

## **The Road Less Traveled – April 20, 2018**

Do you remember elementary school kickball games? Whether at recess or in gym class, they all started the same way. Two people were appointed captains, and those two would take turns selecting their teams. The first captain selected his or her top pick, then the second made his or her top pick, and so on. Finally, the pool of talent would dwindle until only two players were left. They usually were the weaker players, and the first captain would choose between the two, leaving the lone remaining player to go to the other team by default. It was a painful experience for that player, and many of us spent a lot of recess time praying that we would not be the last one left when the teams were picked.

I think it is because there is value and affirmation in being chosen. It's not that someone accepts you because they have to, but rather that another person sees you, recognizes your worth and affirms that worth by choosing you. Whether it's through a kickball team, a college acceptance letter or a job offer, we all long to be chosen.

That's not a cultural thing; I think it's part of the human condition. I think that's why, in the earliest days of the church, those who sought to communicate the message of Christ put it those exact terms. In the earliest of the letters we have attributed to the Apostle Paul, he tells the church at Thessalonica: "For we know, brothers and sisters beloved by God, that he has chosen you."

These words seek to reassure a group of new Christians that their faith is not simply a matter of them choosing God through Christ, but rather it starts with God choosing them. Paul reassures them that their faith is not the result of a decision, but rather the answer to the call that God places on each of their hearts.

We talk a lot in the church about choosing to follow Christ. And there is merit in that. As people of free will, we have the option of claiming Jesus, or not; of leading a Godly life, or not; of following the path of discipleship, or following a different path. But it is also crucial to remember that our faith choices are not simply the results of random options presented in multiple-choice fashion. Rather, our choice is how we respond to the knowledge that God has chosen us.

We talk about it in the church all the time. It's called grace.

See you Sunday.