

Cherished-Chosen-Challenged – January 31, 2010

You Are Mine.....

“So I bought her for myself for fifteen shekels of silver and one and one-half homers of barley.” – Hosea 3:2

God was not pleased with the people of Israel. They had left Him and joined themselves to pagan traditions and the worship of pagan gods. Anything went. The Word of the Lord was ignored. Spiritual apathy and rampant idolatry were the law of the land. That was acceptable, even desired by those who had been called to be God’s people. Into that mess God sent the prophet Hosea with a strange command. Hosea was to find a prostitute and take her as his wife. Gomer, the prostitute became the object of Hosea’s love and affection. She became his wife. Together they had three children, a daughter and two sons. A beautiful and happy love story? Hardly the case, because Gomer went back to her old ways and once again played the prostitute. The name Hosea means salvation. He was to be the “savior” whom Gomer needed to pull her out of the swamp of a life she had chosen. It cost Hosea dearly to redeem Gomer and restore her as his beloved bride. He suffered the shame and heartache of abandonment. He bore the public humiliation of being thrown over for another. He had every right to be angry. He was hurt. But pride had no place in this plan of God. Hosea surely could have left her in her predicament to suffer and die. That would be fair. That would be just. Yet, at God’s command he sought her out and he was willing to pay the redemption price of fifteen shekels of silver and one and one-half homers of barley. She was a filthy mess. It was an unjust thing he had to endure....but this filthy mess was his treasure.

We are the same filthy mess in the eyes of God. We come into this world dead in trespasses and sins. We are a stiff-necked and rebellious people who want no part of God’s good grace. The pleasures of the flesh are ever so inviting. So quick are we to be seduced by worldly pleasure certain of its fulfillment and glory that we become trapped in its ultimate despair only to discover such happiness is momentary and quickly fleeting. Like Gomer,

we rightly deserve to be left in our shame to the rightful end of our works. Only death and destruction in hell are truly ours. But we are God's treasure. As worthless as we might esteem ourselves and rightly so, Christ our Savior cherished us so greatly that He was willing to redeem us from the slime of sin and death that engulfed us...."not with gold or silver, but with His holy precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death." Christ chose us to be His holy people, His Church....His beloved, treasured, and cherished bride. He stripped us of the tattered rags of sin and has clothed us with the shining purity of His righteousness. He bathed us in the cleansing flood of Baptism that we would no longer be the foul stench of sin and death that offends Him, but instead a sweet smelling aroma before Him. We are decorated not with "the scarlet letter" of our unfaithfulness, but instead the pearl of great price, the Gospel itself, hangs about our neck and adorns our lives. What joy we have for we are no longer left to scrounge and feed ourselves on the "junk food" of this world, but instead we are the honored guests who feast at the marriage banquet of the Lamb. We are the Church, the Bride of Christ, the very object of His love and adoring Presence, crowned with the splendor of His glory. Each Lord's Day He summons us that He may pour out His blessing upon us and prepare us for the challenge we face to be His holy people who live and work in the fallen world.

How do we best meet such a challenge: a call to faithfulness? Be every Sunday people. The best way to know of God's love is to be faithful in worship at God's house. Here we receive forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. Here the rejoicing continues as a foretaste of the feast to come. Here God meets His people in Word and Sacrament to arm us against the wiles of the devil, the world, and our flesh. Here we are comforted and assured that we are his treasured people. How can we live as His holy people during the week?

- ❖ Remember: our call is to be faithful. Be in the Word. Learn by God's instruction how to avoid temptation.
- ❖ Remember: Christ died for all people. Share the Good News of Jesus with others as the opportunities present themselves. Let them know that there is hope and they too are the object of God's love.

- ❖ Pray. Remember the pastors, teachers, and people of our congregation. Ask that God use each of us to be a blessing to the work of His kingdom.

How blessed we are to be the people of God. He has chosen us to be in this place. He has prepared us for this time. **Don't wait for someone else to do it. If you wait on someone else to do it...it will never get done!** God bless you in the growth of your faith and in service to Him and His people, for your labor in the Lord is never in vain.

Pastor Jacobs

Cherished-Chosen-Challenged 2010