



**“CHOSEN-NESS”**  
**REV. BRADLEY L. DEHAVEN**  
**ST. ANDREW’S UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**  
**SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS**  
**SUNDAY, APRIL 24, 2005**

John 14:1-14

I have to make a confession. This past week, Jan had done something for my birthday that was supposed to be a surprise, except somehow it sort of backfired. It was kind of a mistake all the way around. She had made reservations for our family, and my folks, and our two trailers to go camping over my birthday – Thursday night, Friday and come back Saturday. I got this email that confirmed this reservation that I never made. And, you know emails – when you get those kinds of things, you’re a little bit suspicious and, well, I called and canceled it, because I didn’t make it, and I didn’t want to be charged for it.

I got home that night and Jan was all excited, and the kids were all excited and they had this wonderful big poster thing of an invitation that Jan had made and the kids had all seen. They brought it to me and I went, “uh-oh.” (As a matter of fact I think I said a different word than that, but I’m not sure now what it was.) And when I had confessed to Jan that I had gotten this email that was confirming a reservation that I didn’t make, and how I called and canceled the reservation that I didn’t make. She went “uh-oh,” except she said a different word, too. It is fun making reservations. We did get it all straightened out, and we did go camping. They had a good laugh at the campground office about the whole thing.

I’m leaving Saturday for a five-day conference in Richmond, Virginia. I’ll be back next Thursday. And I’ve had a lot of fun trying to make those reservations, too. You know, airline reservations are almost as bad. If you don’t stay over a Saturday, the airfare is almost twice as much. And it is literally cheaper for me to fly in on a Saturday than it is for me to fly in on a Monday, and come back on Thursday. I can even pay for the extra nights in the hotel, and save money still. But reservations are reservations, and they just work that way.

This passage of scripture is a peculiar passage of scripture. It takes place during the Last Supper. Three years Jesus has been tromping around Palestine with his disciples in tow, teaching and healing, doing miracles and all sorts of things. Now its toward the end, and there’s only hours to go before Jesus is arrested, the trial begins and then the conviction, the crucifixion, and the burial. For three years, he’s been trying to teach his disciples about the Kingdom of God. He’s been teaching them about what life is like as a citizen of that Kingdom, as opposed to what its like being a citizen under occupation by Rome. For three years he’s been trying to show them what compassion is, what mercy is, what living as a God-fearing person, a faithful person should be. Now he’s at the very end of his ministry, and he’s fast approaching that hour when his time had come. And he has so many things he wants to share with his disciples. So many things.

Those of you who are teachers, raise your hands. (Its ok, you can admit it here, your secret’s safe here!) You know when you look at your class, and you can tell when a child or student “gets it”, right? There’s a look on their face, “Aha! It makes sense now!” And you can tell when you look on a face when they don’t get it yet, right? All right, let me put it another way. There’s this look – because you’re looking at me like that! Jesus is looking at his disciples around the dinner table, and he can see they aren’t getting it. And he gets to the point where he begins to say, not in desperation, but in true compassion, “You believe in God, believe in me.” And then he begins to talk about reservations.

Not the kind of reservations where you’re kind of not quite sure. “I have reservations about this whole thing.” The kind of reservations that God has for all of those who believe. He says, “In

my Father's House there are many rooms. And I'm going to prepare a place for you. And if I'm going to do that, I'm going to come again, so that where I am there you may be also." Jesus is making reservations! The kind that you don't want to cancel because you didn't make them! Jesus is making them for you. It's a gift of grace! It's a gift of life – eternal life. And they didn't get it. They still didn't quite, ...they had this look on their faces where they were thinking, "I know you are saying something and there are words coming out of your mouth, Jesus, but I don't understand."

And Thomas says, "Lord, we didn't even know you were leaving! How can we know the way?" And Jesus said, "I'm the way! Me! You know God? Well, you know me! And I'm the way. Those who follow me will understand and will know. I'm the way, and the truth, and the life. And if you know God, you'll know me. And you can believe the words that I say, because they're not coming from me, they're coming from God. God and I are in this together for you."

And then Phillip... I like Phillip, because Phillip was the first one who found Jesus. He didn't really find Jesus, he sort of stumbled across him, and he went and told Andrew, "hey, there's this guy you gotta meet." And Andrew went and told Peter, "I think we've found the one – we've found the Messiah!" Remember Phillip? The only other time that Phillip is mentioned in scripture is when he is mysteriously transported to this road. And there's this chariot coming toward him with this Ethiopian Official who's reading Isaiah, and has no clue what he's reading.

"I don't get it," he says.

