

Jesus Chose You

by Stewart Ruch

The sermon emphasizes the profound truth that Jesus chose us first, establishing a bond that calls us to bear fruit in His kingdom work.

Duration: 20:43

Scripture: Matthew 22:14, John 15:16, Ephesians 1:4

Topics: "Election"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker uses the metaphor of a soccer game to explain the work of Jesus in the kingdom of God. The purpose of the kingdom of God is to restore the earth and human beings to their original state of union and fruitfulness. The speaker emphasizes the importance of bearing fruit and being restored to God's original plan. The sermon also highlights the concept of Jesus choosing and bonding with individuals before they choose Him, emphasizing the theological and biblical significance of this bond.

Transcript

This morning I'd like to take one verse out of many verses that were just read from the book of John. If you want to move over there in your bulletin. I'd like to focus on the words of Jesus where Jesus says, you did not choose me but I chose you and appointed you to bear fruit.

We've been in a series called spiritual beginnings that we started after Easter day. And for me to teach on anything to do with a beginning, it all starts, as I just prayed, with the beginning that Jesus Christ has made. And when Jesus makes a beginning, He makes a beginning because He has chosen us.

Everything in our Christian lives, everything comes back to Jesus' choice of us. Which actually, clearly from His teaching, has priority over our choice of Him as important as that is. And getting that priority right is critical to any spiritual beginning any of us would make.

It's very powerful to be chosen. Extremely powerful to know you've been chosen. I was trying to remember the first time that Catherine Fawcett, who now, thanks be to God, is Catherine Ruck, my wife.

I was trying to remember the first time when it got clear to me that Catherine had chosen me. I knew that it had to do, we actually dated and got to know each other here at Church of the Resurrection. So many young people, they're dating here and they think that I don't have any knowledge of that.

They actually go to other young people here who actually met at Wheaton College or met somewhere else. Very few on staff have actually dated and gotten married here at Res. I think I'm the only one.

So if you really need counsel on that, I'm your guy. So the first thing I had to do was make clear to the field of competitors, and there are always fields of competitors, if you're not understanding that, then there's a lot you're not understanding, that I was very interested in Catherine Fawcett and that I was willing to fight if it came to that. Spiritually, of course.

So I made clear that I was interested in Catherine and I made it clear to Catherine that I was interested in her and we began to build a friendship and take it slowly and get to know each other. And then there was a time and we'd gone out and we actually had gone to a poetry reading at the Art Institute. We were walking down Michigan Avenue.

I know some of you are going, Stuart, of course you went to a poetry reading at the Art Institute. Yes, that's true. If you know me, that's pretty indicative of what I would do and where I would take Catherine.

She loved it and walked down Michigan Avenue and it was that point where I thought, you know, I think this might be the moment to hold her hand. So I took that risk, grabbed her hand, and that's the moment where you know if you receive limpness in response, a kind of clamminess over the hand, like they're afraid you're going to hold their hand. They're repulsed by you holding their hand.

Whatever it might be, this is not good. Maybe their hand balls up into a fist. That's not a good sign then.

But actually what happened instead was I reached out and grabbed Catherine's hand and she grabbed it in return. Ah, I think she's choosing me. It's extremely powerful.

There's lots of ways that choosing goes on in life and it's often very powerful. If you play sports, it's a very powerful thing to be chosen for a team and be given a position. If you work in the arts to have something that you've created, something you've made, be chosen for notice or for recognition or for a particular element in the art that you've made, it's very, very powerful in the marketplace to be chosen for a position, to be chosen for a particular assignment.

It's very, very powerful. It's so powerful that even in the casual things of life, when someone texts us and says, I've been thinking of you or praying for you today, they've chosen to take a moment and send us a note that in itself is extremely powerful because to be seen, to be noticed, to be known, to be called out in some capacity and to be chosen is, is, is, is a connection with the deepest part of who we are. We are people who desire to be chosen and into that human desire and to that great need.

