

Why God Loves

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 05 November 2017

Preacher: Daniel Ralph

[0 : 00] With your Bibles, turn with me to John chapter 15, when the second half of John 15. Last week I said that initially I was going to tackle the whole chapter of John and we reduced it to the first eight verses wisely, hopefully. This morning I've sort of done a reverse. We're going to take it from verse 9 to the end of the chapter. So verse 9 from the end to the end of the chapter. So now hear God's word. As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Abide in my love.

If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be full. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

Greater love has no one than this, than someone lays down his life for his friends. You are my friends, if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a 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. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask in the Father, whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. These things I command you, so that you will love one another. If the world hates you, know that it hated me before it hated you.

If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own. But because you're not of the world, because I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

Remember the word that I said to you, a servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours.

[2 : 28] But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin.

But now they have no excuse for their sin. Whoever hates me hates the Father also. If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin.

But now they have seen and have hated me both and my Father. But the word that is written in their law must be fulfilled. They hated me without a cause. But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of Truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.

And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning. Well, may God bless both the reading of his word and the explanation of it.

Please, then, if you have your Bibles with you, turn again to John chapter 15. And while you're turning there, I'll remind you of where we are so far in John.

[3 : 49] Last week we learned that both parts are true. It is possible to be in Jesus and to be cut away at the same time. And that was the difficult truth.

Not because it was difficult to understand, but it's difficult because sometimes we cannot, just cannot bring ourselves to believe certain things to be true.

And that is a challenge to our heart when we know it's true. Even for Christians who know that this world offers nothing in the end, sometimes it's still really, really difficult to really believe and convince ourselves that the world is not worth pursuing.

Even though we know the truth, we just cannot bring ourselves to believe in it sometimes. And that's the difficulty. Here, Jesus goes from difficulty to great comfort.

One of the things that this passage focuses on is friendship. It has many other things to mention. Most importantly, what will happen in the future.

[4 : 56] But the thing that it does focus on to bring this to light is friendship. Now, friendship is normally designed between two people. Okay?

Pastors don't have any friends, by the way. Now, I want to take that moment in because it's... But generally speaking, friendship is described as something that happens between two people. It's odd that Jesus decides to describe friendship here as something that is possible between God and man. Well, God is God and man is man. They are, in many senses, wholly separated by not only a huge distance, but by character, holiness, and a whole number of other things. But here we have Jesus calling us his friends. And there's good reason for that. But Jesus decides that he's going to redefine friendship, or rather, properly define what friendship is. One of the things that we need to take into consideration when it comes to true friendship is what Jesus decides true friendship is. So the lesson here is don't take your version of friendship and then apply it to God.

[6 : 10] In the same way somebody here, or perhaps not here, cannot bring themselves to believe in God as a father because their own father was horrible.

Now that happens quite a lot. I just cannot believe in a God who is father-like or is a father because I hated my father or my father hated me.

And that tends to skewer your view on God. And all you've done is you've taken your application, you've applied your application of fatherhood to God the Father. You shouldn't do that.

I can understand why you do it, but you shouldn't do it. In the same way, don't take your understanding of friendship and then apply it to Jesus. Because what Jesus means by friendship may not be anything like what you mean by friendship.

What Jesus means by friendship here is that friendship exists in knowing what the other person is doing all the time. In other words, there's no secrets. There's no secrets.

[7 : 11] And more importantly, the nature of true friendship is where one friend would lay down his life for another. Okay? Well, I'm a friend, but I'm not sure I'm that kind of friend.

Okay? I'm a friend, but I'm not sure I'm that kind of friend. And you may be saying the same thing this morning. I recognize I can be a good friend to a lot of people, but I'm not that kind of friend. Well, when Jesus describes his friendship with us, this is the standard of his friendship. He lets us know what he is doing and why he is doing it.

And then he is the true friend who lays down his life for us. Jesus describes friendship. You're no longer servants, he says.

