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St. Stephen's, Newport News, VA
Sixth Sunday of Easter, Year B May 6, 2018

Acts 10:44-48, Psalm 98, 1John 5:1-16, John 15:9-17

Christ has chosen us

I want this week, to try something different, a touch off-center, but, I pray, with depth in brevity; short enough to be called a true homily.

*“It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you
and appointed you to go and bear fruit.”*

Christ has chosen us.

What an amazing truth!

What a rare and surprising gift!

Despite all of our sins and faults—

despite the greed that leads to temptation, and the weakness that causes us to sin,

Christ has chosen us.

He loves us lavishly, like a host preparing a bountiful feast;

like a farmer casting seed with abandon;

like a fisherman hauling in a heavy net.

We may lash out in anger, or turn our power against the weak.

We may be utterly blind, and prove ourselves unworthy time after time...

but still,

Christ chooses us.

He comes to us like a servant washing dusty feet,
like a healer touching withered limbs,
like a prophet preaching words of truth.

Christ has chosen us.

We may stumble and fall.

We may turn away in despair.

We may fail in charity, faithfulness and trust.

Yet, Christ continues to choose us.

He knocks upon locked doors;

sweeps the floor for a lost coin;

gazes out over the distant road,

patiently waiting for us to come home.

Christ has come to us.

Like water for a scorched earth, like wine for a parched throat,

like bread for a starving child.

God says to all of us,

I have come to you.

I have poured out my spirit,

and smashed the barriers of sin and fear.

You are no longer slaves, but friends.

I choose you.

Remain in my love and bear fruit.

The love that God both offers and commands

is not the narcissism or obsession that so often masquerades as love.

God's love is not self care, sentiment, or self indulgence.

It does not come boxed up like chocolates, or served upon a silver tray.

It does not change with the whim of fashion

or tarnish with familiarity and use.

It is not simple, superficial or cheap.

God's love is hardworking.

It demands.

It endures.

It hopes and suffers and transforms.

It is a love that can only be understood completely

when viewed from the foot of the cross.

This is a love that breaks down barriers and opens locked doors.

It is a love that heals and binds and holds us accountable.

This is a love so deep, that it transforms our lives

and our deaths, forever.

Christ has chosen us.

This is the greatest gift we will ever receive.

It is a gift that demands a response.

In the end, it is the only thing that can sustain us

as we live out our mission to go and bear fruit.

Amen