

Message Big Idea: Chosen

Main Idea: We are a chosen people; chosen by God to be his hands and feet to do his work in our community

Main Text: 1 Peter 2:9-10; 1 John 4:19; James 1:27; Psalm 68:5-6

Reflection/Discussion Questions:

1. Share a time when you were chosen and/or not chosen. How did it make you feel? What did it say to your soul? What happened as a result in your life?
2. Have you ever considered what it means to be God's chosen people? How does it make you live your life differently when you think about that? What responsibilities and privileges going along with being HIS chosen?
3. When you read the story about Charles Brace, how does it make you feel? How does it make you respond? What are the thoughts that go through your mind when you think about somebody stepping out in faith and doing what he did?
4. Have you ever considered the plight of the orphan? Have you ever thought about what it means to be raised in a family or without a family? Can you personally relate to this from your own history?
5. Have you ever considered fostering or adoption? Or perhaps you already do this and if so what has it meant in your life? If you haven't considered, perhaps it is something to consider. Or perhaps there are other ways you can help and if so what are those? What are your fears?

Main Idea: One Liner - WE ARE A CHOSEN PEOPLE - We are the CHURCH

Message:

Chosen! Selected from several. Preferred. As a noun - the elect. (a synonym for Chosen is "called"). It sounds so wonderful, exciting, inclusive! Being chosen is an amazing feeling!

But if you were like me, maybe you can better relate to the opposite of that. Of not being chosen. You applied for a job or a college or team - and you were not chosen. You didn't get asked to the prom, you didn't get that special promotion that you worked hard for, you didn't get the reward that you felt like you earned. It was so unfair. In fact you didn't even the recognition that you felt like you deserved. You put your name and your heart out there....and no one chose it.

Two weeks ago I shared a message for Mother's Day where I shared that I was born with a lazy eye and described a bit how that shaped me and how God used it. One difficult part of my childhood was that I was always chosen last for any sport team. I was awful at everything. I had a pit in my stomach each time a PE Teacher told us to line up so we could pick teams. Or at recess when kids would gather to play kickball. For me, it was "Oh no, here we go again." You get down to the last couple people and I knew - "Here I am last again." Not only was I picked last, but I then had to pray that the ball didn't come my way (please lord, let someone else the volleyball- act out). My depth perception issues made it hard for me to hit - my self confidence as a result of not being chosen so much only made it worse.

The scars of not being chosen can deeply affect us. Forsaken. Heart broken. Lost. Alone. For some, not being chosen as been your life's story...and maybe the scars left from that season are still affecting you. NOT being chosen can scar us, BUT the opposite is also true - being chosen can redeem us. Can ransom us. Can give us new life. Can set us apart and give us purpose. Like When someone's true love says "You are the one!" and gets down on one knee like our daughter Maddy experienced in March or chosen for the job you always wanted or chosen for a special project by your boss, or that teacher said, "I have noticed something special in you!". Being chosen helps us feel wanted. Called. Unique. Special. But hear this - if you have never experienced being chosen as a lifemate or a boss or an award then HERE AND NOW I want to tell you the greatest news you will ever hear - YOU, I, We, are CHOSEN by the Creator of the Universe! Turn with me to **1 Peter 2:9-10** page _____ But you

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are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. **10** Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

God has chosen us. WE are his special possession. Once we were not a people - but now we are the people of God!

I love how the The message version reads:

9-10 But you are the ones chosen by God, chosen for the high calling of priestly work, chosen to be a holy people, God's instruments to do his work and speak out for him, to tell others of the night-and-day difference he made for you—from nothing to something, from rejected to accepted.

Last week Pastors Chris and Joe and their worship team led us in an amazing weekend of worship. One of the songs they shared was a song from Hillsong called So Will I. As I was singing last week, these lines caught my attention:

God of salvation

You chased down my heart

Through all of my failure and pride

The song goes on to say:

I can see Your heart in everything You've done

Every part designed in a work of art called love

God chose us. GOD is LOVE - and GOD in HIS LOVE, CHOSE you! God in HIS Love chose me. He chooses all who would accept his invitation. It feels so amazing to be chosen that sometimes, we just need to sit in awe of it. To just live, relax, bathe in our "chosenness".

Another piece of my growing up story was a Life altering event that happened when I was in high school. You see - I was very busy trying to prove myself to others and to

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myself. That I was worthy. Each year - our HS gave an award to 1 female and 1 male for leadership and involvement. We were the Pacifica Mariners and the award was the "Most Worthy Mariner". During our senior awards banquet - I was announced as the female chosen for my senior year. I was so excited and proud. Finally - AFTER ALL THOSE YEARS - I was chosen. But the glory of that moment only lasted until we all graduated. Because while graduation is about finishing - it is mostly about beginning. The same is True with being chosen. Being chosen is not the end of the journey....it is about the beginning of the real journey. About the future. Many HS and college students graduated this past week - their alma maters want them to go on a do great things - graduation is the beginning- not the end. Think about it - if you are chosen for the team (not that I can relate). But I imagine it is about the team wanting you to PLAY and try to win! People don't say "I am so excited to be chosen - I never intended to play!" When you are chosen for a job - you start working, making plans, figure out how to excel. You don't say "Thanks for the job, when does my vacation start?!" Let me read again The Message version of 1 Peter 2:9-10:

9-10 But you are the ones chosen by God, chosen for the high calling of priestly work, chosen to be a holy people, God's instruments to do his work and speak out for him, to tell others of the night-and-day difference he made for you—from nothing to something, from rejected to accepted.

You see God chose us to be his instruments. To do His work. To be his hands and feet in a lost world. We, this Giant Family of God, exist to make God known - here in Tucson and around the world. WE ARE THE CHURCH. **WE ARE A CHOSEN PEOPLE**
- We are the CHURCH

Right now, at this very moment, some of you sitting here thinking "I am IN Church" Robin. Some of you are watching on line and thinking "I am watching and am a part of church". Some of you are All IN Partners of Pantano - you would call yourselves "members" of our church. But what I am talking about is how do we, how do I, **BE**

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THE CHURCH? Being in church or being part of a church is one thing - BEING THE CHURCH is entirely something different. And being the church starts with one thing - LOVE. **1 John 4:19 says We love because he first loved us.** It was enough that he sent his son to die on the cross for us. Seriously - he could have stopped there. Giving us eternal life - dying for our sins was more than enough. But God didn't stop there - he made it clear that not only are we saved and have eternal life, but we are HIS FAMILY, HIS CHOSEN PEOPLE. We are now part of his plan to be his LOVE in the world!!

Because we were chosen by God and Loved first by God- we are now a part of God's family. We know what it means to be chosen. To be loved. To be invited in. We were once lost, but now are found. We were once without hope and now have hope. We were once alone, but now we are a part of God's chosen people. But what does that really mean? What are we supposed to do as His Chosen? How are we supposed to be And show HiS love?

Earlier when we read 1 Peter 2:9 - we focused on the "chosen" words. But let's re-read what it says about what is next..."that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light". The Message: "to tell others of the night-and-day difference he made for you". Being chosen is amazing and exciting - but what we are chosen for - is equally (and perhaps more) important and yet sometimes we miss it...we are to tell others about God, about this Love we found. But it is more than telling. There is action involved. LOVE does MORE...it MOVES, and ACTS. The Bible consistently calls us - commands us as his church, to ACT: hear what Gods word says:

Rescue the weak and the needy

Open your mouth for the mute

support the fatherless and the widow

bring good news to the poor

look after orphans and widows in their distress

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seek the lost
execute justice for the orphan and the widow
defend the orphans

Note that the theme here is PEOPLE: The lost, the orphan, the poor, the widow, the outcast, those with no voice. **James chapter 1 v . 27** Spells it out even more clearly. **Turn with me to page: _____**. 27 Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

