

**TRINITY EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH  
MINOCQUA, WI  
SERMON FOR JULY 18-19, 2021**

**<sup>3</sup> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.**

**<sup>4</sup> He did this when he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, so that we would be holy and blameless in his sight. In love <sup>5</sup> he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ. He did this in accordance with the good purpose of his will, <sup>6</sup> and for the praise of his glorious grace, which he has graciously given us in the one he loves.**

**<sup>7</sup> In him we also have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in keeping with the riches of his grace, <sup>8</sup> which he lavished on us in all wisdom and insight.**

(Ephesians 1:3-8 EHV)

"We're available 24/7 to answer your questions" so says the television or online ad. While it's nice to hear that someone will answer the phone or respond to an online message in the middle of the night, we wonder, "Will someone really be there? Will someone really be able to help?"

Our Triune God is always available, not only to answer our calls, our prayers, but also to bless us. God's shower of blessing, his grace, flows down on us whether we are asleep or awake...24/7.

That thought is brought out so clearly in Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus. Today we begin a series of sermons on that letter. We will see how God's grace, his underserved love for us undeserving sinners, affects every part of our lives all the time. Our theme for this series is: **GRACE 24/7...AND MORE**. Today, on the basis of our text, we will consider: **GRACE THAT CHOOSES**.

I remember it as though it were yesterday. The very last time my wife and I signed placement papers at an adoption agency. It was for our youngest daughter, Grace, 21 years ago. It was our fourth adoption and completed our family. We'd gone through 7 years without children to gaining 4 children in 6 years and the never ending rollercoaster of raising a family.

Before any of our children were adopted by us, they'd already been adopted into someone else's family. Long before we knew of God's plan for Grace or Elizabeth or Andrew or Luke to become part of our family by way of adoption, another adoption was planned, a spiritual adoption into God's family of faith. Here's how it sounds in our text: ***"(God) chose (them) in Christ before the foundation of the world, so that (they) would be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined (them) to be adopted as his sons/(daughters) through Jesus Christ."*** (vv. 4-5a)

Using my youngest as an example again, deep in the heart of God, even before creation, the choice was made. God's choice to adopt Grace, to make her a child of God. Know how I know? The day we brought her home – June 2<sup>nd</sup>, the day after she was born - Grace was baptized. Nothing fancy. The setting was the hospital room of the birthmother, a plastic tub served as the baptismal font, but the power was in God's Word. Grace's predestination was proven, her election made sure, her sins forgiven through water and the Word as the Lord adopted her. He (God) promises to never let go.

Was all this done because we're such great parents? Because we planned this out so well? Because God looked into the future and saw that this child was going to be one of the "good" people, a believer? No. God did it simply because he wanted to, as our text says, ***"in accordance with the good purpose of his will,"*** (v. 5b) and later, ***"in keeping with the riches of his grace"*** (v. 7b) Adoption into God's family, spiritual adoption is God's sovereign choice. It is pure, indescribable grace.

Several questions come to mind, and they all begin with "Why?" Of all the ways to build families - naturally through childbirth, through adoption, acquiring step-children through marriage - why did God choose to build

his spiritual family through adoption? Because we were born children of the devil, we were not naturally his. We were and still are by nature sinful. In chapter 2 Paul writes that **"we were by nature objects of wrath."** Beneath the soft skin of a newborn lies the heart of a savage. Beneath that cute, cuddly exterior is a cutthroat criminal. Everyone is born this way, and no matter what age we attain, because of our sinfulness, we are hardly objects of affection, worthy of God's love; rather, we are objects of God's anger, and rightly so.

But God says that he chooses people to be his children, adopts them to be his own. Why or how is he even able to do this? Is he soft on sin, does he overlook it? No. The answer is all over our text - he resolved to deal with sin through Jesus Christ! **"(God)...has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing...In love, he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ...In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins."**(vv. 3,5a,7)

God's adoption of his children was not an easy process. He went to incredible lengths to secure the adoption of his children. He killed his own Son, his "natural" Son, shedding his blood on the cross so that forgiveness could be freely given to those who don't deserve it, a world filled with people like you and me who are all by nature objects of wrath. And that's not all. In Romans 4:25, Paul writes, **"He was delivered over to death for our sins and raised to life for our justification."**

Which brings us to the most intriguing question of all: Why? Why do it at all? This isn't how we operate, treating people better than they deserve. Well, God isn't like us. He's not a man that he should lie or change his mind or be held accountable to our standards. He is God, and as such he is sovereign, that is, superior, supreme, above all, independent of all, and incredibly, he operates on the basis of undeserved love. He gives us grace. Listen again: **"He chose...he predestined...he adopted...in accordance with the good purpose of his will...in keeping with the riches of his grace."** He did it because he wanted to, because he felt like it, because he enjoyed doing it, because this act of love fills him with delight! He did it because of his grace, grace that chooses.

And we need to let God be God, and grace be grace. If we believe because we chose to believe, if we've been adopted because we decided it would be OK, if we belong to God because we first let him into our hearts, then grace is no longer grace! Adoption into God's family is not our choice, it's God's! Listen again: **"(He) has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing...he chose us in Christ...he predestined us to be adopted...he has graciously given us (his glorious grace) freely given us...he lavished on us (the forgiveness of sins...and his grace)."** Scripture is filled with testimony to that fact that salvation is God's doing from start to finish. Jesus said in John 15:16 - **"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit."** And in 2 Timothy 1:9 - **"(God) has saved us and called us to a holy life-- not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus (when!?! ) before the beginning of time."**

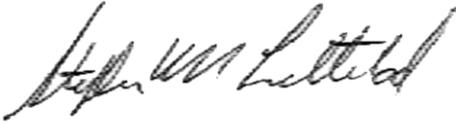
This adoption into God's family is not an abstract teaching. It's not a dry doctrine dragged out of a dusty book. It is intensely personal. Listen for who's included...and if you've already heard this 4 or 5 times this morning (and you have!), rejoice in it again!: **"(God) has blessed us in Christ every spiritual blessing...He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, so that we would be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons...In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins. In him we also have redemption through his blood."** You, me, us, we! Beneficiaries of God's sovereign choice, recipients of his grace!

Remember who this God is. He's not some small-time, run-of-the-mill god. This is the God Who has been there from all eternity, the God Who has no needs at all, the God Who is so vastly superior to us that we can't even begin to comprehend all that he is and does - this is the God who resolved to make lost sinners his children. This is the God who resolved - from before the creation of the world - to make you his child!

Adoption as God's sons and daughters is also eternally practical. Here's what I mean: When God says we're forgiven, let's take him at his word; unload the guilt, leave it at the foot of the cross, and forget about it. When God says we're free from sin's power, let's not let sin enslave us again by excusing it, hiding it, covering it up,

but rather, confess sin, turn away from it, and plead for the Lord's help and mercy til the day when sin is no more. When God our Father says we're precious to him, let's take him at his word. When our Father says we're provided for, let's stop worrying. When he says he's in control, let's let him do his thing. When he says our inheritance is waiting and that heaven is a sure thing, let's believe him and not doubt. He is a God of grace. He is a God who keeps his promises. This God is our Father. He has made us his children.

This text is deeply personal for me. My children are to me living theology lessons of the precious truth of adoption. And now my children are having children and those grandchildren are being adopted into God's family through Holy Baptism. Praise God for his "Grace 24/7," grace that chooses you and me! ***"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places!"*** (v. 3) Amen.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Stephen W. Luchterhand". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Pastor Stephen Luchterhand  
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