

God's Preferences ?

- Rereading Divine Choice, Human Favouritism, and the Wider Mercy

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Many thoughtful Christians carry a quiet, persistent question: why does Scripture sometimes speak of God choosing some and not others? Why Israel, why certain people healed or called, why moments of rescue interpreted as divine favour? You may feel the tug of that question yourself. It can stir an anxiety that divine love might be selective, or that God might have favourites. This concern deserves honesty and care. (1)

To read these ancient stories well, you need to remember the human world in which they arose. Israel was a small and often threatened people. In times of siege, exile, or fragility, they naturally interpreted their survival as a sign that God was with them. Their fears, hopes, and prayers became woven into Scripture. God's self-disclosure came through their cultural lens, just as your own sense of God is shaped by who you are.

Yet, within those same Scriptures, a broader truth steadily unfolds: the God who binds himself to Israel is also the God of all peoples. The covenant with one community becomes a doorway through which blessing is meant to travel outward. Israel's sense of being "chosen" was never an endorsement of supe-



riority but a call to serve, to illuminate, to bear blessing for the sake of many. (2,3)

This has its echo in our own spiritual life. We may have moments when we feel noticed by God, seen, or accompanied. The point is never that someone else is less noticed. Rather, it is an awakening to the truth that all are known, cherished, and called. Divine favour is not a competition but an invitation: chosen not instead of others, but for others – so that mercy may flow more freely.

Towards a Different Seeing

Whenever Scripture speaks of God "choosing", the orientation is vocational rather than hierarchical. God calls particular people or communities where love can next break through, where healing can begin, where renewal can take root. Divine attention is never a prize; it is a purpose. You are invited to read these stories not as statements of exclusion, but as signals of where blessing is poised to spread. (4)

Is There a Bias Toward the Poor?

As you read, you will notice how strongly the biblical story directs God's care towards the poor, the overlooked, and the vulnerable. This is not partiality against everyone else, but the natural movement of restorative love. Healing begins where the wound is deepest. When Jesus calls the poor blessed, it is a summons for you to see with a widened heart – to look upon all people with compassion, especially those whom society forgets. (5,6,7,8)

This way of love asks more of you than occasional charity. It draws you into the hope and labour of justice – a justice that restores dignity and belonging to all, not just to some. You are invited to stand in solidarity with those pushed to the margins, knowing that God’s gaze is already resting there with tenderness.

Contemplative Practice: Seeing as God Sees

When you bring these questions into stillness, something gentle shifts. In quiet prayer, the old fear of a selective God eases, and you begin to perceive a love that cannot be divided or measured. Christian mystics describe this as learning to rest in God’s merciful gaze – wide, steady, and without rivalry.

Julian of Norwich offers a vision of that universal embrace: “Love was His meaning... From beginning to end, what moves God and what God desires for us is nothing but love.” (10)

St John of the Cross gives you the practical challenge: “Where there is no love, put love – and you will draw love out.” (22)

Thomas Merton adds the insight born of deep interior seeing: “Compassion is the keen awareness of the interdependence of all things.” (23)

As you sit with these voices, you may find the old “us and them” boundaries softening.



Prayer becomes less about anxious words and more about quiet presence. The small, competitive habits of the heart loosen. Gradually, you begin to see others with gentleness, aware of their dignity, their sorrow, their beauty. And little by little, in this way, we become more open, more merciful, more Christlike. This lifelong widening of the heart is the slow, faithful work of grace. (11,12)

Pastoral Reflection

The heart of this reflection is simple. God’s love is never in competition. When God draws close to one person or people, it is for the blessing of many. As we deepen in prayer and compassion, we learn to recognise this wide mercy in our own lives – and to share it generously with all.



SCRIPTURAL WITNESS

These passages show how "chosenness" in Scripture is vocational, not exclusive – a channel through which blessing widens.

Genesis 12:2–3: "I will bless you... and through you all the families of the earth shall find blessing." Abraham's call widens outward. (13)

Isaiah 49:6: "I will make you a light to the nations, so my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth." Election expands, never contracts. (14)

Wisdom 11:24: "You love all things that exist." God's universal regard. (15)

Deuteronomy 10:17–19: "The Lord... shows no partiality... and loves the stranger." Justice directed toward the vulnerable. (16)

Luke 15:4–7: "... Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it?..." Restorative attention to the lost, not exclusivity. (17)

Romans 2:11: "There is no partiality with God." (18)



THEOLOGICAL WITNESS

Theologians across the centuries affirm God's universal love and interpret "election" as service.

Augustine: "God loves each one of us as if there were but one of us to love." (19)

Catherine of Siena: creation and redemption flow entirely from love. (20)

Karl Rahner: "God's self-communication is universally offered." (21)

CONTEMPLATIVE-MYSTICAL WITNESS

These voices show how contemplative prayer dissolves partiality and awakens universal compassion.