Real faith is faith in action. The lost, the poor, the widow, the outcast, those with no voice and the orphan - throughout the Bible God draws our attention to all of them and then James focuses our attention on the orphans and the widows. In context, this is because in the culture of the day, women and children had no rights, no ability to work, no ability to hold property or better themselves. THE CHURCH was their only hope. The generosity and hospitality of the church was their only hope AND it was God's plan!! Specifically in regards to orphans God asked HIS people, his chosen people, His CHURCH to be his hands and feet in this area. Why? Maybe because we more than any people should know what it is like to be chosen, included, invited into the family. Maybe because of the blessings we personally receive when we live out our lives according to God's design. As God's Church - our decision to ACT makes a difference in people's lives. It is a conscious decision. Not an accident or a surprise. My husband, Roger, has a sister that is adopted. His parents didn't think they were able to have children when they adopted her (Roger's dad was 43 when he was born - surprise!). Growing up his sister would remind him, "Mom and Dad CHOSE me - they got stuck with you!") As God's chosen people - we are adopted by God and thus we know what it is like to have a heavenly father who loves us....and by so doing, God gave us an example of what we, THE CHURCH, should look like and James makes it perfectly clear. This is what LOVE should look like, what THE CHURCH should look like in action.

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But what does that look like to an individual - how do you or I "BE" the CHURCH? Let me give you an example that is over 150 years old. In the 1800's there lived a man named Charles Brace. After he graduated seminary, he moved to New York because he felt called to "Be the church" on the street rather than in a building. While there, he couldn't get over the hundreds of unwanted and unloved children he found making a living on the streets of NY - many as young as 5. Locally, they were known as "Street Rats". Whether their parents were addicted or neglectful or non-existent, Reverend Brace saw that THIS was a HUGE PROBLEM. For New York and for the future and so he started the Children's Aid Society. He strongly believed that the best place for a child to grow up was in the home of a Christian farmer. Did you catch that? The best place for a child to grow up in was a HOME of a CHRISTIAN. While he had an idealized view of what life was like in the Mid-West, he knew that the growing number of homeless children in the city would one day result in a serious crime problem and so Brace began his "placing out" program in 1854 with a group of forty-six boys traveling by train to Michigan with an agent. The children aboard the "Orphan Train" were taken before an assembly of townspeople in a local church where the agent explained the children's need for homes. Within one week, local farm families had claimed all the children. Orphan trains began running through the country with groups of up to 40 children with a couple caregivers for the next 75 years. While not perfect, historians say that this effort was the beginning of the Foster Care Movement in our country. The reports vary, but over 100,000 urban children living in poverty in NY found homes. It is believed that the children on the orphan train now have over 2 million descendants. This was from 1 man - 1 man who chose to be the church to children in need. **WE ARE A CHOSEN PEOPLE - We are the CHURCH.** We are God's instrument -his "plan" to show love to the world.

Charles got it. He knew what it meant to be the church. Frankly I admire him because if I am honest, if it had been me, I am not sure I would have acted. In fact, maybe you would have had thoughts similar to mine: There are too many kids, what good will finding homes for just a few do? Is this sustainable? The problem is too big. I have

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no funding. What if it doesn't work out? Maybe I would have thought - I suppose I can help a couple kids myself - but I don't even know them, or their story, or their problems or their issues. What if I am not prepared, what if it backfires, what if I am not enough. What if I now have to deal with their families, or they expect more than I can give. The what if's can bring all my actions to a halt. Maybe you have found the same to be true for you. My daughter recently shared this quote going around at her Christian College with me. **God does not call the qualified, he qualifies the called.** IF GOD CALLS us, we can be sure that he will provide us with what we need to do what he has called us to do. We aren't going to feel prepared first. To be honest - if I felt prepared for everything I attempted in life - I would probably feel (and act) like I didn't need God. (And that is a problem). I think God gives us God-sized problems so that keep our eyes and focus on him. So - we are never going to feel prepared. AND - in case you were wondering - There is not going to be a perfect time (God and I have this discussion a lot - "You know Lord, if I had had a head's up on this, I could have done it better, been ready, etc.)" God called Charles and THEN he gave him the skill, resources, connections, energy and strength to do what he was called to do - more importantly, this is exactly what God does in us. No matter how qualified we feel - THIS is what it means to BE THE CHURCH. HE WAS THE CHURCH to those children. Each of us is called to be the church to those around us. We are the Christ that people see. You and I. and it is because once we understand that God Loved us first and called us to be his instruments, that we are then able to invite others into God's family, to share love from the wealth of love we have been given. Each of us, as individuals saved by God's grace and love, make up THE CHURCH.

The book of James was written nearly 2,000 years ago. Orphans were a concern then and they are still a concern today. May is Foster Awareness Month. To be perfectly honest, this was never on my radar until a few years ago. In fact, until a few years ago, I didn't know that that there was a foster care issue in the US or even in Pima County for that matter. I knew that people who couldn't have children often adopted them. I thought that was great. But I had no idea about the need for us as Christians

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to actively love the fatherless around us. And we don't usually have to look past our own home or the home next door to find someone who is fatherless. This was a problem in Bible times and in Charles' time and in today in 2018. And GOD's solution for the fatherless children and widows and outcasts and poor and marginalized around us is - and always has been - YOU and I. We are that solution!!

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So what is the status of the orphan, the fatherless in 2018 in Pima County? is there still an issue? A call to us as The Church? Well, I have asked the experts and here is what I have been told:

In Pima County - there are approximately 2,500 children currently in in the Foster Care system - children not living in their biological families homes. There are 323 Foster homes. Which means that to place all these children in homes - with a family - there would be 7 children per home! That is more than you or I can handle. We, THE CHURCH, can do something about this. We are called to do something about this we get to do something about this

Of that 2,500 children - 246 were removed from homes in the 6 zip codes closest to Pantano. This isn't a problem that exists on the "other side of the tracks" - this is a problem in our neighborhood.

The Number of kids in foster care near Pantano, 246 (in the 6 closest zip codes)

I final statistic I want to share with you - Right now, in Pima County there are 232 children whose parental rights have been severed and are ready for adoption as soon as a forever home is found. We can help!

There are many families right here in Pantano who see the need. Many who choose to foster a child while the family is being helped, strengthened or healed. The hope is that these children will go back to their birth families when that happens. There are also many families at Pantano who have adopted. Who have accepted and invited a child to be a part of their family forever!

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Remember - **God does not call the qualified, he qualifies the called.** AND WE as a church - ARE CALLED. More specifically - Some of you are called. I can guarantee that some of you had had fostering or adoption on your heart for a while now. Be the Church! Act on what God has placed in your heart.

As many of you may know, my husband, Roger, and I have 4 beautiful girls - the youngest just finished their freshman years in college. A year ago, as we saw this "empty nest" coming, I have to admit - there was a part of us that said "ah...the house can stay clean, large shopping trips at Costco will be a thing of the past and I don't have to worry about what to heat up- I mean cook - for dinner any more - Roger can fend for himself - we can sit, and read and relax and enjoy being empty nesters." Except that Roger and I know too much about the need for families to foster and adopt right here in Pima County. As Pastors, we have too often seen the results of neglected, abandoned and abused children trying to live their adult lives from a place of brokenness and hurt. Except that we are Christians and believe God at his word that our reward is in heaven - not on earth and that we are building our treasure for eternity. We feel we have more love to give, more life to share, more of God's purpose in our lives to fulfill. So, we completed our Foster Care License and in January our licensing workers started looking for teenagers for us. A teenager or two wanted a family and guidance and support. We are still looking to do this - but in the meantime, a month ago, we were introduced to a mom of 4 (including 22 month old twins) who was homeless and floating from house to house - sometimes living out of their car. I can't imagine. Roger and I had 4 children including a set of twins. We know the struggles and the challenges and there were two of us. As I shared on Mother's Day - I also know what it feels like to be left out...So we met her and invited her to come live with us for a season. Why would we do this? Because, like you, Roger and I are called to BE THE CHURCH - to offer Biblical hospitality. But I have to share a secret - we aren't doing it alone. We can't do it alone. We aren't called to do it alone! Others have come alongside us. The Galvins have been providing love, support and housing to the

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older 2 children as they finished school in Vail - and then they will join us for the summer as well. People have helped us with baby supplies, clothes, food, encouragement. Our daughters have loved on this family and supported them as well. They have shared their rooms, their time, their parents. It has been a family affair - It is a community effort! Each of us can do something as God's Chosen People - The Church.

