

You Are My Friends

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[0 : 00] Let's turn again just for a little to the chapter that we read together in John's Gospel, John chapter 15, and reading again at verse 14, where Jesus says, You are my friends if you do what I command you.

He goes on to say in the next verse, 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. Particularly verse 14, where Jesus says, You are my friends if you do what I command you.

One of the great truths that the Bible teaches us is the fact that we have a friend in Jesus. It really is quite an extraordinary truth. Now, in life, we all have many friends and many acquaintances. And I'm sure it would be quite wonderful for us if we were to have, you know how we use the expression, friends in high places.

[1 : 16] Imagine if you had a friend in the royal family, or a friend in government, maybe in the cabinet. You would say to yourself, I really treasure having somebody, a real friend in that position.

Because you would say to yourself, if ever there was a time of difficulty, a time of trouble, that person might be able to influence things or help you in some way.

Great to have somebody like that. But our friends, of course, are very, very special to us and important to us. But here we have the most extraordinary statement, really, where Jesus is telling us that we are his friends.

And what we've got to take note of is that we're not the ones who are making the claim. It's Jesus who is making the claim. Jesus Christ is the one who is talking about this friendship.

Now, again in life, some people make very extravagant claims about so-and-so being a friend. Sometimes you'll meet people and they'll say, oh, well, I'm friendly with so-and-so.

[2 : 28] In this day where there's this hunger for celebrity fame and such like, some people will say, oh, well, I'm a friend of so-and-so. And you'll find that the friendship may go no deeper to the fact that maybe they spoke to them in the passing, maybe at some function or where the person signed an autograph or something.

And you realize, well, it's not really a friendship at all. It's just that the person spoke for a moment or two. But what we have here is the Son of God, the Son of Man.

We have the Lord Jesus Christ making this quite extraordinary statement to and about his people where he is calling them friends. Of course, this particular statement is qualified by what follows.

And we'll look at that just in a moment if you do what I command you. But we'll come to that in a moment. We see this tremendous statement about Christ's friendship.

Now, of course, we know that this friendship is based upon love. Now, some people have difficulty with the whole concept of Christian love because they say to themselves, well, there are people and I don't particularly love them.

[3 : 47] I know that the Bible tells me that I should. But the problem is I don't. Now, I'm not saying that that will be true of anybody in here.

I hope it won't. But the fact is sometimes people say that. And maybe they say it about a person who is very difficult. They've got that kind of cantankerous nature.

They're kind of very... They might be the kind of person that you say, actually, they are quite difficult to like. But we've got to distinguish that there's a difference between liking and loving.

Jesus doesn't say that you've got to like somebody in order to love them. But he says to us, we are to love. And we are to love not only...

This is the amazing thing. Not only are we to love our friends. Not only are we to love all our brothers and sisters in the Lord. But we are even to love our enemies.

[4 : 42] We are to bless those who curse us. And when you come and begin to look at what Jesus is saying, you say to yourself, this really is quite extraordinary. It's radical teaching.

And the problem that so many people have in the whole concept and area of love is that they're looking at love in the way of kind of that emotional thrill that you might get where you feel attracted to someone.

Where there might be that sort of little beat of the heart. All these kind of things. And you think that's love. Jesus shows us that love demonstrates itself by action.

And Jesus, I think one of the great examples of it, or one of the great teachings, is found in the teaching of the Good Samaritan. And you remember how the man who was going between Jerusalem and Jericho and how he was ganged up and he was attacked by a band of thieves and robbers.

And they gave him a terrible doing and they left him dying. So he was half dead. And remember the religious leaders, the Levite, the priest, those who represented the religious order of the day, they both passed by on the other side.

[5 : 58] They had a look across and didn't want to get involved. And then the Samaritan came. The Samaritan didn't begin to count the cost. He didn't think, I wonder if maybe this man's had a terrible doing.

If I stop, I might get a doing as well. He doesn't think like that. He just goes straight in. He pours in the oil. He tries to help him and soothe him. Puts him on his own beast.

Takes him to a hotel. Pays the cost. And goes on his way. And Jesus asked this lawyer, I'd ask the question, Which one? Which one of these demonstrated love?

Who was it that showed love to his neighbor? And remember how the man said, well, he said, I suppose it was the one who showed mercy.

And Jesus said, yes. And you go and do the same. Do likewise. And Jesus is showing that is love. That is the kind of love that ought to operate in our hearts and lives.

