

I've really been busy lately, so busy the mail has been piling up.
You don't mind do you if I take a moment to catch up.

Not first class, I'll put that aside, presorted first class, still not very important. A mailing label on this one, means they sent the same thing to a lot of people. Ah, here is one, first class with a real stamp, maybe it is meant just for me. No, just another form letter sent to all their friends.

Does your heart sink just a little when the words you receive are the very same words received by many others?

It is like the difference between a radio broadcast and a phone conversation. The news might be the very same, but when someone dials my number, I know the news is meant for me.

I think that is why God has chosen baptism as his means of communicating with us. One by one we are washed into ~~his~~ ^{God's} kingdom. One by one we are joined to Christ.

For one precious moment, in all the world God focuses on the one being baptized. Not a form letter, but a personal claiming and naming of this child as ~~his~~ ^{God's} own. Melanie, in all the vast universe, from all the people that exist, I claim you as my daughter. Jodi, in all the vast universe, from all the people that exist, I claim you as my daughter.

In Ephesians we read, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will.

What God will declare here today, that Jodi and Melanie are his adopted daughters, he has planned before this world was. Before he spoke,

let there be light, before ^{God} ~~he~~ created the first human in God's own image, God chose Jodi and Melanie in Christ.

Sometimes it might seem that God is ruling rather impersonally. Scripture itself might seem more a general communication, like a form letter. Baptism, it might seem, just a ritual that we go through when our place in line has come. Communion, food for the masses.

Yet before the world was, God prepared all of these for you.

I remember years ago, flying into Chicago over the hundreds of thousands of lights glowing below, and feeling so very small. Now sometimes at a mall or in the city, I think of how many people there are and of God. I can't imagine that God could be concerned about me, individually, and each of you individually. But that is God's promise.

You were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. You were destined before you even were to be adopted as a child of God through Christ.

Every time you open a Bible, trust that this is a personal word to you. Every time you hear a sermon, believe that God has chosen the words that are being spoken for you and to you. And when you kneel at the table, touch and taste the body and blood, given for you.

For though we cannot conceive how God could speak to us all and one by one, God can. Though we cannot conceive that God could take on our human flesh and be born a child of Mary, God was. Though we cannot understand how God could breath God's own breath, God's own spirit into each of our hearts, God has done just that.

God is God, not limited as you and I are. Jesus says to you, Every hair of your head is numbered. For God chose you from the foundation of the world to receive his grace in Jesus Christ.

The world may be full of third class mail, but God's word is always first class, for you and to you through Jesus Christ.

But I need to say a final word. God's personal word is not for you alone. God loves you with a love so great that if you were the only one that was, Christ still would have died for you. But God's love is not for you alone.

You were chosen from before the foundation of the world, but so were all for whom Christ died. Children whom God loves with the same love that God loves you don't know it, have not believed that the God who created this vast world could be concerned about them. God's love is personal individual, but it is not exclusive. God hears your prayers, but God hears your neighbors and your enemies prayers as well. And in Christ he seeks to unite everything and every one.

So believe with all your heart that you are special to God. Then believe that every other one is just as special and you'll know what God would have you do. Amen.