ST. PETER LUTHERAN CHURCH

God Has Chosen You

Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost • October 18, 2026 • Pastor Raymond Van Buskirk

AS WE GATHER

By God's loving kindness and grace, He chooses people for salvation. The Church at Thessalonica was one example (1 Thessalonians 1:1-10 ESV). They not only received the soul-saving Word of God, but they also showed the fruits of faith by sharing the good news with other people. You have been chosen by God if you share this same faith and witness. Amen.

OLD TESTAMENT READING

Isaiah 45:1–7 (ESV)

(Almighty God chose Persian King Cyrus to free His people Israel from captivity in Babylon, to restore them to the Promised Land, and to proclaim God's salvation.)

1 Thus says the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped, to subdue nations before him and to loose
the belts of kings, to open doors before him that gates may not be closed: 2 "I will go before you and level the exalted places,
I will break in pieces the doors of bronze and cut through the bars of iron, 3 I will give you the treasures of darkness and the
hoards in secret places, that you may know that it is I, the LORD, the God of Israel, who call you by your name. 4 For the
sake of my servant Jacob, and Israel my chosen, I call you by your name, I name you, though you do not know me. 5 I am the
LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me, 6 that people may know,
from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the LORD, and there is no other. 7 I form
light and create darkness; I make well-being and create calamity; I am the LORD, who does all these things.

THE EPISTLE

1 Thessalonians 1:1–10 (ESV)

(St. Paul rejoices that the church at Thessalonica has been chosen by God and has received saving faith, a productive faith that is being spread to other areas.)

1 Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you
and peace. 2 We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, 3 remembering before
our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. 4 For we know,
brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, 5 because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in
the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. 6 And you
became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, 7 so that
you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. 8 For not only has the word of the Lord sounded
forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything.
9 For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols
to serve the living and true God, 10 and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers
us from the wrath to come.

THE HOLY GOSPEL

Matthew 22:15–22 (ESV)

(The Pharisees try to trap Jesus regarding paying taxes. He tells them to give to Caesar what is his and to God what is His.)

15 Then the Pharisees went and plotted how to entangle him in his words. 16 And they sent their disciples to him, along with
the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that you are true and teach the way of God truthfully, and you do not care about
anyone's opinion, for you are not swayed by appearances. 17 Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar,
or not?" 18 But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, "Why put me to the test, you hypocrites? 19 Show me the coin for the tax."
And they brought him a denarius. 20 And Jesus said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" 21 They said,
"Caesar's." Then he said to them, "Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are
God's." 22 When they heard it, they marveled. And they left him and went away.

SERMON

God Has Chosen You

SUMMARY

By God's loving kindness and grace, He chooses people for salvation. The Church at Thessalonica was one example (1 Thessalonians 1:1-10 ESV). They not only received the soul-saving Word of God, they showed the fruits of faith by sharing the good news with other people. You have been chosen by God if you share this same faith and witness. Amen.

Being chosen by God is a great and wondrous mystery. Why should He save anyone? We are dead in our sins and trespasses, enemies of God from conception, deservedly subject to God's eternal wrath and powerless to choose Him.

Some people think that they are good enough or smart enough to choose God or earn His salvation by good works. But, Jesus tells us that the "work" required by God is to believe in the one whom He has sent (Jesus Christ) (John 6:29). We are saved by grace through faith. And faith itself is the work and gift of God (Ephesians 2). No one can believe in or trust in Jesus Christ unless the Father draws them (John 6:44). And, God draws people to His Son by the Word (Romans 10:5-17, esp. 17). Faith comes from hearing the Word of Christ.

Today, God baptized two children here. He proclaimed His Word of grace and mercy and peace to them. He adopted them through the waters by the power of the Word. He gave them His name and claimed them for His kingdom. He cleansed them of their sins and gave them the right to call upon His name in every time of need (body, soul and mind)—which seems to be 24/7 these days... God called them and chose them. It is a divine miracle! Jesus means "God saves."

St. Paul told about the joy he had in that the church at Thessalonica was sharing their faith far and wide. They had (verses 9-10): "...turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come."

You have received the greatest gift ever if you share this same faith. Receive God's Word and Sacraments that strengthen and preserve you in this faith unto life everlasting. Rejoice in this faith by sharing it with others around you. May many more be chosen by God. Amen.

Pastor Raymond Van Buskirk • stpeterdowntownhouston.org