

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
[www.lutheranlccf.org](http://www.lutheranlccf.org)  
**Fifth Sunday After Trinity, July 4, 2021**

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 32, 237:1, 660, 421, 553.

Lessons: Exodus 24:1-8, Romans 8:28-39, Matthew 27:15-26.

Sermon Text: 1 Peter 1:1-2.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehltrittter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Sometimes the devil, the enemy of God and the enemy of all who believe in God makes it very hard to praise God. He leads attacks upon God's people and persecutes them. The Devil wants to take away everything that he can from all who believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior from sin, death, and hell. He wants to make their lives as miserable as he can so they will despair and turn away from God. As the father of lies, he wants to make all who believe in Jesus Christ think that he can offer them something better than the promise of eternal life. In the case of Job in the Old Testament, God permitted the devil to take away all Job's possessions, all his family and even to make his friends turn against him. But the power of God preserved the faith of Job.

Peter, the one who denied the Lord Jesus Christ at his trial, wrote two letters by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost for the edification, the building up of God's people. These letters tell us of God's grace.

Let us today remember that

**THOSE WHO BELIEVE HAVE BEEN CHOSEN BY GOD**

- 1. By the work of the Holy Ghost,**
- 2. To be obedient to Jesus Christ,**
- 3. Because we have been sprinkled by his blood.**

Peter writes this letter to comfort and encourage "God's elect", those who believe – all of us who believe in Jesus Christ as our Savior. God chose us. God elected us from eternity. God's elect are all people everywhere of all time who believe in Jesus Christ, not just those who are members of some visible church body. We were chosen by God and did not decide to turn to God. God's word makes that so very clear when it tells us "***Turn thou me and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God.***" (Jeremiah 31:18). Luther explains it so clearly when his small catechism teaches "*I believe that I cannot by my own thinking or choosing believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me by the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith.*" It is really a tremendous comfort to me to know and realize that my salvation does not depend on me. It is really a tremendous comfort to me to know and realize that my being a Christian is the result of something greater than me; to know and realize that God has worked through his Word to make me what I am – one of his dear, chosen children.

God's choosing you is not like you choose a puppy at an animal shelter because that creature wagged his tail and was friendly to you. There was nothing in us that caused God to choose us.

Peter addresses his letter to strangers in the world, to people who are far from their real, abiding home. They are wanderers and pilgrims on this earth. After all, heaven is their true home. In this way Peter starts his letter with the thought found throughout the letter that the entire life of all believers here on earth is but a time of preparation for the citizenship in the real homeland above.

Now, because of God's choosing us, we are truly strangers in the world. It's not my home. I am an alien, a foreigner. I really don't belong here, but God has left me here for a little while to be about his work. God's people are scattered throughout the world. Peter mentions only five places in the world where believers in

Christ have been scattered: Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia. Three of these regions are specifically mentioned in Acts 2 when Peter preached his great Pentecost sermon to those gathered at Jerusalem, including those from foreign lands. The five regions mentioned here cover most of Asia Minor, the area now known as Turkey. Today Turkey is predominantly Islam in religion. Turkey is a country which in July, 2020, turned the great “Hagia Sophia” – Saint Sophia’s – building over to the Muslim religion. It had been a museum since 1934 and was the largest Christian Cathedral in the world from its construction in the Sixth century until 1520. Peter is writing first of all to Christians in a Gentile land, Christians in a ‘pagan’ land. So that fits us, too. We are Christians living in a pagan land, despite the claims of many people in our country that the United States of America is a “Christian” nation. People who believed in some kind of a supreme being whom they often called “God” were among the first leaders of our land, but I don’t think that any of us would agree that the USA today could be called a Christian nation. The only true Christian nation will be heaven, the place that is really the home for all Christians. We share the thought of the hymn writer: “I’m but a stranger here, heaven is my home.”

Those who are “God’s *“elect”* have been *“chosen according to the foreknowledge of God.”* It is truly comforting when we realize that God chose us. In the same way that we feel good when someone chooses us to be on his or her sports team in a pick-up game or in school instead of being left out, we not only “feel good”, but we praise God for that gift!

We *“have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood”*.

There is absolutely no excellence, no merit, no goodness on our part that led God to choose us. Out of his free grace God the Father has from eternity elected us for eternal life in Christ Jesus.

All three persons of the Triune God have been involved in our lives. The Father chose us.

And it was the sanctifying work of the Holy Ghost that brought us to faith. Remember that that word “sanctify” means to make holy, to call out to of the sinful world. It was not our decision to become God’s children. We are reminded again that Faith comes by hearing the Word of God. And Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. We know that the power of the Holy Spirit is at work whenever and wherever the Gospel of Jesus Christ is preached. To sanctify means to make holy that which was evil, wicked, sinful.

And we have also clear teaching about Jesus Christ here. It is by the sprinkling of his blood that we are made clean from our sins. We have been sprinkled, washed by the blood of the Lamb of God to take away our sins. God’s people in the Old Testament were especially familiar with the sprinkling of blood of sacrificial animals. It was sprinkled on the altar, on the priests, and on the people, signifying that they have been cleansed by sacrifice. All that sprinkling of blood was pointing forward to Jesus Christ, whose blood was shed – poured out – for our sins, to make us clean.

We were called and sanctified so that we might obey Jesus Christ – who is, after all the Word of God – and so that we might be sprinkled with his blood and made clean to serve him.

We were made holy to do holy things, to think holy thoughts, to lead holy lives. But we can’t do it by ourselves. It is in obedience to all the words which Jesus teaches us in his Word that our holiness yields fruit. But we must admit that we sin daily and much and that we cannot do any good thing by ourselves. So it is the power of God which leads and causes us to do anything at all which is pleasing to God.

We were chosen for obedience to Jesus Christ. He himself commanded his followers to go into all the world, *“teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”* Matthew 28:20 (NIV) Such obedience is not a grievous burden. It becomes a joy to serve and obey Jesus Christ in all our lives, in all we want to do.

And finally, Peter closes this simple introduction to his first letter with the words *“Grace and peace be yours in abundance.”* 1 Peter 1:2 (NIV) *“May grace and peace be multiplied to you.”* 1 Peter 1:2 (HCSB) *“May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure.”* 1 Peter 1:2 (NASB)

Those two words *“grace and peace”* are traditionally used to start sermons. No truly Christian sermon can be delivered without God’s grace, his undeserved goodness and mercy. It is his grace that called us out and led us out of darkness into his marvelous light. It is his grace that worked faith in us by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is his grace that keeps us his!

And no truly Christian sermon can be delivered without giving God's peace to the hearers. You can have – and do have – peace with God because you know he is not angry with you because of your sins. He has forgiven them because of what Jesus Christ did for you – and for all mankind. And that peace is yours through faith in Jesus Christ. God is not angry with you because of your sins, and will take all who believe to their heavenly home.

This grand greeting sending God's grace and peace transitions to a superb hymn of praise: The words after our text go on ***“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade--kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.”*** 1 Peter 1:3-5 (NIV)

For all God has done for us, we can only praise him – here on earth and hereafter in heaven!

***“May grace and peace be multiplied to you.”*** 1 Peter 1:2 (ESV)

Amen.