Jesus gives us a teaching which is elemental and foundational to understanding our Christian lives, which is, you did not choose me, but I chose you. What does it mean to be chosen by Jesus Christ? And how does it affect how we make a beginning of our lives? Whether it's a beginning in a certain phase of life or beginning of a spiritual life, because perhaps you're not a committed Christian. That is not unusual at all here at resurrection to have those who are not committed Christians coming on Sundays, coming to different things that we're doing and learning.

What does it mean to be chosen by Jesus? It means at least two things. It means he knows you and it means he needs you. It means at least two things.

It means he knows you and it means he needs you. How does Jesus know us? What does it mean to be known by Jesus? To be known by someone is to have a bond with him. When we're known by somebody and then we come to know them, a profound bond is a part of that.

There's a, there's a very significant attachment. Uh, we would use the word in the scriptures of communion of common union. There's, there's this back and forth bond that happens.

And when Jesus says, I chose you, what he is saying is I have bonded with you. I have indeed desire to have full connection and communion with you before you even knew how to bond with me. I wanted to bond with you.

I wanted to attach and reach out and have communion with you. That's what I have wanted for every single human being. I have wanted that from the beginning of their lives.

My daughter Madeline just graduated from high school. And so we were putting together a little slideshow of her life. She's our oldest kid.

And so there were, there were literally Epic numbers of baby pictures. It was staggering. How many baby pictures there were.

We did pretty well by everyone else too. Thanks to Catherine, but there were just piles of baby pictures and we're going through the baby pictures, look at them as just one picture after another, of course, where Madeline's a month old and I'm taking a nap and she's just asleep right there on my chest. Catherine's got Madeline on her hip like this and she's stirring something at the stove or I'm up in front leading a meeting here at Rez and I've got Madeline up front pack.

I'm holding up Madeline. I'm looking at her like this and she's smiling down at me. Now Madeline didn't know how much she needed to bond with Catherine and me, but we knew how much he needed to bond with Catherine and me.

We chose her before she could ever really choose us. Now I would like you to consider an imaginative theological exercise. And I'm wondering if you could bring to your memory and if not, maybe you need to do it later and get some time of a baby picture of yours.

Can you remember a baby picture or even a toddler picture of you? I've got one where I'm doing yard work with my dad. I'm probably a year and a half old. I'm standing there and he's got some like clippers in his hand.

He's down doing this and I think I've got like little clippers, tiny clippers, right in my hand. Now, if you would just for a moment, I'm really going to ask you to try this for some of you. It may click some of you.

It may not. Don't worry about that. Would you just consider closing your eyes right now? We're going to be quiet.

Close your eyes and it may be that God will show you a picture. Maybe he'll just speak to you with words and maybe they'll just be a quiet piece. And maybe that don't worry about what's going to happen.

But I was going to ask you that if you can bring up to your imagination or Holy Spirit, would you just bring up to our imaginations now a picture of us with a parent or with a loved one when we were children, when we were babies or toddlers. And I'd like you just to imagine that Jesus is in that picture where your uncle

or your aunt or your parent is. Just see Jesus there.

He's holding you. He's actually bonding with you. And even now we just pray, Lord, show us how you chose us with this exercise or just another way through the scriptures before we chose you.

Come Holy Spirit. You can open your eyes. That may need more time for some of you.

That's OK. Get some time and ask Lord to maybe just speak to you about when you were an infant and how he chose you. Some of us see pictures, some of us here were so much feeling it.

There's lots of ways that God can work this. But it's very important theologically and biblically. That you understand in your body, in your mind, in your imagination that before you chose Jesus, he chose you.

He bonded with you. This is true at your baptism. But if you've been baptized, Jesus bonded with you there.

It's true the moment you were born. It's absolutely true right now. What does it mean that he chose you? It means that he knows you.

