

Minor Prophets

Two Questions

Frankton – 1/24/16

Scripture: Haggai 2.20-23

Proposition: God calls us because of who(se) we are and calls us to do something for the Kingdom.

Assemble The Not Ready for Heaven Yet Players (2 captains + odd # of players) I want you to picture the following scene – and to some of you, this will be easy to picture because you lived through it. Picture a group of young boys standing around the sand lot wearing grass stained blue jeans, T-shirts with a hole here and there, and dirty tennis shoes. Each of these boys is also wearing a baseball cap and carrying a mitt. Their desire in that sand lot is to play a pick-up baseball game. They choose two captains by default – one captain, Johnny, brought the ball and one captain, Billy, brought the bat. They begin by figuring out who gets the first choice of the remaining players. [SLIDE] They do that by the captain who brought the bat tossing it to the other who catches it in one hand. Then they each start grabbing toward the handle one at a time until the lucky captain gets to put his hand over the end of the bat signifying he gets first choice. The two captains move apart a little bit and the lucky captain chooses his first player from the pool of players standing around. With the coveted first pick, Johnny chooses Sam. And the captains then rotate turns a few times picking the players out of the pool that they think are the best that are left.

Now here is where the story gets interesting. Let's say each team has three boys plus the captain and there are three boys left in the pool. You might think that the captain who got to choose first will have an advantage because he will have an extra choice. But let's play it out to see. Johnny got to choose first and it's his turn again. He looks over the three remaining boys, sizing up which one of them has the best abilities. He finally chooses Fred and Fred walks over to join Johnny's team. It's now Billy's turn to choose. He has two boys to choose from – Phil and Bob. He looks over both boys and slowly chooses Phil. Phil – happy not to be chosen last cheerfully walks over to join Billy's team, leaving Bob all alone - unchosen. And you've got to know that Bob feels really bad about himself at this point.

Now Johnny would seemingly get Bob on his team and have a one man advantage. However, he knows that Bob is just not a very good baseball player, hence his being left until last. Bob can't catch a ball if it's tossed in his lap so he is going to be no help in the field. And Bob couldn't hit a pitch if it were placed on a tee so every time that he gets up to bat he is going to be an out. So Johnny looks at Billy and says, "You can have Bob too, he ain't worth nothing." And with that he turns and starts walking out to the field leaving Bob with Billy's team. And there stands Bob, not only was he not chosen to be on a team, he was actually rejected from a team and told he was worth nothing. *Dismiss players.*

This morning's scripture is about being chosen. But I think we need to have a little background on Haggai before we get into the scripture. Haggai prophesied in Jerusalem after the Exile, about 520 BC. Originally, when the Israelites got back to Jerusalem, they started great guns on rebuilding the Temple, but they had cooled off considerably (15 years considerably) since they started. The temple lay half-finished while the people lived in beautiful homes. They had put God

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in second place on their priority list, right behind themselves. Haggai gets this vision, or a word from God. God tells Haggai to tell this message to the king of Judah, who is of the line of King David, and later Jesus. The king's name is Zerubbabel. The message is that God is about to cause a big shake up. He is going to overthrow the kingdoms and destroy the kings of the earth with one exception: Zerubbabel and his kingdom of Judah. And the last clause of the scripture is the most important. Haggai is to tell Zerubbabel why he and his kingdom will be saved: [SLIDE] *for I have chosen you....* [23]

So in our passage, Zerubbabel is chosen. Now there are two questions that deserve an answer. Question number 1) Why is Zerubbabel chosen? The answer is pretty easy actually. This message is about the coming of the Kingdom of God. And we all know who brings in the Kingdom of God – that's Jesus. And we all know from what line Jesus comes – David's line, the same line as Zerubbabel. So Zerubbabel is chosen because he is from the "house and the lineage of David." The second question is: what is Zerubbabel chosen to do? That answer is also pretty easy. In the vision, there are no conditions that Zerubbabel has on him, no directions to fight wars, no instructions on how to lead. The only thing we know is that Zerubbabel is in the ruling line – the signet ring line. So Zerubbabel is chosen to carry-on the line of David so that Jesus can be born of that line. All of us know where we can find the genealogy of Jesus – Matthew 1, so let's go there and see if we can find Zerubbabel. In verse 12, Zerubbabel is listed. So Zerubbabel was indeed chosen to carry on the Davidic line. Why was he chosen – because he was in the Davidic line. What was he chosen to do – carry on the Davidic line.