[7 : 03] It isn't a matter of working out, do I like this person? We don't think and say to ourselves, I'm not going to help him. I'm not going to help her. Because he once did this or she once did that.

That doesn't enter into it. The motive ought to be that here is someone in need. And love goes to help.

And Jesus goes on to show that, of course, that the greatest level of love is the love that he himself showed. Jesus shows, and in fact, previously, just in that verse, he shows that the greatest demonstration of love is where somebody will give their life for another person.

And we read about these things, extraordinary, where somebody has gone to rescue someone. And they've died in the attempt. They've managed to rescue, but they themselves have lost their life.

It happens quite often. And whenever we hear about that, or read about that, or we're told about that, or we ourselves know, and maybe even those within our own family we've understood or know of people where that has happened, we're always affected and touched by it.

[8 : 18] Where we see this tremendous demonstration of love where someone gives his life or her life to save somebody else. That's what Jesus says, it's the greatest love possible.

But the wonderful thing about Jesus was that Jesus gave his life not for people who were his friends, but people who were his enemies.

People who were in rebellion against him. People who were on the run away from him. People who didn't even want him. And he gave his life for them in order to make them his friends.

And that is at the very heart of the gospel. That is what, God willing, we will be remembering next Lord's Day. It's what we always preach about, what we remind ourselves about.

But it is at the very heart of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper where we remember Christ's love. Where he died and where personally we reflect upon that great love.

[9 : 29] Because through that love he made us his friends. Broke the rebellion. Broke the enmity that was there naturally in our heart.

It didn't begin with us. We didn't make up the, we didn't have this idea. We didn't suggest it. This is a doing of the Lord and marvelous in our eyes.

It's all of him. Now, this particular word, friend, that we have here really is signifying a friend in court. That kind of friend. It describes the inner circle that a king would have round about. Those who were his closest friends.

Those that the king would have. That he would share with. And that he would maybe discuss things with. It's the same word that is used, that Jesus used, that is used earlier on in John's gospel.

[10:31] About the friend of the bride. The friend of the bridegroom. Or what we may in our own language term. The best man. It's a very close friendship.

Not a friend who is little more than an acquaintance. But a friend who is right there. It's like a best friend.

Now again, if we can have the idea of the king in the court. And think of that friendship. I think that really hits home. Because you think of these friends as inner group around the king.

They are his friends. But they're also still subject to him. Even though the king is their friends. They acknowledge him as king.

They acknowledge his rule over them in life. And that is the very picture that we have here. There's this two-fold where there is a friendship and yet being subject to.

[11:36] And if you're looking for an example in the Bible. Abraham is a classic example of that. Because Abraham is termed the servant of God.

And he's also termed the friend of God. Both. He's a servant and he's a friend. And that's what we have here. That's what Jesus does.

That's what his love does. He's a servant. He's a servant. He's a servant. So that we become friends. And also we become servants. Now as we said.

It is all of grace. It is all of Jesus' doing. He is the one who begun this friendship. Now. Friendships in life.

Normally have a starting point. And I'm sure if you look back over your life. You will remember. Remember when some particular friendships began.

[12:32] Some friendships. Maybe. Maybe I'm wrong. Because some friendships go back all the way. From the time that you were very, very small. Probably too small now to remember.

Where you have been a friend with somebody. It's what we term a lifelong friendship. Friendship. And these are very special. Very precious. And I'm sure many of the older people here.

They look back. And they're still friends with people that they were in school with. People that they grew up beside. These friendships last. But normally there's a starting point. And so in the Christian faith.

There's a starting point to this friendship. And as we said earlier. It is the Lord who begins. We love him. Because he first loved us.

It's not an encouragement today. If you're here today. And you love the Lord. You look and you say to yourself. Well how do I love him? You love him because he has loved you.

[13:32] His love has drawn you. His love. His love gave his life for you. And it was through this love that the Holy Spirit. Has worked in your heart.

And has applied the work of Jesus. So that you have received Jesus by faith. And faith works by love. It's all of love.

And it's all of grace. It's wonderful. So it's all his doing. And what do we receive in this friendship with Jesus? Well it's a friendship.

That will never bring us anything but that which is good. It's not wonderful to have such a friend. I'm sure if we look back over our lives.

We realize that sometimes there could be friends. Friends who would lead us astray. Friends that may not. We might like them. But they may not have been very good for us.

[14:32] And I'm sure as we look back over our lives. We can remember those who didn't influence us in the right way. Even although we were friendly with them. But here is a friendship that will never do anything but that which is good.

And never bring anything into your life but that which is good. It's also an incredibly intimate friendship. It is a kind of friendship where there is deep sharing.

Where you can pour out your heart to this friend and you know that he will never betray your friendship.

He will never disclose what you have said. You know it's a wonderful thing to have this privilege.

Where you can go on and burden yourself and cast yourself. Particularly in times where you might be going through distress or pain in your heart.

Where there might be things that you cannot put in even into words. You go to him. Maybe you've got no more than a groan. And he understands. And he's saying I know.

[15 : 40] I'm there for you. I love you. I'm hearing what you're saying. It's wonderful to know this type of friendship. Just like Peter.

When Peter was saying to Jesus. Lord you know all things. You know that I love you. And it's also a friendship.

Where the Lord is going to bring us to places and to points. Where he's going to show us and teach us things. That other people will never know or never understand.

Jesus does that with his friends. You know the Bible says. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him.

Remember elsewhere where Jesus was saying. We were looking at that not that long ago. And to you it is given to know. The secret of the kingdom. In other words.

[16 : 40] Jesus. Will reveal to his people. He gives his people to understand. What those outside the kingdom.

Cannot understand. Now you might be. I don't know your own particular situation today. Or where you're actually standing with the Lord. But it might be.

That you are. That you've moved on from where you were. And you're saying to yourself. You know. I've been coming to church for a long time. And I used to hear the same thing over and over and over again.

But you know. Things have changed. I'm beginning to understand things. I never used to understand. I'm beginning to lay hold upon things. And I would say to myself. I never.

I heard that. But I never really understood it. I would take great encouragement from that. Because I believe what that is indicating. Is that the Lord is opening your heart.

[17 : 43] To understand things. And see things. Because it's not of yourself. The natural person. The natural heart. Does not take on board the things of the Lord.

They can read it. And they can hear it. But somehow it doesn't penetrate. But the Holy Spirit. This is part of the Holy Spirit's work. Or the main part of his work.

Is to reveal the things of Christ. And so the Holy Spirit. Is opening our heart and our mind. To receive these things. To understand these things.

To lay hold upon these truths. So that they're real. And we're saying. Oh yeah. This is what the word says. I'm believing it. I'm accepting it.

And it's also a friendship that will last forever. Isn't that wonderful? I think one of the saddest things to see in life. Are people who were once great friends.

[18 : 39] Falling out. Where friends fall out. It's a horrible thing to see. But sadly sometimes in life it happens. Those who are once very friendly. No longer speaking to one another.

Friends. Who maybe everybody would think. Were going to be lifelong friends. And it's turned to enmity. It's a sad thing to see. Sometimes it happens.

Well here is a friendship. Where that sort of thing can never ever ever happen. It will never happen.

There was a day. My dear believing friend. Where you were an enemy.

Of the Lord. But you're no longer that. You're now his friend. And he made you his friend. To be a lifelong friend. So that when you die. You will go.

To be with him forever. And ever. And ever. In that friendship. And it's only in glory. That you'll begin to understand. All that is involved in that friendship. It's going to be absolutely.

[19 : 39] And altogether wonderful. But just in a word. There's a solemn responsibility. Attached to this verse. This friendship talks about. If you do what I command you.

This of course. Reveals to us. What it is to be a Christian. It is to be a doer. Of the word. To be a doer. Of the word. Remember when we were looking at.

At James's letter. We saw the importance. Of doing the word. That faith. That real faith. Acts. Upon the word of God.

It's not just to be a hearer. But a doer. Of the word. As well. And so. This is really the key. This is a heartbeat. This friendship. Will be evidenced.

By obedience. To the word. Because there are people. Who can say. Oh I'm a follower of the Lord. But their lives. Are lived in disobedience.

[20 : 42] The five. Foolish. Girls. Foolish virgins. They carried. Lamps as well. Though there was no oil in them. The foolish man. He built his house.

Just like the wise man. Though he built it on the sand. And it's quite possible. That his house was just as big. And on the outside. Would look just as good. As the one built on the rock.

But the key to it. Is the foundation. What. What is it. Being built upon. And ultimately. The Christian life. Is marked. By fruit.

That's what we're reading about. In this chapter. That it's all about fruit. Our life. In Christ. Will bear. Fruit. It will manifest fruit.