He's bonded with you. To get to the second part of the teaching of verse 16, we have to have that first part. But Jesus then moves to the second part of verse 16, where he says, and I have appointed you to bear good fruit.

Other places will call it fruit that will last. What Jesus is saying at this point, then, is not only do I know you, but I actually need you. Okay, now let's try to understand what it would mean that Jesus needs us, because that could get confusing.

Does it mean that Jesus needs us in the way that we need oxygen to survive, to live? No, it doesn't mean that. We know that Jesus existed before we ever existed. We know that he existed before all things.

There never was a time when Jesus was not. We know that he will always exist into all eternity. We know that he doesn't need us for his life.

So he doesn't need us in that way. But there's other ways of needing people. Instead, I would say that Jesus needs us in a way that a soccer team needs a goalie.

For the game of soccer to work, you have to have a goalie in position. To play that game, there are certain things that you very much need. And for Jesus to do the work of the kingdom of God, which it would sound too casual to call that a game.

But to use that metaphorically for Jesus to do that work, but just to be engaged in the profound work of the kingdom of God and the work of the kingdom of God is to restore the earth and restore human beings to who they were meant to be. Indeed, to bear fruit is a kind of regarding of the earth, whereby we're bearing fruit and being restored to God's original plan, which was that men and women would live in absolute union with each other and love and blessing for each other close to what God had created, which was a garden full of fruitfulness. That that was indeed the purpose that God set man and woman on this earth for was to be to be bountiful and to live in this beautiful fruit filled garden.

And when he says bear fruit, it has a connection to the very beginning of creation itself. Indeed, did you know that many churches, when they were designed through the early years, the Middle Ages, even if you

go into the old churches, you'll see fruit in the churches. Look for that.

You'll see pomegranates. You'll you'll you'll see pineapples. You'll see apples.

You'll see vines everywhere. I wanted that so desperately. Remember what we have this not fruit, but trees living life because they wanted to say when you're walking into the church where Jesus Christ is fully reigning, you're returning to the garden fully that there's garden energy throughout churches because this is the restoration of all of creation.

That's what Jesus is doing and he wants us and he has chosen to need us to be a part of that restoration work. Not only has he chosen you, he's chosen the world. He wants to restore the world.

He loves the world. Does he love all that's evil? No, he doesn't love all that's evil. That's why he loves the world so much as he wants to redeem the evil.

He wants to restore the evil. He wants to put to death that which is dark and he wants to resurrect us and this world. He appoints us to go and bear fruit.

That's the work of mission. Now, should that make you nervous? I don't know. That sounds something a lot.

I'm getting kind of nervous about bearing fruit. Let me ask you, do you think an apple tree is nervous about bearing apples? Tomato plants. I mean, do they spend all of June and July? I don't know.

I don't know if I know. Now, let's let's be fair. They may feel some pressure because if you've ever had a store bought tomato, I mean, we're depending on our tomato plants for real tomatoes anymore.

All right. They may feel a little more pressure than other vegetables and fruits. But really, I mean, a tomato plant, what does it do? It bears tomatoes.

If it's in good soil, it's got great sunlight, lots of heat and humidity. It's going to bear tomatoes. It's what it does.

That's what a Christian does. Who knows? They've been chosen before he just chose. They've been chosen before they chose him.

There's a foundation with a profound bond with Jesus. If you have that foundation, a bond with Jesus, or if you need a healing and a strengthening or ministry of the Lord to have that bond with Jesus really profoundly connected, or your bond with early caregivers was not that strong. It's hard for you to project and understand what it means that Jesus wants to bond with you.

Then you can get a healing from the Lord. You can get a ministry from the Lord. You can get that foundation that you need.

That soul can be put in the place. And then you can't help but bear fruit because that's what Christians do. You don't need to be nervous about this.

You need to be alert about this. You need to know that Jesus has chosen to need you in the work of the kingdom of God. You've been appointed.