You are friends of God. Now, don't let that be a lessening of your relationship with God. But it does speak of a different kind of relationship, doesn't it?

[8 : 10] We all understand that a servant has a different relationship with a master than a friend does. And Jesus is saying here that your relationship with him, if indeed you follow him, if indeed you belong to him, is not one of servanthood, though we serve him.

But it's actually one of friendship. We serve friends. We go out of our way in friendship. You know, someone breaks down in the middle of the night.

We may be tired. We may have had a long day. It may even be an incredibly difficult day. And the last thing we want to do is to put our shoes back on and our coat and go out in the middle of the night and help our brother or sister out with the repair of their car, the changing of the wheel.

But we do it out of affection. We do it out of affection. And that's exactly what Jesus is describing here when it talks about friends serving him.

It's out of love. It's abiding in his love. It's out of affection. Now, this is super important. But it's super important for a number of different reasons.

[9 : 17] The first thing is, is that joy needs to be complete in you. You need to be a person who is absolutely full on joy. And I'll explain why in a moment.

If you're not, you're going to live a damaged life. Your life is going to get dented. And it's going to be beyond repair unless you're full of Jesus.

Now, we've all seen, perhaps if I can use a simple illustration, a balloon full of air. Okay? You take one pin and it pops. Okay?

But you fill that same balloon with something a little bit more solid. And suddenly there isn't that big explosion. Because there is a difference between being puffed up with something, perhaps other people's opinions, which Corinthians warns us against, and being filled up with something that stays full in us.

Well, Jesus wants our joy to be full. He wants us to be absolutely a complete person. And by being complete, that means being full on Jesus Christ.

[10 : 22] So Jesus here calls his disciples, those who follow him, those who serve him, his friends. And what this means is this. That for the Christian, for the whole of Christianity, there are things to be believed and things to be done.

Okay? I'm going to summarize Christianity for you in terms of what our side of the friendship looks like. There are things to be believed and things to be done.

The way that our joy becomes complete in Christ is by believing the right things. Okay? And by doing the right things. Now I know, I know there's plenty of examples in scripture where people are willing to believe a lie just to have the sense of comfort.

Jacob and Esau would be a typical one. Why did Jacob pretend to be his brother Esau? Why did he go in and seek the birthright blessing when he knew it was under deception?

Why did he want to hear the birthright blessing from his father when he knew that he'd only ever hear it under deception?

[11 : 34] And I know that people can be so damaged and so hurt, especially when there's jealousy and favoritism in the family like there was there, that they're even willing to hear, I love you, even when it's not true.

Okay? You can have a married couple that have been together for a number of years and one, they both know that they're drifting apart. They both know that they're drifting apart and there's nothing that can be done about this.

But so desperate can the wife be or the husband be that they pursue the other person, do you love me, do you love me, do you love me? And they are so willing to hear the words, yes, I love you, even under false pretenses, even under falsehood, because it is that sense of comfort that they're looking for.

Okay? We are like that. That's exactly what we're like. But when it comes to Christ, when Christ says he loves us, he really does love us.

He doesn't love us for any other reason than he decided to choose to love us. Now I want you to take that same type of love, Jesus is saying, and then apply it to your brothers and sisters in the faith.

[12 : 45] That means that you don't love your husband if he does certain things for you in the home, and you don't love your wife if she dresses a certain way wherever, okay, or cooks certain meals.

The reason you love them cannot be found in the other person. Because if it is, the moment those things are no longer in the other person, your love for them has to change.

I've said this many times, but it's worth repeating. You know, if you love your wife because her hair looks great, she knows that when her hair doesn't look great, then your love for her has to change. Because you have based it in something that is temporary. So when you love someone like Jesus is wanting us to love brothers and sisters, like he's wanting us to love him and like he loves us, don't love for temporal, changeable reasons that are found in other people.

Okay? It won't take you anywhere. Your love has to be able to go way beyond all of those things, because if it doesn't, you'll just stop loving them. You'll just stop loving them.

