tolerating incestuous relationships - thinking they were free to do that because of grace. And so they bore the name of Christ - but that name was much maligned. They weren't known for being super.

I look at their problem and I consider our own as Christians today. Christians are perhaps misrepresented by mass media. Misunderstood by those looking on and not being in. Not only that but then you have the real failings of those who bear the name. And so today Christians are known as being hypocrites, judgmental, self-righteous, unloving bigots. Earned, unearned the names and perceptions are there.

So what is the solution for a bad name for those known as anything but super? Peter shows us the way. v.11-12, "11 Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. 12 Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us." We talked about living as a houseguest here in this world. And house guest is not too comfortable, no they are intentional about what they are doing. And the real goal of intentional activity is beautiful behavior. That is the literal translation of "good deeds."

Beautiful behavior. And so major point to your calling by God. *We are called to beautiful behavior; as a solution to a bad name.*

And consider all the things he doesn't encourage them to do. He doesn't encourage a Facebook post, a blog battle, or a tweet to clarify their correct position and get past misunderstanding. He doesn't encourage them to debate or get into lengthy arguments. No very simply just live so beautifully that no one can argue with it. Which reminds me of a few quotes Ralph Emerson said, "Your actions speak so loudly, I can not hear what you are saying." Or

even President Theodore Roosevelt who said, “Speak softly and carry a big stick.” And while he was referring to his military power, Peter is referring to beautiful behavior.

And have you ever met someone who didn’t need to speak loudly, because their actions spoke their heart. I think of football player JJ Watt when Hurricane Harvey hit Houston. He didn’t have to say, “I care about these people. I want them to be helped.” No he created a fundraiser and his heart was defined by his actions. His first goal was to raise \$200,000 but they closed the fundraiser having raised \$37 million. That’s being defined by beautiful behavior.

And so a Christian shouldn’t have to declare their love for certain people, for outcasts, the poor, the needy. Shouldn’t have to convince no I love them. It should be seen. In the simple activity of beautiful activity. Of helping in time of need, of praying, of being a good neighbor. Another pastor is known for saying a Christian witness should be so powerful that onlookers might say I don’t know if I agree with all they believe, but I know I want to hire as many of them as I can, want my neighbors to be one, and my daughters to marry them because of what they are known for doing. I dream of this community called Amazing Love being defined by the simple actions of love.

But the rub to what Peter is saying is this. As Christians we fail. In that age, and in this age we fail. There is sin amidst the ones trying the hardest. If you walk with me long enough, you’ll see my failures that ain’t so beautiful. If I walk with you long enough I’ll see the same. And so our behavior limps as much as we try. In this place we are real that we haven’t been as beautiful as we ought to have been, and because of this we deserve to be cast aside not chosen.

So there has to be a better solution than my beauty and yours, and there is. And his name is Jesus. The one who did not trade insult for insult, not know for blasting people on social media. The one who while suffering didn’t threaten, but said “Father forgive them.” The one who didn’t need to argue about his innocence in a mock courtroom or before Pilate, because he believed there was a righteous judge over it all, to whom someday all would answer. And this one is the true source of our power as community. For we are all ugly, but we traded ugly for beauty on the cross. We traded earthly rags for heavenly riches on the cross. We traded being outcasts to those who are called to be children of the Most High God. And the cross of Jesus is calling you and calling me once again to believe there is a higher solution than us. It’s Jesus. What did Peter say, “23 When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. 24 “He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.” Amen and amen. So with that what are we called to. *We are called to hold out Jesus’ beautiful behavior as our beauty and our way.*

And we are to remember it is this good news of Jesus that is the hope of the world, that is our hope as well. And how awesome is it that he is the one who made us beautiful, he is the reason the church is so powerful - not for the people but for the Savior. And he has called us to this salvation. But then we are reminded who we are.

And isn’t it true that we will know what to do when we remember who we are. For example in the game of hockey and the game soccer there are various positions. Offensive, mid, defense, and both have goalie. Now what is a goalie’s job? When you know the title you know what you are to do. Defend the goal. Which is always when the pull the goalie for soccer or hockey and have them play offense or trade it seems so foreign. How can the goalie play offense

- it's not what goalies do. This week I can across a few items that illustrate people with one job to do but didn't do them. Ruler, sign, grocery store stocker, etc. *When you remember who you are you'll know what to do.* Well not only does Peter said we are called. But he gives us some other titles. After chosen people it says what.