"Can I explain it to you?"

"Yes, please! How can I understand it unless someone explains it!"

Phillip explains it, and does more. Remember what he does? He baptizes him right there on the side of the road. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. And then he disappears and shows up in another area! Phillip did a lot of traveling like that!

But Phillip comes up and says, "Lord, if you just would show us a picture of God! You've got one in your wallet – we all have pictures of family with us... Show us the Father and then we'll be satisfied! Just once, just show us a little bit so that we can know..." And Jesus says, "Phillip! How long have we been walking together?! We've been together all this time! 'Show us the Father!' Phillip!!! You know God! You know God! How can you say that? I am in the Father, and the Father is in me. You see me? You see the Father."

It is as if Jesus is preparing them for his departure, but what he's really doing is giving them some assurance that they desperately need, and somehow they haven't quite been able to put it into play.

I can't begin to count over eighteen years of doing this, how many waiting rooms that I've sat in, holding hands and waiting. Waiting for anything. Waiting for news. Waiting for results. Waiting for tests to be finished. And how many times people have struggled with and come to grips or come to terms with what they are about to hear. The prayer always is, "O Lord God, please don't let it be what I think it's going to be." Or, "If these are the choices, God, please let me have the lesser of the two." How many of us have been in that situation, sitting in a waiting room, waiting for the unknown.

How many of us have sat in a strange place – a place where we haven't been before - a place where we're sitting around, usually around a small round table. We're listening, and we're hearing all the options, and we're seeing all the choices that need to be made. "Do you want Pine or do you want Oak? Or do you want metal? Do you want a concrete or plastic vault? Did you bring clothes? What would you like to be written up in the obituary?"

How many times have we found ourselves in strange situations where – and these words are distant to us? And yet, they are the words that Jesus uses to remind us when we are in those situations. "Phillip, how can you say that?" "Thomas, don't you know that I am the way?"

The assurance of these words – and these are liturgical words, this passage of scripture is profound in the liturgy of the funeral service – not because they are depressing, but because they provide hope. Because in these words Jesus is sharing with his disciples very sincerely, “I may not be with you very much longer, but you know where you’re going! Your reservation has been made! You’re going home! I’m going home to prepare the place for you! Do you know this? Do you know this in your heart, in your gut, in your soul – do you know where you’re going?”

Because the reservation is made and it can’t be canceled. And if you know where you are going, how does that change how you live your life now – in the meantime? What are you going to do differently? How do you approach that waiting room – because you’re going to be in them! How do you approach that meeting with your child’s principal? How do you approach the meeting with your boss? How do you face the decisions you face on a daily basis, knowing what you know about where you’re going? How does it change your life? How do you live differently now?

Jesus has said, “I’ve made your reservation for you. And if you remember, you didn’t choose me – I chose you.” And that’s the blessing, the grace of being chosen, that you know where you’re going. Now, how do you live in the meantime? What do you believe? If you know where you’re going, you can face anything with boldness. With a rock-solid foundational belief that nothing can harm you. That nothing will tear you away from where you’re going.

I used to listen to the flight attendants give their final announcements toward the end of the flight, you know where they would give their speech about, “Please remain seated until the aircraft has come to a complete stop in front of the gate and the captain has turned off the fasten seatbelt sign. We hope that you’ve enjoyed your flight, and we wish you well as you continue on to your final destination.” Well, my friends, you know where your final destination is. That’s what it means to be chosen. That’s what it means to be a part of the community of believers. That’s how we live our lives. Now we can face things that we never thought we could face before with a new outlook, with a new sense of risk, with a new sense of faith. That’s the holy boldness that we have. That’s how we face one another. That’s how we can face that person that lives under the bridge. That’s how we can face our boss, and the doctor. That’s how we can face the folks that sit across at the dinner table. It changes our whole perspective on how we live. It’s not one of those things that makes us “superior” or “Better than Thou”. No, but it gives us the opportunity to love beyond what we might be scared to do, because we know where we’re going.

And in that knowledge, in that hope, in that faith – what is it Jesus said? He said, “The one who believes in me will also do the works that I do, and in fact, will do greater works than these!” We can love boldly. We can do boldly. We can share boldly. Because we have been boldly loved and saved. That’s what chosen-ness means. When you are chosen, you receive the gift of grace that is life. The place that’s prepared for you in the mansion with many rooms. The place that’s been prepared by the very hands, the nail-scarred hands, of the one who died to give you life.

Knowing that, knowing that you are chosen, how does that chosen-ness affect how you are going to live in the meantime? That’s what it’s all about. That’s the faith. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen.