

Communion Preparatory Sermon - Jesus, Our Friend

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[0 : 00] Let's turn for a little to the chapter we read in John's Gospel, John chapter 15. I'm reading again at verse 15.

No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing, but I have called you friends.

For all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. Now as we know, this discourse in the upper room is something that really touches the heart of every believer.

And I'm sure if there are places in the Bible that you would say, I would love to have been able to have been transported back in time if that sort of thing had been possible, which we obviously can't do.

But if you were in some way able to be transported back into particular situations at particular times, I'm quite sure that this would be one place that you would love to have been able to get into, to the upper room, to be in the company of the disciples with Jesus.

[1 : 13] Because it was a very, very special time, and there's such a sense of intimacy, such a sense of love and friendship there. And the word abiding features very strongly in this chapter, as it's a chapter that focuses very much upon relationships and also upon responsibility.

As branches, our responsibility is to abide. That's one of the things we see here. And as friends, our great responsibility is to obey.

Now, as we know, friendship is one of the great blessings of this world. This world would be an incredibly isolated and lonely place were it not for friends. One of the blessings that God has given to us, something of the intimacy of friendship, whether that friendship is the friendship within marriage, the friendship within families, the friendship within, at workplaces, the friendship of just friends that we have.

It's one of the great blessings of life. And it's very interesting that in Eden, after God had declared over everything that he had made, it is very good. Each day, each morning and evening, we find that the Lord is saying, it is good, it is good.

But the one thing, not that there was anything wrong in anything that the Lord had created, but in the condition in which Adam was, God said it is not good for the man to be alone.

[2 : 44] Adam was all on his own. And he was very acutely aware of his own particular isolation. And that's not surprising because Adam was made in the image of God.

And we've got to remember that even within the Godhead, the three persons within the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And there is this presence and communication and fullness of fellowship, one with another.

So it's not surprising that in Eden, there is this sense of loneliness, this sense of needing someone else.

And of course, that is exactly what the Lord did. He provided for Adam. He provided Eve. And while Eve, of course, became his wife, also became his friend.

And that's what the Lord has given to us in life. Of course, I'm not saying that Eve is going to marry, but at whatever level, our friends are vitally important to us in this world that we live in.

[3 : 49] And one of the great blessings that God has given to us. Can you imagine, how often do we stop and actually thank the Lord for our friends? Because so often they've been there, they've been helped us, they've been props for us.

Life would be just so difficult, were it not, for the friends that we've been given in this world. Now, the Lord, of course, as we say, has made us for each other.

But above all, while we need the friendship and the fellowship in this world with one another, and that's one of the great things of communion time. It is a time of communion, of fellowship with one another.

That's one of the great things when we sit at the Lord's table and we share. We share the bread, we share the cup. And it is pointing to this joining together, this being one together in Christ Jesus.

And while, of course, this communion is essential with one another, of course, primarily it is essential that we have this communion and this fellowship and this friendship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

[4 : 56] As we know that the Lord has made us for himself and the soul. It was Augustine who was always saying that. The soul is restless until it finds rest in you.

And how true that is. So friendship is something that's incredibly important within the Christian faith. And I suppose, not that I've studied other world religions in any great depths at all, but I feel one of the unique features of the Christian faith is that God becomes a friend with his people.

God was termed the friend, Abraham was termed the friend of God. I don't think you find that sort of thing happening in any of the other world religions. God is termed the friend of God.

That servant will always remain just that, a servant. Will never come into the place where that person becomes a friend. So Jesus is calling his disciples friends.

And the actual word that Jesus uses here means a friend in court. And kind of describes the inner circle that a king may have.

[6 : 36] Of people where there is almost like secret things discussed. Where it's an inner circle that nobody else breaks into. That this is between the king and his close, close advisors or close circle of friends.

It's also the kind of idea that we have of like the best man. Again, in the Bible times, the best man was called the friend or the bridegroom.

And again, spiritually speaking, Jesus is the bridegroom. And we are like the friend or the bridegroom. That's what we are.

Jesus says, you are my friends. And of course, a best man is somebody who is a great friend of the groom. And that's, again, something of the idea that we have here of the friendship that exists between the Christian and between the Lord.

So Jesus is saying, behold, I have called you friends. For all that I have heard from my Father, I have made known to you. And so there's this sense of this great intimacy.

[7 : 47] That here is Jesus. And he's saying, look, you're my friends. And all that the Father has given to me, that you need to know, I am going to give to you.

And that's one of the wonderful things that happens as we journey along in the Christian faith. That there is a constant opening up of the things of God.

You know, you work with people who aren't Christians. You live beside people who aren't Christians. You're involved with people who aren't Christians. Might be lovely people.

And you're engaging with them all the time. And yet there's this incredible, there are many differences. But one is that you are having spiritual nourishment that they aren't.

You are seeing things at a different, with different eyes, as it were, to them. And that is because you are a friend. And secrets are being revealed to you.

[8 : 50] Indeed, it would indicate to us that the Hebrew word for friendship is the same as secret.

And that's something that we have in Psalm 25, what we're singing there. So the friendship of the Lord with those who fear him involves sharing of secrets.

And in a sense, that's what's happening all the time. That the Lord is sharing the secrets that the world don't know. The world isn't able to grasp or to understand.

It's not that those out of Christ are thick. They might have amazing IQs. But it's just that they haven't got a spiritual understanding that you have.

Because the Lord has opened your mind. You are his friend. He opened your mind. And whenever he opened your heart and opened your mind, it was in order that you will receive the things of God. That's why you have an appetite for the things of God.

[9 : 53] That's why you're here tonight. Because you have an appetite. You come wanting. You're saying when you come, hope I get something for my soul tonight. It's like you're going out to a restaurant, going out to eat.

You're going out, you want something. You say, hope there's something good there. Hope there's something good on the menu. Hope I enjoy it. And when you come to God's house, there's always this, you're hoping, you know, oh, there's something there.

Something that'll satisfy. Something that'll help me as I journey along the way. And that's what the Lord is doing. Because you are his friend. And he wants the very, very best for you.

And so we see that we are the friends of Christ. And one of the first things that we'd say about the friendship, of any friendship, is that friendship is founded on knowledge.

It's very difficult to be a friend of somebody if you don't know that person. When you look back over your life, and I'm sure you still have it, it doesn't matter how old you are, you will still have friends from school.

[10 : 55] And very often a friendship started because you ended up sitting beside somebody in school. Or you found that you had things in common. And the more you got to know that person, the deeper that friendship became.

And although you may go your separate ways and live in different places, there's still that friendship, still that bond. And that friendship is built upon knowledge. And it's still the same with us with regard to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Because there are two aspects to that. Now, there's, I suppose, different aspects. But one aspect is that this knowledge is built upon our understanding of who Jesus is.

We cannot believe in someone that we don't know. That's why the Bible says that it's so important. How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?

That's a great duty that is placed upon the church. To go out and to tell people about the Lord Jesus Christ. Because people cannot believe. You know, it's all very well to sit and say, Ah, you know, there aren't so many Christians nowadays.

[12 : 03] As there used to be. But do we tell people? Do we, when the opportunity is given to us, do we tell people about Jesus Christ? And tell them, not just that there is Jesus.

But tell them a little about who Jesus is and what Jesus does. How will they believe in him of whom they have not heard?

So there's a huge responsibility placed upon us to tell people about the Lord Jesus Christ. So that's one of the first things that happens is that the Holy Spirit has convinced you in your mind of the truth of who Jesus is.

And you saw Jesus as somebody who was able to save you. But there isn't just an intellectual, as it were, knowledge. There is also a heart knowledge.

Where there is within your heart, the Holy Spirit opens up your heart in order to receive Jesus. The Jesus that you have heard about, the Jesus that you begin to know about, is now the Jesus that you really want to know.

[13 : 16] And this knowledge comes by receiving Jesus. And that's what happens within our Christian life.

That's what happens as we go on. Because this knowledge that we have is a knowledge that is never satisfied with just saying, Oh, well, that's me. I've come to know, you know something?

I'm a Christian. I know enough about Jesus that he is able to save me. And I believe that he has saved me. And that will do me. But that's not what a Christian does.

Once we have come to know Jesus, we want to know more and more about him. That's what the apostle says. I know in whom I have believed.

And again, it tells us that, but as many as received him, to them he gave power to become the sons of God.

[14 : 13] And so we want to know more and more and more about him. That was to remember the apostle Paul's great prayer. That I might know him. And you say to Paul, Paul, you know him.

Probably there are very few people in this world who ever knew Jesus at the level that the apostle Paul knew. But Paul was not satisfied with just having known a bit about Jesus and coming to know him intimately at a level.

What he knew of Jesus means that he wanted to know more and more and more and more and more. And that is a hunger that is born within the heart.

And that's exactly how it is with you. We've said it often enough before, but very often when you come to know people. And you know, I think that's one of the great things about friends is that you're prepared to overlook the faults.

You know, if you've got really close friends and you see, you're aware and you say, Oh, well, you see their faults and you know their blemishes. But you're prepared to overlook them.

[15 : 23] And you know, you say, I know that's the way they are. But he is still my friend. She's still my friend. That's what friendships, part of the great thing about friendships. But the wonderful thing about Jesus is that the more we come to know him, which is normally the opposite to our human knowledge of people, because usually the more we come to know about people, the more we begin to realize and see the faults and the failings.

And we think, I never saw that side to him before. Didn't know she was like that. Didn't know that's the way he reacted. Oh, I'm not too sure about that side. And the more we get to know, the more we see maybe some of the negatives.

That will never, ever be the case as we get to know Jesus, because the more we get to know him, the more wonderful he becomes. The more spotless, the more precious, the more loving, the more gracious.

And there's just this ever-growing desire within our heart to know more and more about him. And so we see that this love, of course, that we have for Jesus is a reflection of his love first to us, because we love him because he first loved us.

And, of course, the basis, we find that the reflection of our love to him is displayed in our obedience.

[16 : 52] You are my friends, Jesus says. He says, if you do what I have commanded you. And so that's quite a sobering and quite a challenging thoughts.

And the wonderful thing, though, about Jesus' friendship is that it's a friendship forever. You know, I suppose one of the sad things in life is that sometimes friends fall out.

People who are real friends with one another. And that friendship is broken up. And sometimes people who are really, really good friends, they won't even speak to one another.

The breakup, the fallout has been so bad. But the wonderful thing is that the friendship that we have with Jesus is an everlasting friendship.

It's forever. And Jesus will never, ever, ever, ever fall out of being a friend with us. Isn't that a wonderful thing? Never.

[17 : 51] Because I'm sure every single one of us here. And, you know, it's often at a time as we come to communion time. And we're conscious of coming to the table. And we're conscious of that it's a means of grace to strengthen our faith.

But we're always aware that it's kind of a high point within our Christian journey. And we become more acutely aware of our own faults and failings.

Because the Word of God says, let a person, let a man or a woman, examine themselves. It's one of the things that we're required to do before we eat and drink. To examine ourselves.

And that is something that happens when we see the table on the horizon. And we reflect upon the fact that we're going in this way to do what the Lord asked us to do.

And to take of his broken body and shed blood in a symbolic way. There is this that straight away begins to look at ourselves. And we begin to see the impurity.

[18 : 55] We begin to see the ways we've let the Lord down. The pride. The lusts. Sometimes the anger. The idolatry. You know, sometimes. And the more we delve in.

The more we begin to see different shades. To sin. We see sin at different levels. And sometimes as we begin to dig down. It gets worse and worse and worse.

You know, sometimes you say to yourself. Well, you know. I'm not a dog. I'm not a dog. I'm not a dog. I'm not a dog. I've never been guilty of idolatry.

But, you know, we are. We're all guilty of it. Because if we're putting a focus on something that should be. Our focus should be on the Lord. If our heart has been given to something.

Where we're relegating the place the Lord should have in our heart. And putting someone or something else there. Then we're guilty of idolatry. And the word of God shows us so often.

[19 : 53] Particularly in the Old Testament. The prophets would be going to the people. And they would be highlighting to them. The sins that they were guilty of. And Israel would be saying.

But when did we. What do you mean? When were we guilty of that? So you see. This is what the heart is like. The heart is deceitful above all things.

And desperately wicked. And at some times we come to communion time. And we begin to examine ourselves. We begin to say. Oh. Will the Lord accept me?

Will the Lord sever his friendship with me? Will the Lord say. How dare you come to my table? When I. Look at the state of your heart.

Look at what you've been. But the wonderful thing is. He doesn't. He doesn't. His friendship is forever. That's one of the wonderful things.

[20 : 51] Part of this life. That's part of what makes. I suppose life. Sore and sad is. That our friends pass on. Our families pass on. I do believe. That friendship in Christ Jesus.

The union. The spiritual union. That we have with one another. In Christ. Is a union that. In one sense. Will continue. Because. In glory.

We will be in glory. One with another. And. We will be sharing. Everybody. In glory. Will be sharing with one another. But at one level. Friendships. And marriage.

And all these things. Are for time. But not Jesus' friendship. That remains. Intact. Right down. Into death.

This dark veil. Right through death. That friendship. Is still there. It is a friendship. That is for. Forever. And ever. And it is an invaluable friendship.

[21 : 49] Because. As you and I know. A friend in need. Is a friend indeed. And you know that there is. Nothing greater than having a friend. That you can go to. And you know.

If you are. If you are needing something. Supposing you are short. Or something. Or you say. Oh you know. And it is too late. And you say. Oh I can phone him.

Or phone her. Or there are things troubling you. Or things that have happened to you. And you need to share. You need advice. You need help. It is wonderful to have a friend. That you can go to like that.

Well the great thing is. That Jesus is such a friend. That we can go to him. Anytime. Anyplace. And he says. I am the one. Who supplies. All your needs.

So it is one of the. The great and wonderful things. But Jesus says. You are my friends. If you do. What I command you. And Jesus commands us many things.

[22 : 45] But one thing. That he has commanded us to do. Is to remember his death. In a particular way. Do this he says. It is not an option.

It is a command. Do this in remembrance of me. Examine yourself. Are you in the faith? Well if you are in the faith. Then I command you.

Do this in remembrance of me. So that it is not an option. That is open to the Christian. It is an actual command. And that is what Jesus says. You are my friends.

If you do. What I command you to do. And so. As we said. Here. One of the.

Wonderful things about friendship. Is that. The Lord is making known to us. For I. For all that I have heard. From my father. I have made known. Unto you.

[23 : 41] Everything. As we said. That we need. For our development. And growth and grace. Everything. Is there. Being given to us. And I suppose.

One of the questions. Then that we ask ourselves. Is this. How do I know. That I am a friend of Christ. Well. I think one of the things is. That you think of him often.

If you love somebody. That person. That person. Will be. In your thoughts. If you are close to somebody. That person. Will be in your thoughts. If you are a real friend.

Of somebody. That person. Is in your thoughts. You don't find yourself. Going. And say. You know this. I haven't thought about that person. I am sure it is a good month. Since I thought about him or her. It is not the way.

Because. Friendship. Means. That you think about. And that is the same with the Lord. You will be thinking. About the Lord. Often. It is part and part.

- [24 : 40] It is natural. That is part of being. A friend. Of Jesus. That you. You are thinking. About him often. And. Also. You will.
- You will seek. His company. If you love somebody. You want to be with that person. That is natural. And so it is.
- With regard to the Lord. Jesus Christ. We seek his company. In the word. We go to his word. It is not that. You know. We say. I want to. I want to hear.
- What he is saying to us. We are in prayer. It is part of what you want to do. You want to. You want to speak to him. Again. We could. We could say.
- And that comes back to the word. You want to read. The letter. That he has written. You know. If you. If you love somebody. You are waiting. And waiting for.
- [25 : 36] Communication. If that person is away. So. Supposing that person was abroad. If that person is away. Far away. Or wherever. You are wanting. To hear. Whether it is a phone. Or a text. Or a. Or some form of message. Or a letter. Whatever it is. You are longing to hear. Supposing somebody was. Of your. Your family. Or a. Husband.
- Or a wife. Or a girlfriend. A boyfriend. Whatever. Was away. For quite a while. And they sent a letter. The letter arrived. And you. Oh. You recognize. The handwriting. And you say.
- Oh. You just threw it aside. I'll read that later. And then. Two. Three. Four days later. You say. Oh. I haven't read. I haven't time. I'll read it later. That.
- That wouldn't happen. That letter. Because someone you love. Straight away. Open it. Read it. And so it is. With the word. We have an appetite.
- [26 : 29] For the word. We want to read. We want to. We want to. To hear. What the Lord. Is saying to us. So we. We have this appetite. And we are also friends.
- With his friends. You know. That's one of the. One of the great things. We. We want to be friends. With. Who he is friends with. And we're.
- Always. One of the things. Is. Because again. That's one of the great marks. We know that we've passed. From death into life. Because we love. The brethren. And we also want.
- To tell. Other people. About Jesus. We want to confess him. You know. This is possibly. One of the hardest. Parts. Of it. Is. And I'm sure.
- It's one of the areas. That. So often. We feel ashamed. At just what poor. Witnesses. We are. How good are we. At actually. Confessing Christ. Before others.
- [27 : 22] Church. And I believe. It's one of the things. That sometimes. Keeps people back. From coming to the table. There's. There's just this. And it's. It's a strange thing.
- Where. Sometimes. People say. I don't know. If I can. If I have the courage. Do I have the courage. They say. It's a huge step. Where I'm going to come out. In the public domain.
- And from this moment on. You know. Up until now. I can kind of hide away. That I'm. People say. I might be. I go to church. But. But you know. When you take that commitment. That you're professing Christ.
- You're taking of his cup. You're identifying. With his broken body. And his shed blood. It's a big commitment. And you know. When you take that. You're making a public statement.
- Because that's what it tells us. You show forth. The Lord's death. Until he comes. That's what you're doing. You're proclaiming. The Lord's death. And if there's anybody here tonight.
- [28 : 21] And. You know. That you should be. Proclaiming the Lord's death. That you should be. Going there. I would say to you. Ask the Lord. Please Lord. Help me.