What fruit. The fruit of the spirit. If our life. Is not producing that fruit. Of love. And joy. And peace. [21 : 38] And gentleness. And all these things. We read about them. Read about it in. In Galatians. The fruit. Of the spirit. And if a person's life.

Is not producing this. Then irrespective. Of what a person says. Then you have to. Ask questions. And we. We have to ask questions.

Of ourselves. And that's one of the important things. As we come to our communion. Is to examine ourselves. Now when it talks about. Being a doer of the word. That doesn't mean.

That the Christian. Will never ever. Slip. Or stumble. That there will never be. Any as it were. Hiccup. In the journey.

I've never seen. A baby. Learn to walk. Without falling. I've never seen. A little child. Never stumble. As they begin.

[22 : 35] To walk in life. And I'm sure. Even as. We've grown older. Naturally. In life. We've all had our. Stumbles and falls. And I believe.

That that happens. Also. In the Christian life. And there are many. Verses in scripture. That talk about. These things. The steps of a good man. Are ordered by the Lord. Though he fall.

Yet he shall not. Be utterly cast down. For the Lord. Upholdeth them. With his hand. The Lord talks about. His people. Even if they fall. Seven times. Yet they will arise.

Because the Lord. The Lord has a hold of them. Now these things. Aren't there to. To say. Well it doesn't matter. How we do. Or what we live. We can do any old way.

The Lord's got a hold of me. That's not what it's saying. It's not there. It is there to encourage. The Lord's people. When they may have stumbled. In order that they will come back.

[23 : 30] The doer of the word. Is the one. Whose life. The main. Thrust of the life. The main direction. That the life is going in.

Is one that is seeking. To obey. The word. There might be times. When. It's difficult. There might be times.

When there are stumbles. And if there are. There is repentance. Because there is a new desire. A longing. To get back. On the right track. And saying Lord. Lord. We want to follow your word.

Forgive me Lord. It's your word. Because I love you. And it's. That's the way I want to go. That's the way I want to walk. And so.

We are seeking. To follow the Lord. And that is how we go. Forward. To his table. It is an obedience. We want to go.

[24 : 25] Because there is. A desire within our heart. To obey his word. And of course. That obedience. Involves. Going to the table. To confess. And to profess.

That he is. Our Lord. Well do you love. The Lord Jesus Christ. Today. Can you say. With all your heart.

I really. Love. The Lord Jesus. You might have difficulties. Because part of you. Is saying. We've said this often enough. Before. Part of you.

Is saying. I love the Lord. But my great problem. Is this. I feel. I don't love him. As much as I should. If I'm a Christian. I look at other people.

And I think. They love the Lord. Far more than I do. How do you know. And I believe. Itself. Being. As an evidence. Of our love.

[25 : 22] To the Lord. In our heart. When we actually. Lament. Our lack of love. If we are here. And we're saying. I love the Lord. But I want to love him.

So much more. I. Really. And truly. I feel that. If there's one thing. In life. That I could. Do more of. Is to love the Lord. I would be happy. And maybe. You're saying. To yourself. While I love the Lord. I feel. I'm not one of his. Because of.

How little. Or lacking. My love. Seems to be. Well. I would say. That if that is. The way. Your heart is. Then it can. Only speak. Of one thing.

Is that. You do. Love the Lord. And you love him. Because he has. First loved you. If you're here. Today. And you have to say.

[26 : 14] With your hand. In your heart. I hear all this. About the Lord. I would like. To love him. But as things are. I don't. I hope.

One day. To get this. Sorted out. I don't want to die. Without coming. To know the Lord. As my Savior. Well. I would urge you. Today. To ask Jesus.

Even now. To ask him. To become. The Lord. Of your life. The Lord. Of your heart. That so that. You might know. Him. And that you might. Receive him. As your Savior.

And that you might. Be able to serve him. All the days. Of your life. Let us pray. Oh Lord. Our God. We. Pray. To help us. As we go forward.

In life. We realize. That life. At times. Can be so complex. And we. Ourselves. Are complex. There are times.

[27 : 10] We. We. We have to stop. And to. Reflect upon. Who we are. And. What we're doing. And. What are the main. Priorities of life. Help us.

Oh Lord. To get a right focus. And a right perspective. In order that we may have Jesus. At the center of our lives. Forgive us Lord.

For when we don't. And help us to follow thee. With all our heart. Bless each one of us this day. Do us good. Have mercy upon us. And cleanse us we pray. From all our sin.

In Jesus name we ask it. Amen.