Here comes the punch line, folks. As Christians, we also are chosen. We are chosen by God to follow in his footsteps and in the footsteps of his son, Jesus Christ. And we agreed to do that. Some don't want to and reject God's choosing, but we have chosen to accept God's choosing. So now we need to look at two questions and we need to ask them about ourselves: [SLIDE] 1) why were we chosen and 2) what were we chosen to do.

Let's look at that first question: [SLIDE] why were we chosen. And let's think back to our baseball example. Why would the captain of one of those teams choose a particular player? The captain looks at the players and tries to figure out who can hit the best or throw the best or who has the most speed or who can understand the game best and come up with a good strategy. The captain is looking for some particular attribute about the player. Do you think that is what God was looking for when he chose you? Do you think he chose you because you're better looking than some of the others? Obviously not. Do you think God chose you because you're smarter than the average bear? Obviously not. Do you think God chose you because you can multi-task – walk and chew gum at the same time? Obviously not.

These attributes are not why God chose you. God doesn't look at our attributes when God chooses us. God chooses us for an entirely different reason. [SLIDE] God doesn't look at what we are; God looks at who we are. We are special because God made us. We were made by the master. Think about it this way. I read a book about Dietrich Bonhoeffer – a theologian during World War II. It was one of those historical novels so you don't know where history stopped and novel begins. But one of the characters in the novel was a German SS man who had somehow gotten (that means stolen) the original manuscript of Mozart's Mass in C Minor. That's one of Mozart masterpieces and this SS general had the original. That manuscript was worth a lot of money because Mozart actually wrote it while copies of the manuscript are worthless because Mozart didn't write the

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copy. So the manuscript was priceless because there was only one in existence AND it was written by a master composer. Articles like these are highly valued because they were made by a master and there are very few of them.

Now how does that relate to us? First of all, we were made by THE master creator – in fact, the only creator. So that makes us special. And when we couple that with the fact that we are truly one of a kind. We are the only person exactly like us. There may be others who come close, but we are the only person exactly like us. That makes us rare just like an original Mozart manuscript. So, we are special because God made us and because God made only one of us. That's why God chose us. He made us and he made only one of us. So that answers the first question of why we were chosen. We were chosen not because of what we are, but simply because of who we are. Even twins are different, they are not the same.

Now let's move on to the second question: [SLIDE] what were we chosen to do. Let's go back to our baseball example. Some of the players were chosen because they could knock the cover off the ball every time they hit it. Some were chosen because they were human vacuum cleaners and caught every ball that came their way. Some were chosen because they had wheels for feet or they could make a curve ball fall off the table. They were chosen for what they could do. Here's where we can talk about being chosen for our attributes. God has chosen to give each of us talents and abilities and spiritual gifts. To some he gave the gift of prophesy, to some he gave the gift of teaching. To some he gave compassion, and others he gave exhortation. God chose to give us all gifts that we can use. That's what we are all individually chosen to do – [SLIDE] to use the gifts that God gave us for God's kingdom.

We have people in this church who are very good at handling the checkbook, but they would be the first to tell you that their teaching a Sunday School class would be like, to go back to baseball, Johnny Bench bunting. [SLIDE] JB When I was growing up, Johnny Bench was my baseball hero. He's a Hall-of-Famer. He was a great catcher. He was a great hitter, but he was a lousy bunter. He never made the Hall of Fame on his bunting abilities. We have people in this church who, like Johnny Bench, can hit a home run every time they write a note of encouragement to a friend or call them with an encouraging word but they would be like Johnny Bench bunting when it comes to organizing an all-church dinner. We have people in this church that knock the ball out of the park when it comes to keeping the church looking good and in good physical shape. And those same people will agree that they are Johnny Bench bunting when they try to stand up in front of a group and read scripture. God gave us each different gifts to use for his kingdom.

So in answer to our two questions. Number one: why were we chosen? We were chosen because we were special – So in answer to our two questions. Number one: why were we chosen? We were chosen because we were special – God made us and made only one of us. Number two: what were we chosen to do? We were chosen to use the gifts that God gave us as individuals to work together as a church team. He great God of the universe made us and made only one of us. Number two: what were we chosen to do? We were chosen to use the gifts that God gave us for God's kingdom.



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Haggai 20.23b

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