[13 : 49] So I know that we like talk about, I know people like talking about, well, that's not very loving or this, but most people don't actually have the famous idea of what it is to love.

To really love is to believe certain things to be true and to do certain things. Things to be believed and things to be done.

Ultimately, Jesus says to lay down your life, if it comes to that, for the other person. Now, the reason Jesus says all of this is because he has bad news.

Now, it's not bad news in the sense that it's bad, but it's a bit like someone saying to you, can you sit down? I have some news to tell you. Now, you know that when someone prefaces their statement with please sit down, you know it's not going to be good.

You know that something's coming that I'm not going to be able to handle stood up. Right? So, Jesus is effectively fortifying the disciples' hearts because he's about to tell them that when you go out into the world, apart from me, they're not going to like you.

[14 : 57] They're going to hate you in the same way they hated me. So, Jesus is fortifying his disciples' hearts. He's telling them that they're his friends. He's telling them that he loves them.

He's building them up with all the necessary strength that they need because they're going to take a hit. They're going to go out into a world where there are sinful people, sinful relationships, and a sinful environment that are just going to damage us left, right, and center.

And you've got to be ready for that type of environment. You've got to be ready for those type of relationships. So, you are sat down, and Jesus is about to fortify your heart.

Jesus wants your joy to be full. Okay? He wants your joy to be full. Imagine it like this.

You have a bank account. And in your bank account, you have X amount of money, and then suddenly a bill comes in that you're not expecting.

[15:57] But you have enough money in the account to cover the bill. Do you still feel the withdrawal? Yeah, of course you do. But you're not in debt.

And the reason you're not in debt, the reason you're not in trouble, the reason you're not in damage, is because there's enough in the account to be able to handle that kind of withdrawal. Okay, we understand it financially.

Well, let's take it to relationships with children. Parents. It is absolutely vital that parents fill their children with love all the time.

Why? Because you know as parents, there's going to come a day where you're going to have to say to them, no, you can't have that. Now, when a child hears no, that could be a 50 or 60 or 70% withdrawal.

Now, if they've only got 40% of your love in them, and you make a 60% withdrawal, you are taking them what? Into debt. You're damaging them spiritually, morally.

[16:59] Okay, they're not able to handle that. But when children are full on the love of their parents, they know that they're loved, they know that their parents go out of their way to support them, to build them, to keep them full.

When the parent does say no, the child's still going to feel the withdrawal, still going to feel that this is a, that no is a massive withdrawal, but there's enough in the account to be able not to go into debt.

There's enough in the account to not be damaged by the no. That's incredibly important. What about marriages? It's exactly the same, husbands and wives. Husbands and wives argue.

I argue with my wife. I repent, by the way, just to let you know. But I do argue with my wife, and you know, I'm the typical husband who believes that I think I'm always right, and my way is the correct way, until, of course, I'm proven wrong.

And the standard for always, is if you have sinned in public, you repent in public. And we also don't, we don't say sorry in our house anymore. We've had to repent of saying sorry in our house.

[18:04] Because when I say sorry, I'm simply paying my own debt. But sin is a debt that nobody can pay. It needs to be forgiven.

So when I sin against my wife, for me to say sorry is simply to try and pay it all by myself, and then say, it's done and dusted, I don't want to talk about it anymore. Let's move on. But you know, right, yeah, sound familiar, right.

But you know that's just not good enough. That's just not good enough, because you can't clear your own debt. Sin is a debt that nobody can pay apart from Jesus.

And so you shouldn't say sorry. You should say, dear, child, son, daughter, will you forgive me? That's how relationships are restored.

That's the definition of true friendship. That's the definition of a relationship that works. People who say sorry are simply trying to pay their own debt and then say, I don't want to talk about it anymore.

[19:08] That's embarrassing. Men grow up. Women also. Okay? We ask for forgiveness because sin damages. And sin cannot be repaid with a sorry.

