

Sermon for the Sixth Sunday of Easter, Saint Helena, 21.v.2005, 10:00 a.m.
Evangelical Lutheran Church of Saint James the Apostle / Brogue, Pennsylvania
Acts 8:26-40; Psalm 22:24-30; I John 4:7-21; John 15:1-8
Holy Communion, LBW - Setting 2

Jesu Juva !

Grace to you and peace from Him Who is and Who was
and Who is to come! ✠ Amen.

"You did not choose me but I chose you."

– John 15:16a

Most of you were and possibly still are more athletic than I ever have been or most certainly ever will be, so you may have difficulty relating to the following experience. If so, then please bear with me. A team sport is to be played and team members must be chosen. You all line up as the team captains take turns calling names. You have been through this countless times before. You know what will happen. In the classroom, your name is often called toward the beginning of taking attendance or beginning an exercise because your family name begins with a letter near the beginning of the alphabet. But here,

on the playground, your name will be neither among the first called nor among the middle group of names but rather at the very end, the next to last or, often enough, the very last, and only because the idea is accepted that everyone gets to play. If the game is softball, then off you go into left field. If the game is football, you are placed on the line. No one expects much of you. You expect little of yourself. Pop flies come your way, but you miss them. A pass is thrown to you in your team's desperate attempt to keep the ball, but you fumble it.

But today is different. Your name is called out *not* at the end, but at the beginning, and the captain smiles and razzes you in a good-natured way as you run to stand with your team. You have really been *chosen*, not just accepted. You have been wanted and called, and now your eye is on that softball or football. Now you will not let your teammates down. Now you *catch* that fly ball, even if you

get beamed in the attempt, and you *receive* that pass, even if you are tackled where you stand.

Sound familiar? It should, because each one of you has been *chosen*, not just accepted as the embarrassing leftovers who must be allowed to play but *chosen by the Lord of the Church, Jesus Christ, to be part of His Church and to play a role in the life of that Church by doing something He is confident you can do*. You are called to love. You are called to love all those whom Christ Our Redeemer has chosen in Holy Baptism, others just like you, and all those whom God the Creator loves with an infinite love in ways known to God alone.

But that first choosing was so long ago. For most of us, it happened at a time that predates our own clear memory of events. We have only the Church's word that we were named and called by the Triune God on the day of our Baptism, but that is good enough. That is a human

word that is also *God's Word*, let no one forget that, let *no one* deny that. But people do forget, and some people deny the reality of anything they have not fashioned or invented or otherwise willed themselves. And so it is that Christians may stand around, with little confidence in their ability to love as Christ loved, passively accepting the fact that the first Disciples and Apostles of Our Lord and the great Saints of the Church may have believed and hoped and loved splendidly, *but not believing that we—that I—can truly follow through with my part as a member of this team called the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.*

The Lord of the Church is not surprised. He begged the Father to send the Holy Spirit as a remedy for the feeling that God's accepts us but does not really want us, and He promised us the Father *would* send His Spirit, and so He did, and so He *does*. Your Baptism and mine may stand half a century or longer ago in our past, but the

crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ, true God and true human being, stands really and truly present among us in His Body and Blood today, will walk down from that Tabernacle and that Altar in a few short minutes to be among you, to feed you with His own hands through the Apostolic ministry of His Church, to become Himself one with *your* flesh and blood and spirit, really present through *your* life in *His* world to redeem that wrecked and ruined world with the love of God. He chooses *you* to be the living, breathing, thinking, feeling and willing vessel of His own life among us, chooses *you* by name, chooses *you* and wants *you*. Get your head and the rest of you in the game! ✠ Amen.



Now to Him Who loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood, and has made of us a Kingdom, priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion with the Father and the Holy Spirit, both now and forever. ✠ Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria!