

### 5.16.21 Er7 Chosen and Sent by God

- I'm not a huge fan of the annual National Football League draft, but I am curious each year to see who the Eagles will ~~draft~~ *select*
  - This year the new coach, Nick Sirianni (no relationship to our Ed Sirianni) – coach Nick Sirianni decided to play a game with some of the football players that they were considering for the draft
    - They played rock... paper... scissors
    - It's a game of chance that you have probably played – you and your opponent on the count of three throw out your hand with one of those three signs
      - And to see who wins, rocks are covered by paper, paper is cut by scissors, and scissors are smashed by rock
      - Coach Sirianni played this little game of chance to see how competitive the prospective players were
  - Now let me tell you about a very different way of choosing people
    - Some years ago I was in a meeting with several other pastors from other denominations
    - We were sitting at a table talking about how each of our denominations recruited and trained pastors, when one of the older guys – a tall, older, gray-haired Mennonite pastor said that they don't *do* this now, but he could remember people becoming pastors by drawing papers
    - When he was much younger, because he hadn't seen this for years – but when he was much younger, he could remember an elder putting several strips of paper in a Bible *do* that even though one of them was shorter than the others, they all stuck out about the same amount
    - Then they gathered some men together (they only chose men), and after prayer, each one pulled a strip of paper out of the Bible, and like drawing straws, the short piece of paper won – and he was sometimes ready, and other times he was in shock,

to find that he would be the congregation's new pastor

- In our first reading for today, we hear yet another way to choose someone
  - After Easter, when the small, tight-knit circle of Jesus' closest disciples gathered, Judas was absent
  - He had betrayed Jesus, and he had taken his own life, so Judas left an empty space in the circle of the closest followers *of Jesus*
  - So Peter and the other remaining ten looked out among the wider following of Jesus
  - They looked for people who had witnessed everything from Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist at the Jordan river, to the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus
  - From the broader group they identified two people – Justus and Matthias.
  - They prayed, and they cast lots like throwing dice, and Matthias was chosen to take Judas' place, and this restored the inner circle of disciples to twelve
- We have no reason to doubt that Matthias was a faithful witness, and a leader in the early church
  - But actually this is the first... and the last time that we hear about him in the scriptures. We have no idea what Matthias did the rest of his life
  - And not only that, but this is the first and the last time that the inner circle worried about either replacing someone, or limiting the inner circle to just twelve people
    - People like Paul were soon called to be disciples, and Paul was even an apostle
    - In greetings at the end of Romans, we hear Paul send greetings to two more Apostles, a man named Andronicus, and a woman named Junia [16:7]
    - And of course there were even more people who *became* leaders in the early church, people like Stephen, and Silas, and

Timothy, and Lydia, and Dorcas, and Phoebe,  
and Cornelius, and the unnamed Ethiopian

- The church and its leadership grew and grew and grew – it grew so fast that the early church leaders couldn't keep up with it, as God raised up new leaders for the early church who were regarded as the next generation of disciples and apostles
- So how about you?
  - You didn't get chosen by a round of rock, paper, and scissors
  - You didn't get here by prayerfully pulling slips of paper out of a Bible
  - And you didn't get here by prayerfully throwing dice
  - You are here today, because GOD chose you
- God chose you by name, and God welcomed you with water poured and God's word of promise spoken over you
  - In your baptism, you were made nothing less than a child of God
  - When you were baptized, God chose you, and God joined you to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, so that his death would put your sin to death, and his risen life would become your risen life
  - And as baptized and chosen children of God, we have all been called...
  - A few have been called to be pastors, a few have been called to be football players, and a few have been called to be teachers and leaders – but all of us have been called to God's daughters and sons.
- ✓ Some speak with eloquent words of witness
- ✓ Others speak better with their actions
- ✓ But all of us have been chosen by God to be witnesses and servants for this generation