Royal. You and I are children of the King which makes us royal. And you think of all the things royal people do and have. Royal people live in a palace with fancy clothes and fancy food. Royal people are bestowed with honor and dignity because of the royal blood that flows through their veins. Royal people reign and rule. And they can also help and honor others in need. Good rulers stoop low in order to serve the least of these and with their power help. I consider Queen Elizabeth who has been royal and reigning for 60 years. And it was recently said of her, "the Queen has set an amazing example when it comes to her charitable support making an enormous difference to millions of people up and down the country; doing more for charity in the last 60 years than probably any other monarch in history..." It recounts how many billions she has given to around 510 different charities - cancer research and charities for both the community and for civic reform.

Dear friends, in Christ you are royal. You have a mansion prepared for you in heaven by Jesus side - a place of unparalleled beauty and splendor. You are wrapped in the fancied clothes. For we are clothed with Christ and his righteousness. You are bestowed with honor and dignity for your sins are forgiven and you do not live in guilt or shame. And we will reign forever with the Lord. But in the meantime we are to use our high position to go as low as possible.

I consider how many times our lesson said our calling is to honor other people. How we are free, but we use this freedom to be slaves to others. So you are royal, and *As royalty use your high position to stoop low in service.*

But not just royal - we are also priests. Bet you don't always consider this title as you walk around as a Christian. You too are part of a priesthood. And let me explain the function of priest. In the Old Testament a priest is one who would offer sacrifices on behalf of the sins of people. He served as the butcher who would slaughter whatever they brought as a sacrifice, a dove, a goat, a bull. He would also pray for the people, talking to God for them. The most significant day was when the high priest on the day of atonement would transfer the sins of the people onto a goat, and send the goat away never to return. A picture of sins being carried off. So you had the people and God and in the middle you had the priest.

So you too are priests. There are many people who have no connection to God right now. And God has called you to reach out to them. They could be at your job, they could be in your family, your neighbors or at the store. And what you do is a bit different, you don't sacrifice anything for them. But you are to tell them of the great Sacrifice once for all. You are to say because of the death of Jesus you are made right with a holy God. You are to pray for those who do not know the Savior. You are to tell them that their sins have been removed. *As a priest hold out the great sacrifice.*

But here I sometimes wonder how concerned are we at showing other people the sacrifice of Jesus. It reminds me of another video I saw this past week. There was a young boy at a wedding with one job to do. He was the ring bearer who was coming down the aisle in a most interesting way. One interesting part is that he had a little car to drive, but pay attention to the

state of the boy doing his job. Yes he is sleeping on the job. And he's only got one job to do, get down that aisle

Christians in the United States have sometimes been referred to as the Sleeping Giant. And perhaps the area we've been sleeping the most is not in our acts of kindness, not in expressing our opinions on morality. But maybe where we've been sleeping the most is as priests. As ones who quite simply hold out the hope that is ours in Jesus. Because the sacrifice for sins was paid. Because in Christ we are set free. Because he has removed our sins like a goat walking away from camp never to return, or as far as the East is from the West. So I say by power of the Spirit. Priests wake up. You might not have a call to public ministry but we all have this calling to daily personal ministry to those around us locked in guilt and shame. Tell them they have the right to be set free because of the sacrifice once for all! We need to remember who we are, for it tells us what to do.

The final title I would remind you of is still in verse 9. It says we are people of his possession. Now that might sound a bit odd, not sure I want to be considered as anyone's possession but go with me here for a moment.

You think of what we do with our possessions. I have my Andre Dawson Cubs jersey here. A possession is something that was bought and paid for. A possession is something you have the right to use. A possession is something that is protected, handled, and cared for by the one who possess it.

So our God has bought you by the blood he shed. He intends to make much use of you. And when he does it will be his power in you, you will simply be the instrument in his hands. And I guess what really pumps me up about being his possession is this. *As His possession I will be cared for and protected by Him.* Being a possession also takes the pressure off. Possessions are not concerned they are doing enough. They simply exist in the hands in the house in the care of the one who possesses them. You have the right to simply exist in the hands of the one who cares for you. The one who chose you for salvation, calling you by His Gospel.

May you hold out Jesus' beautiful behavior for yourself and for others. And in the process may you also look like him. amen.