Good Morning. It’s funny I assume you are watching this in the morning because if we were still living B.C (Before Covid) we would be gathered and I would be preaching in the morning. Well whatever time it is I hope that you are enjoying your day. The sermon I am about to preach may be jarring to hear. In fact in a moment I’m going to open with two references that might be triggering; one taken from today’s news and the other from scripture. So, if you’re not feeling up to be challenged this morning then by all means, in a few moments, pause this video and watch it later or not at all.

Now how often do you get a wide open invitation to opt out of the sermon? This is like your own little “get out of Jail Free” card so by all means take it with my blessing. Before you hit the pause button let me leave you with a one sentence sermon; “You are loved more than can imagine by the God who made you.” Amen

Still watching? Good “I speak to you in the name of God; the Father, God, the Son and God the Holy Spirit. May only the truth be spoken and only the truth be heard. Amen”

# Black lives matter

We Are Chosen People

How do I dare sit here and hold these two signs in the same hands?

In the wake of the killing of George Floyd, a person of colour at the hands of a white police officer passions have been ignited around the world. Hard, hurtful complicated issues of prejudice and hate, of privilege and power of systemic wrong and racism have come once again to the forefront of our collective consciousness.

# Black lives matter speaks to series of interconnected issues all of which merit a great deal of thought and prayer. Changes are needed and I believe changes are coming. Core to the matter is the issue of race. A privileged race (my race) has for too long held the power over another race and we have used that power to create and entrench a system designed to enshrine and maintain our power while denying and oppressing another race. Declaring one people superior and another people inferior is an evil that has spawned generations of hurt. “# Black Lives Matter” is a demand that this change. Optimistically, “#Black Lives Matter” is also the promise that it will.

So what do we do with scriptural references like the one we read in Exodus this morning? We are descendent from...”a chosen people”? Its not like scripture is ambivalent about this claim. Depending on the translation of the bible you read there are about 120 references in our Old Testament to Israel being a “Chosen people”

This one is clear.

Deuteronomy 7:6 “For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession.”

Or Psalm 105 which says; “He has brought out his people with rejoicing, his chosen ones with shouts of Joy.”

Nothing ambivalent about Isaiah 65:9 “I will bring forth descendants from Jacob and from Judah those who will posses my mountains, my chosen people will inherit them”

If you Google “The Chosen People” you get 337 million hits and everyone that I scrolled through referred to the Jews.

As Christians, we are of Jewish decent in our faith. Indeed this belief that we are a chosen people persists into our Christian faith. It is there:

In Colossians 3:12 we are told “Therefore as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved...” And just to be clear here, now that’s you and I as Christians

And then there is this reference from the first letter of Peter which leaves us no wiggle room. He writes, “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession...”

So there it is, the bible speaks of our Jewish forbearers as God’s chosen people and as you and I as Christians in the same language; as God’s chosen people. We cannot sidestep this. Our status as God’s chosen people runs like a red coloured thread through our entire story.

I believe we get our answer, and a way to make sense of this, in today’s readings which is why we are confronting this topic today.

In our reading from Exodus this morning we heard God say through Moses, “Now therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples. Indeed, the whole earth is mine, but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation.”

If you obey my voice and keep my covenant you shall be my treasured possession. God chose this little tribe of wanderers to reveal himself to, he gave them the Law and entered into a covenant with them to bless them while for their part these people lived out God’s ways in the world. Or as God would later say through Isaiah “Listen to me my people, hear me my nation; instruction will go out from me, my justice will become a light to the nations.” And again, “Nations will come to your light and kings to the brightness of your dawn.”

Isreal, the Jewish people were not chosen by God over and above the other nations because they were superior or inherently better. No, God chose the Jews to be his living witnesses in the world. God entered into covenant with this small, relatively insignificant tribe and he gave them his Law so that they might model God’s way to the world around them. The descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were chosen to be God’s witness to the world. Better than no one! Superior to no other people! but chosen to serve the world.

 When we start looking for answers to the question “What makes us, as Christians, God’s chosen people? What is it we are chosen for?” we see a continuity of the same theme as applied to the Old Testament Jews. Let’s start with Jesus, shall we? In matters of faith he is always a great place to start. Setting aside discussion of Jesus’ ultimate, universal mission; today we read a nice, tight synopsis of Jesus’ earthly ministry.

We read, “Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness.”
Jesus was chosen to “proclaim the good news of God’s kingdom”. Many of you have heard by now that the word for ‘good news’ is ‘gospel’ (it’s what gospel means) so Jesus went out to preach the gospel. The second part of his mission was ” curing every disease and every sickness.” That is, to be an active healing presence in the world; to heal.

As we read on this morning we heard that Jesus called, he *chose* (there’s ‘chosen’ again) twelve apostles and sent them out on a mission of their own. And what exactly were they *Chosen* to do? Jesus said, “As you go, proclaim the good news, 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons.” Exactly the same mission Jesus was chosen to fulfill: two parts, equally important, preach the gospel and take an active role in heal the people that are hurting in the world. This is what we, as Christians are chosen to do.

We are chosen my friends, make no mistake we are a chosen people. We are not chosen because we are inherently better than anyone. We are not chosen to become superior! No we are chosen, as Jesus himself was chosen, to tell of God’s redemptive love and to take an active hand to heal the world.

So Let me go back to my cue cards.

As Christians we are a **chosen people.**

Precisely because **# Black Lives Matter**

Here are some of the things that we have been chosen to do.

Love Everyone

Listen

Forgive

Ask Forgiveness

Give of ourselves

Actively heal

Listen

Empower the powerless

Honour Everyone

Value

All of

God’s

Children

#Black Lives Matter

Amen