Don't let me put it off. Any longer. Lord. I need to go. You do need to go. You need to come. To the session. You need. To confess. That Jesus Christ.

Is Lord. Going to the session. Is not a grilling. Going to the session. Is. Where we discern. The Lord's body. We have to have an understanding.

Of what it is we're doing. That we're taking the bread. And taking the wine. Symbolically. That is speaking to us. Of what Jesus. Has done. For us.

It's very simple. At one level. Tonight. If you are his friend. Then. Make sure. You obey. His command. Let us pray.

[29 : 14] O Lord. We. Give thanks. Again. For. What your word. Shows us. Shows us of. Ourselves. And shows us of. Yourself. Help us Lord.

To put our trust in you. And to believe in you. And to know you. As Lord and Savior. We ask that. You will be with us. And that. If there are those.

Here tonight. Who. Need to. Confess you. As Lord. We pray that. Even tonight. That they will come. To the session. Bless us. And we pray.

And do us good. And take away our sin. In Jesus name. Amen. We're going to conclude.

Singing in Psalm 122. The Scottish Psalter. And. After. We sing. Of course. The. Mr. McEver. Mr.

[30 : 06] McEver. Will come. And. The. Tokens. Are going to be given out. To. Communicant. Members. And if there are those. Present. Who.

Wish to meet. With the Kirk session. Then. Go around. And come in. Then. To meet with the. Kirk session. Afterwards. And. If you wish to profess. Your faith. In the Lord Jesus Christ.

For the first time. The Kirk session. Would be absolutely delighted. To meet with you. Afterwards. Psalm 122. From verse 4. To the. In the middle.

Of verse 4. To the end. Of the psalm. To Israel's testimony.

There. To God's name. Thanks to pay. For thrones of judgment. Even the thrones. Of David's house. Their stay. Pray that Jerusalem. May have peace. And felicity. Let them that love.

[31 : 01] The and thy peace. Have still prosperity. Therefore. I wish that peace. May still. Within thy walls. Remain. And ever may thy. Palaces prosperity. Retain.

Now for my friends. And brethren. Sakes. Peace be in thee. I'll say. And for the house. Of God. Our Lord. I'll seek. Thy good. Always. Psalm 122. Middle of verse 4.

Bar Smackel 6.

Shout out. R immerse laufesies La Suè For it has Jerusalem behal, each hand's felicity.

Let them not love me on thy peace. Let them not love me on thy feet, a still most fair is King.

[32 : 49] Therefore I wish that peace may chill within thy walls remain, and ever may thy father's church, and ever may thy father's church, or fair is thee day.

Now for my friends and brethren's sake, each beat in thee I'll say, and for the house of God our Lord, and for the house of God our Lord, I'll seek thy good away.

Amen. Now may the grace, mercy, and peace of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rest and abide upon each one of you now and forevermore.

Amen.