Bring a mind reader - I know what you are thinking- well, Robin, God has prepared you to help this family since you already had 4 children. Maybe. But then how do you explain a young couple I know who 2 years after getting married - decided to foster a sibling group of 4 - pretty sure they didn't feel prepared - but they did feel called. And God, his equipping them daily to fulfill the call he has placed on their hearts. In fact if God calls them to raise them permanently- they will and he will be faithful to equip them Day by day. I also talked to a family this week who has fostered 18 children (Only God prepares you for that!) and has adopted 2 of them. WHY would people do this?? because Jesus himself said "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."

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Some of you are saying: "Robin, are you crazy?? I was listening to you, but you have gone too far! There is no way I am called to do something like this! Maybe you are not called to foster or adopt - BUT I challenge you, you are called to do something! Maybe you are called to mentor children in the community. Maybe you are called to help meet physical needs for those in care or trying to do care. Maybe you are called to serve in your local school. Maybe you are called to pray or spread the word of this great need to others. Maybe you are called to support friends and families around you who are called to adopt or foster - help provide them with an occasional babysitter (we all need a break sometime) or meals, supplies, encouragement and love. Maybe you are called to support organizations financially. I was sharing with a good friend yesterday and she

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said, "I know that you mean Robin, At this time, our family doesn't feel led to Foster or Adopt - BUT, we know several families around us who are doing that and so when I go to the store - I call and ask them "What can I bring you in the way of supplies or dinner today?" She is doing SOMETHING. Our community is filled more with the fatherless in single parent homes than ever before, as well as single dads and grandparents raising kids. We, as the church, are called to support them too. To come alongside these children, teens, parents and grandparents and say "Here, let me help you. God loved me first - let me show his love to you!" We don't need to wait until they are in foster care or in crisis or stressed to the max. We can offer support now. And - Some of you can open an invitation to your home "Come, be a part of our family; Of God's family!" Sometimes it is just for a season of crisis - until the child or family can find HOPE again - some of you are called to officially become a Foster Parent and and as I said, I know, that some of you are called adopt.

Pantano Christian Church believes that we are called to BE THE CHURCH, and our mission is to launch passionate people to make our world different. That is why we share this message, that is why we support various organizations as mission partners around town who are doing that. As I was working on my notes for this message, I was reminded again about how the community sees the CHURCH. As you know, a few weeks ago we did a day camp for kids to help support parents when the teachers had their walkout. Do you know what surprised me the most about all that? It wasn't the kids had to say though they had fun and we planted seeds of God's love in their hearts; it wasn't the parents who thanked us over and over again for the help, support and love. For me, it came in the moment when I was helping a man who I had never seen before drop off a bunch of snacks he had bought. He noticed that one of our staff happened to be wearing a "God's Not Dead" T-shirt and he after pointing to the shirt he said, "I want you to know, I am an atheist. I don't believe in God, but I do believe in what you are doing for our community and I wanted to thank you.!"

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We are the church people see. We are the Love of God people see.

Because my prayer today is that you want to find out more about being the church, we have invited several organizations who serve our community in regards to the needs of orphans, to join us today. They are in the Pantano Cafe'. You should have received a handout when you entered that tells you about the organizations we are partnering with today. We invite you to stop by their tables and get more information about what you can do. There are also pictures around the cafe' and **in the lobby ?** These are photos of some of the 232 adoptable children in Pima County right now. Also, please take a blue ribbon pin as you exit from the baskets in the lobby. We have 1250 pins - each one representing 2 of the children in out of home care. I ask that you take a pin and put it somewhere where it will remind you to pray for the children around our county that need THE CHURCH to step up and BE THE CHURCH.

Let me read **Psalm 68:5-6** to you.

A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows,
is God in his holy dwelling.

6 God sets the lonely in families,[c]

he leads out the prisoners with singing;

God is the Father to the fatherless...and is calling you to be his hands. He is the defender of widows - and using your feet and resources. He sets the lonely in families - and that family might be yours. God loved us first, so that we could love others.

In just a moment, our worship band is going to lead a song "Who you Say I am" one of the lines is:

In my Father's house There's a place for me - I'm a child of God. During this song, we are going to have several of our Pantano families, who have chosen to BE THE CHURCH and have either fostered or adopted. I think you will enjoy meeting them These

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families are some of the few who have chosen to say YES to God's solution for children in need.