Are you clear about your sort of appointment to fruit bearing right now in your season of life? Are you clear about that? Here's what I mean. Are you clear whom you're being called to love right now who is far from God? Are you clear? You have a name, two names, three names, developing relationship, the folks who are far from God, co-workers, family, neighbors. There's plenty of folks.

There's lots of folks far from God. May I just put a little problem to rest? Folks living in DuPage County think, oh, this area is so church-ed. It's so hard to find un-Christian, non-Christian friends.

Statistically, let me just help you with that. There's 900,000 people in DuPage County. The highest estimate is that 100,000 of the 900,000 go to church and are connected with some kind of faith community regularly.

That leaves 800,000 people in DuPage County alone. There's plenty of folks to love. We don't have a dearth of folks to love.

So, are you clear? Do you have your assignment? If you don't yet, then let me give you an assignment. Alongside taking time to understand how Jesus has bonded with you from the earliest days, how He chose you before you chose Him, you need to get clear about your assignment, who God is calling you to love, who God is calling you to relationship and friendship with who is far from God, the lost and the least, as the Scriptures call them. I have a couple of folks I'm pretty clear about.

And sometimes I've learned that loving them, sometimes, as an earlier verse in John 15 says, I think I have to learn that there's ways in which I have to kind of give up my life to love them. Now, not literally. I've not been asked to lay down my life physically for these people at this point in my life.

But I have been asked to sort of give up my preconceptions. I've asked to give up my perspective at times. Let me give an example.

I have a friend that I've been building friendship with for over five years. It came very naturally through common loves and common interests. And we just hang out together.

We get dinner together. He is far from God. He does not have a relationship with Christ.

He knows that I want him to have a relationship with Jesus. As a matter of fact, he believes that it's so important for others that he brought his mom to me, who is far from Christ. I had a chance to lead her to Christ.

And I said to him, wow, that was that was really great. Like mother, like son. Let's let's talk this through.

And he said, I'm not ready for that yet. My mom needs the Lord, but I'm not ready yet. All right.

OK, so it's open. It's an open friendship in that way. It's really important.

So we get together and I found that as I've gotten to know him, I do have to bring to him, but he has a lot to bring me. And as I get to know him, I have to kind of lay down my life and my conceptions. Let me give an example.

He comes from a different ethnic background than I come from. Comes from a different cultural background than I come from. And he's not a believer and I'm a believer.

I live by God's word. He does not. So we have a lot that's not in common.

So we're having a conversation about a cultural event that's very important in our country last year, Ferguson, Missouri. And I had some developing ideas around that. They were not very strong, honestly, but they were developing ideas around Ferguson.

He had other ideas. He had been to Ferguson two or three times. He developed a lot of thinking around Ferguson.

He walked me through his thinking step by step with great clarity. You know, that was really important for me. I actually had to lay down my life to a certain degree and listen to him and what he had to give me from perspective that I never would have had otherwise.

My perspective was influenced by him. Now I've had a lot of influence on him as well. Everything he was saying with me and challenging me for, I ran into the grit of the gospel.

Some I don't agree with, some I actually came to agree with. See, that's what happens when we're appointed to bear fruit. As we move into a relationship of mutuality, indeed, we build a bond, as Jesus has built with us, with someone else.

And in that bond, there is a give and a take. So I'm asking you to build relations with those who are far from God. I want to be really clear.

I'm asking you to enter into an opportunity to love them. Indeed, within the confines and the gift of the gospel, to be influenced by how they might think about some things. Always running into the grit of the scriptures.

Always into the grit of the gospel. But learning. But also knowing that you have, in Jesus, exactly what they need.

Every single human being needs a bond with Jesus Christ. And to be known by Him and to know that they're known by Him. And to know that they're needed by Him on a kingdom assignment.

So perhaps it's a beginning for you today. Beginning of a new assignment to bear fruit. A beginning to understand just how much Jesus desires to bond with you before you could ever choose Jesus.

He chose you. In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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