

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
Amen

These words again from our Old Testament lesson for today from Deuteronomy chapter 7, verse 6.

- **“You are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for His treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.”**
- That sounds pretty good, doesn't it?
- Caring, loving, endearing.
- Being chosen. Specially selected. A treasured possession.

And its not just that verse from our assigned Old Testament reading that tells us that today.

- It is a central theme throughout all our readings for today....even, including the Psalm we chanted a few minutes ago.
- If you need to be picked up, if you need affirmation that you are special and loved and a treasured possession, you've come to the right place today.

But we don't always feel that way, do we?

- We often don't think life is fair.

Pastor Jonathan Stein, chaplain at the seminary when I attended there tells of this account.

- One day a student came into his office, talking about how life was going for him as well as his fellow students.
- In the midst of all of this, he asked chaplain Stein a question which seemed to be the real reason for his stopping by.

Why is life so unfair, he asked.

- Chaplain Stein said the question seemed to be unusual because the student himself was not in crisis.
- His classes were going well, as were his grades.
- His social life and love life were also good.
- He was engaged to be married and he had friends, as the old saying goes, “coming out his ears.”
- Life was good would sum up how he felt.

But that was the problem.

- Life was too good.
- It seemed to him that he was getting all of the breaks while several of his friends were trying as hard as they could to do well, but somehow they all seemed to fall short of the goal.

So his question, why is life so unfair.....that question arose out of guilt of his own good fortune,

- Ever feel that way?
- I know I sometimes do.

Yet I also have to say that the majority of us, including me many times, ask the question from the other side of the table.

- Life expressed as a card game where you are dealt one bad hand after another and another until after the 10th losing hand you ask.....
- Why can't good fortune smile on me, at least once?

We ask, why is life unfair?

- We are all about fairness and justice.
- Go to the grocery store and you may be unhappy about the price of eggs, but you buy them.
- You get home and you paid for 12 eggs; but now realize there were only 11 in the carton.
- Your ready to go back to the grocery store and complain.
- It's just not fair. You paid for 12 but only got 11.

So it goes in life. Pastor.....I tried to take care of myself. I tried to live a good life.

- Even attended church regularly.....yet here I sit in poor health.
- Yet Bob, the guy down the street, who has caroused, and led a rough life.....is as healthy as a horse.
- It just isn't fair.

Or, Pastor, I worked hard my whole life. Always have held down a job.

- I tried to get ahead for my family.
- Yet I see the neighbors with the new car and the big boat in the driveway, and all the fancy trips they take.
- It just isn't fair.

Or, Pastor, I worked hard to raise my family right. Even had them in church.

- Yet now they are never in church and are living life on the edge.
- Joey didn't have a father growing up. And look how good he turned out to be.

- You add your own scenario to that list.

Life just isn't fair.

- And as Christians, certain of our future, and being in the arms of Christ.....when we as Christians are sometimes, many times discouraged and think life is unfair.....how much more so it is for the average person on the street.

There was a survey recently taken that asked Americans if they thought life is fair.

- Only one-third of Americans think life is fair, or two-thirds think life is unfair.

There is also this thing called the Pessimism Index.

- It measures if people think peace and security will get worse.

Although the United States and Great Britain are 2 countries known for their seemingly unshakable political and economic stability.....

- Both countries have the lowest levels of optimism or highest levels of pessimism.
- 40 percent of the Brits and 36 percent of Americans believe peace and security will get worse.
- Interestingly, citizens in poor and extremely unstable countries project the highest levels of optimism.
- In Syria, one of the most unstable and precarious countries, 94 percent of the people think peace and security will improve.

One more statistic.....that I find interesting that agrees with this conclusion.

- The current decade just ended, was rated by Americans as the worst in the last 50 years.

Considering all this information, and if these statistics are true, maybe life is unfair.

- But I would say not when we have a God like the writer of Deuteronomy describes.

Consider again these words.

- The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for His treasured possession.

And why is this? Why did God love and chose Israel?

- Well, if you read on in our Old Testament account for today we are told why.

- Not because of her size.....no.
- Not because of her achievements.....but simply because God loved her.

And Israel's God is ours too.

- We are the new Israel.
- And like God did with Israel.....
- He loves us.....because He loves us.

Look at all the reaffirmations of this just in our Scripture readings for today.

- In addition to our Old Testament reading.....
- Jesus tells a parable.....
- "The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys the field."
- In this parable, Jesus is the man and you are that treasure hidden in the field.

And Jesus went on to another parable.....

- Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value went and sold all that he had and bought it.
- In this parable, Jesus is the merchant and you are that one pearl of great value.

Hear also these words from the Psalm we chanted earlier that talks of the Lord's protection of us.

- "As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds His people from this time forth and forever more."

Now look at our Epistle reading that you heard just a little bit ago.

- Paul says it this way.
- "If God is for us who can be against us. He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him graciously give us all good things.....
- Who can separate us from the love of God? Shall tribulation and or distress or persecution or famine or danger or sword.
- No, in all these things we are more than conquerors thru Him who loves us, and nothing in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

So considering the words of Scripture, the words from God to us.....

- When we are in the hands of God, unfairness loses its sting.

Do you know why?

- God cares for us.
- In His mind our value lies not in our achievements but in His gift of grace.
- In His commitment of Divine care.

Yes, even when we catch ourselves joining in with those that think our country and our world is falling apart.

- Even when we find ourselves creating pessimism indexes instead of kneeling down in worship and praise of the One who lived and died and rose again.....for us.
- Yes, even when we find ourselves among those whose faces are etched with the sorrows of our times, the frailty of our achievements, and the fragile security upon which we build our lives.....

There is always the voice of our God who shouts out to us with no uncertainty.

- You are a treasured possession.
- I, your Creator and Redeemer, care for you.
- You matter to Me.
- I love you....because I love you.....

And that changes our often asked question, why is life so unfair....to.....How is God transforming life's unfairness into life's blessings.

- And echoing over it all again is His declaration.....I love you.....because I love you.

Dear fellow redeemed.....

- You are a treasured possession.
- Live today, tomorrow, and no matter what you face on your way to eternal paradise with God.....in the joy and peace and security and strength of a God who is with you now and for what ever lies ahead for you.....and for all eternity.
- God loves you because He loves you.
- Amen.

(Please Stand) And now, may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Having heard the Word of God we now prepare our hearts and minds to confess the words of the Nicene Creed as found on page 158 in your hymnal.