



## SERMON | REVD CANON STAN EVANS | SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER 2021

### *'You did not choose me, but I chose you'*

Can you remember the last time you went for a job interview?

Best suit and the nervous excitement begins as the hour for the interview approaches. You have completed the application form and so you know that the interviewer has probably formed an opinion about you already. Dry throats are watered; moist palms are rubbed; nervousness is covered with a smile. The interview begins. The agenda is set.

Then you go through the anxiety and the strain in the hope that you will be selected. The prospect of failure and rejection is real, but the strenuous hope of being chosen gives you courage to face the probing questions.

To be chosen is to be picked out, opted for, preferred, taken on.

All this makes the risk of refusal worthwhile.

It is only when you are chosen for the job that you actually feel free to accept it or leave it. Before being chosen, you are in no position to choose the job that is advertised; In applying you declare that you want the position, but wishes aren't choices. Real choice presupposes the freedom and the power to commit oneself.

When John talks about the love of God in today's readings, he is clear what he means – 'this is the love I mean; not our love for God, but God's love for us,'.

The same message is underlined in the Gospel: 'You did not choose me, no, I chose you.'

We don't have to turn up for an interview to discover if God loves us.

God's love is not an issue, it is not a matter of speculation. It is there.

God's love is first, and it is only because of the primacy of God's love that we have the power and freedom to choose God.

God has opted for us, declared his choice, taken us on. It is a decisive movement of love that began with the Father; 'As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Remain in my love'.



The hope is expressed that can come to appreciate God's choice of us.  
It is such good news that John is anxious to get the message through to us,  
simply and clearly.

Can we remain in the love that chooses us?

God's love is based on choice: God loves because God chooses to love.  
The supreme example of that is in his Word, Jesus.

If the supreme act of love is to lay down your life for the sake of others,  
Jesus shows that he could have no greater love.

His love takes him to the cross, just as the Father's love raises him up.  
Jesus spends himself.

He gives of himself until there is nothing left to give.  
He empties himself.

So do we choose to give of ourselves?

In everything that he did, Jesus kept on choosing to love.  
He did not choose once upon a time; he chose to love at all times.  
It drained him. That self-giving quality of divine love is one that can be seen in  
the lives of many people.

One young doctor saw it in a way that he can never forget.  
As a medical student he watched an unusual operation in a London Hospital.

It was the first time that this particular brain operation had been carried out in  
the UK. It was performed by a leading surgeon upon a young man of great  
promise for whom, after an accident, there seemed to be no other remedy.  
It was an operation of great delicacy, in which a small error would have had fatal  
consequences. In the outcome the operation was a triumph: but it involved  
seven hours of intense and uninterrupted concentration on the part of the  
surgeon. When it was over, a nurse had to take him by the hand, and lead him  
from the operating theatre like a blind man or a little child.

That kind of self-giving and concentration on the needs of another reflects  
something of the quality of God's love in Jesus.



Jesus hopes that we will choose to keep giving of ourselves in love, even when the giving hurts, even when we feel we have nothing left but our exhausted presence. But it's that kind of love that mirrors God's kind of love. As Jesus said himself, the love is the giving of the self, the communication of the self, the handing over of the self.

We have to admit that few of us have the freedom or the power to accomplish this. We can only choose to try, confident that our struggle is backed by God's energetic love.

Somewhere in the struggle we can hear the voice of God cheering us on. With the same love with which He chose us.

**Amen**