Julian of Norwich: "Love was His meaning..." (condensed/paraphrased). (10)

John of the Cross: "Where there is no love, put love, and you will draw love out." (22)

Thomas Merton: "Compassion is the keen awareness of the interdependence of all things." (23)



Endnotes

- (1) Fox, M. (2020). *Creation Spirituality*. <https://dailymeditationswithmatthewfox.org/2020/05/11/creation-spirituality-lineage-of-julian-of-norwich/>
- (2) Isaiah 49:6 (NRSV). <https://bible.oremus.org/>
- (3) Luke 15:4-7 (NRSV). <https://bible.oremus.org/>
- (4) Genesis 12:2-3 (NRSV). <https://bible.oremus.org/>
- (5) Luke 4:18 (NRSV). <https://bible.oremus.org/>
- (6) Gutiérrez, G., Inza, C., & Eagleson, J. (1973). *A Theology of Liberation*. London: SCM Press Ltd. <https://catalogue.library.ucu.ac.ug/bib/28654>
- (7) Luke 6:20 (NRSV). <https://bible.oremus.org/>
- (8) Windram, D. (2025, February 22). *Liberation Theology: The Preferential Option for the Poor*. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/liberation-theology-preferential-option-poor-dominic-windram>
- (9) Shalem Institute. (2017, Nov 5). *Compassion through Contemplation*. <https://shalem.org/2017/11/06/compassion-through-contemplation/>
- (10) Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love* (c. 1395). (paraphrased) <https://numinousletters.substack.com/p/quotes-from-christian-mystics>

- (11) Conversatio. (2022, Apr 28). *Being with God: The Practice of Contemplative Prayer*. <https://conversatio.org/being-with-god-the-practice-of-contemplative-prayer/>
- (12) Compassion.org.nz. (2019, Mar 12). *Contemplative Prayer Series*. <https://compassion.org.nz/event/contemplative-prayer-series/>
- (13) Genesis 12:2-3 (NRSV). <https://bible.oremus.org/>
- (14) Isaiah 49:6 (NRSV). <https://bible.oremus.org/>
- (15) Wisdom 11:24 (NRSV). <https://bible.oremus.org/>
- (16) Deuteronomy 10:17-19 (NRSV). <https://bible.oremus.org/>
- (17) Luke 15:4-7 (NRSV). <https://bible.oremus.org/>
- (18) Romans 2:11 (NRSV). <https://bible.oremus.org/>
- (19) Augustine, *Homilies on the Gospel of John*, Tractate 110.
- (20) Catherine of Siena, *Dialogue*, ch. 153.
- (21) Rahner, K. (1978). *Foundations of Christian Faith*. New York: Crossroad.
- (22) John of the Cross, *Sayings of Light and Love*, no. 82.
- (23) Merton, T. (1961). *New Seeds of Contemplation*. <https://numinousletters.substack.com/p/quotes-from-christian-mystics>



Summary article in Maltese for parish/group bulletins

Alla u l-Għażla Tiegħu

Ħafna jista' jistaqsuna b'sincerità: Alla jaħdem bil-preferenzi? *Alla għażel lill-Lhud u qered l-għedewwa tagħhom?* Il-Bibbja xi kultant tidher hekk, iżda rridu niftakru li l-Iskrittura tiġi permezz tal-esperjenzi, il-kultura, u l-biżgħat tan-nies li kitbuha. L-ispirazzjoni t'Alla tkun trid tgħaddi mill-filtru ta' dawn l-esperjenzi umani. Il-poplu Lhudi, żgħir u mdawwar b'nazzjonijiet akbar, ra s-salvazzjoni tiegħu bħala sinjal tal-għażla divina. Dan hu naturali u uman.

Imma l-istess Bibbja turi Alla li jħobb lil kulhadd, bla preferenzi, li jħares lejn il-barrani, il-foqra u l-mitlufa, u li jrid li l-barka tinfirex lil kulhadd. L-għażla m'hijiex privileġġ, imma vokazzjoni biex

insiru dawl għal haddieħor.

U dan japplika għalina wkoll. Int u jien aħna magħrufa u maħbuba minn Alla. Imma dan ma jagħmilniex "aktar importanti" minn haddieħor; jagħmilna aktar kapaċi li nħobbu lil kulhadd. Fit-talb tas-skiet, id-dubji dwar Alla tal-preferenzi jisparixxu, u l-qalb titgħallem thares lejn kulhadd b'mogħdrija universali.

Julian tgħid: "*L-imħabba kienet it-tifsira tiegħu.*" U San Gwann tas-Salib ifakkarna: "*Fejn ma hemmx imħabba, poġġi l-imħabba.*" It-talb kontemplattiv jiftaħ qalbna għal din il-ħniena universali, u jagħmilna aktar bħal Kristu – aktar sħan, aktar ġusti, aktar ħanina lejn ilkoll.