

Message

Jesus Calls Us Friends

The relationship that we experience with another person can be impacted by the words they use to address us. The way they address us affects our Identity – the way we think about ourselves, and that affects the way we interact with that person. If someone uses a name of ridicule to address us, we will not experience much intimacy with that person. We will feel belittled and humiliated. If someone uses harsh language to refer to us, we will likely resent that person. We may experience fear or feel intimidated. But if they use a tender name, a term of endearment to address us, we will likely feel connected to that person; we will feel that we want to be kind and helpful to them. In this passage of Scripture that we are looking at today, we hear **Jesus addressing His followers with a loving term of endearment**. It may not sound as significant to us as it would have to the first ones who heard it, but it is quite important. **Jesus calls His followers Friends**.

We have been looking at this chapter – John 15 – for some time now. We took a break last week for the 4th of July, but we come back to it today. I have said several times that I think it is a very significant passage for those who identify themselves as Jesus' disciples. This includes the first followers of Jesus, but I believe that those of us who identify ourselves as His followers, His disciples, need to learn the lessons contained in this Chapter. We remember the context of this Chapter. Jesus has met with his disciples in the Upper Room and shared the Passover meal together. He began the evening by washing their feet. He became their servant and taught that they must serve one another as He had served them. They now have left the Upper Room and are walking to the Garden of Gethsemane, a place that Jesus came to often for prayer. In the Garden He will pray that memorable prayer, "**Father, if it be possible, take this cup [the cross] from me, but never the less, not MY will but Your will be done.**" He would be betrayed, arrested and led away to those who would judge Him, and sentence Him to death. He has taught them about **their mission after He is gone – to bear fruit**. He has taught them the importance of **remaining attached to Him**. He has taught them the **importance of loving one another** as He had loved them. And He teaches them **what loving each other should look like**. **Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends**.

And so he introduces this term of Endearment – **Friends**. I believe that this is a term of great significance, that we cannot quickly pass over. He has used the term on at least one other occasion. After the disciples had returned from an evangelistic mission that He had sent them on. **(Luke 12:4): ⁴“I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do.** Now he uses it again:

¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command. ¹⁵ I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.

While there are some folks who like to use “chummy” language to refer to God – “The Man Upstairs” – I would suppose that a lot of serious minded Christ followers would have a difficult time thinking of themselves as a **“Friend of God”**. It sounds rather presumptuous. As I said earlier, the disciples who heard this conversation with Jesus, who heard Him refer to them as **“Friends”** would have found this to be a dramatic change in the level of their relationship with Jesus. Other personalities in the Bible were referred to as Friends of God. **Abraham** is referred to as God's friend. **“But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, you descendants of Abraham my friend”**. **Moses** is also referred to as God's Friend: **¹¹ The LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend.**

Abraham and Moses were leaders of God's people – the father and the nation and the Deliverer of the people. They enjoyed a special relationship with God. But the followers of Jesus were just common-ers. Fishermen; tax collectors; insurrectionists; I doubt that any of them would have considered themselves worthy of being referred to as a Friend of God. But that is what Jesus calls them. He assures **them (and us)** of His friendship. How does Jesus demonstrate His friendship

- **WE are the objects of His love.**

- **WE are people that Jesus would lay down His life for.**

The word in the original language that is translated “Friend” comes from the root word **Philos**. The Greek language had several words for Love. Eros – which includes the idea of physical intimacy (erotic); Agape – is the most noble word for love; used to refer to God’s love for us. Phileo is the word that refers to brother love, or friendship. Philadelphia is the city of Brotherly Love. That is the relationship word that Jesus uses here.

There are several implications that we make when Jesus uses the word “Friend” to refer to His followers. What are the benefits of friendship with Jesus?

1. **Intimacy.** Being identified as a friend of Jesus raises our relationship with him to a new level of intimacy. This Bible uses several images to speak of our relationship with God. We are His children. We are His beloved. Now we are His friends. God desires to interact with us with the intimacy of friendship. Think about a friend you have. How would you describe your relationship with that person – Openness; Honesty; Trust; That can be the level of relationship that we can enjoy with God.
2. **Knowledge of His Plan.** Vs. 15 *“I no longer call you servants because a servant does not know His master’s business. Instead I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.”* The word “servant” is not necessarily a title of shame. (Also translated slave). When people chose to serve a leader or king, they were willing to do His bidding. It would have been an honor to consider oneself a servant of Jesus. But there are certain things that a servant would not or could not do. The king would not necessarily consult one of the servants in his court for plans or military strategies. But he would take a friend into His confidence.. Jesus considers His followers to be friends rather than servants. Jesus has been in constant communication with God the Father. And all that the Father has revealed to Him about His work and plans for restoring the world, He has shared with us. We know the heart and mind of God.
3. **We have a purpose.** Vs. 16 – *I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit – fruit that will last.* Jesus makes them aware that they have come into His circle of friends by His invitation. The work that Jesus has talked about in this chapter is very serious and necessary work – Bearing Fruit. He has complete confidence in His followers to carry out the work. There is another important principle in this choice that Jesus has made. Because He chose us, He will keep us. He knows who we are, what we are, and He still sets his love on us. We do not need to live with fear or apprehension that He is going to let us go, or turn on us. He chose us and will keep us.
4. **A Confidence in Prayer.** A final benefit of friendship with God. He chose us to bear fruit for Him, and now Jesus says He chose us so that we can impact the world with our prayers. *Whatever you ask in my name, the Father will give you.* We met this idea earlier in the passage (Vs. 7). Now He repeats it. Once again, we must understand that this is not a blanket promise that God will give us every self-centered thing that we ask for. The context of this verse is now we have the mind of God. Jesus has revealed God to us. And so in light of what we know about God and His desires for the world, we will pray accordingly and those prayers will be heard and answered. God’s mission in this world is to redeem, reconcile, restore the world. Sin has corrupted the world, but God desires to reverse the effects of sin and establish righteousness in the world.

He concludes this section by once again repeating His command **“Love each other.”** We go through life in this world in connection with others who like us are followers of Jesus. As we share life and mission together, we must love one another.

Let me close our time of study today, by asking you to reflect on this term of endearment that Jesus uses to refer to you. How does it impact the way you view yourself, to know that God considers you to be His friend? How does it change your perspective when you are going through a difficult time, a time of suffering? How does it impact the way you interact with others, knowing that you are a Friend of God? It is my prayer that as you grow in your understanding that God considers you to be His friend, that you will feel more deeply attached to Him.

Prayer.