It must be forgiven. So Jesus here is filling us with joy, is filling us with all the necessary fullness that we need because we are about to enter into an environment and relationships where people are going to make hefty withdrawals.

He says, you belong in a world that hates me, and if they hated me, they'll hate you as well. Jesus wants your account, your spiritual account with him to be totally full because the world is going to make big withdrawals.

Jesus knows that the world is going to take it out of you. In fact, Jesus even knows that the family that you live in will take hefty withdrawals out of you. So love God and love each other.

It is absolutely imperative, categorically, the most important thing, to keep a church full on the love of God and on the joy of God.

[20 : 24] It's absolutely important that you, as you sit here, husbands and wives, parents of children, children of parents, must be full on joy and love because we live in families and environments where withdrawals are going to be happening all the time.

So Jesus here, with the disciples, is calling them his friends, is telling them that their joy must be full. He's telling them to abide in his love so that their spiritual account would be full.

And it needs to be full because they're about to enter into a world where hurt, damage, and withdrawals are unavoidable. Things are going to be taken out of us all the time and we need to make sure there's enough in us in order that we can handle those withdrawals.

We don't want to go into spiritual debt and we certainly don't want to be damaged by it either. So, friendship of a different kind.

Friendship of a different kind. To be a true friend, Jesus says, in the context here, involves sacrifice. A true friend lays down his life for another.

[21 : 42] It means that you don't take any notice of your heart lawyers. You know that we have lawyers in our heart. It's when something happens to us and then we say in ourselves, oh, you're really going to pay for that.

Or in a relationship, perhaps between a man and a woman, where a man focuses more on the physical side and the woman focuses more on the conversational side, the woman is more likely to make the man pay by not spending any time in the bedroom.

I'm going to make you pay for that. And the husband is going to make the wife pay by not coming in from work early or any time where they can have a time to speak. Okay? We know exactly what we're doing and we know it's wrong.

But we do it because inside of us, okay, we don't want to make the sacrifice. We want to make you pay for it. We want to go out of our way to make the other person pay.

But Jesus here says that true friendship involves sacrifice. It involves laying down your life for the other person. That means you take that upon yourself.

[22 : 53] You don't work out how much is yours and how much is theirs and then pay them back. No, you take the full hit for them in love. This is why Jesus is on his way to the cross.

The cross is the only answer for forgiveness. The cross is the only answer for sin. The cross and Jesus' accomplishment on the cross is the only thing that can deal with both sin and forgiveness. Jesus has to deal with it and only Jesus can deal with it. He doesn't make you pay. He doesn't have a lawyer in his heart saying to himself while he's there on the cross, boy, am I going to make these people pay for it when I'm down from here.

Not once does he think that. Rather, he says from the cross, Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing. Okay? Forgive them. Jesus is being sacrificed as your friend.

As your friend. The emphasis that Jesus wants to put here is why do people hate him? Let me think about it for a moment.

[24 : 04] Why do people hate Jesus? He says in verse 25 that people in the world hate him without a cause.

He also says that anybody who rejects him is rejecting the Father, so this idea that I've been good and God will love me but I don't want anything to do with Jesus doesn't seem to hold water in Jesus' theology.

Things to be believed and things to be done. Why do people hate Jesus? Well, Jesus does say, look, there is a way of avoiding the hatred of the world and that is don't be my friend.

If you're a friend of the world, the world won't hate you. You'll get along just fine or as well as can be expected. But if you're a friend of mine, the world's going to hate you but remember, they hate you because they first hated me.

In other words, Jesus is fortifying your heart with love demonstrating to you that his sacrifice is the very necessary understanding that you need to have in order to understand his love truly for you because you're going to go out into a world where if you stand as a follower of Jesus Christ, if you say, this is what I believe and this is what I do, this is who I follow, this is who I love, the world might just rip you to shreds for it.

[25 : 31] And who hasn't experienced friends that have left us because we are now a friend of Jesus? Right? Think about those friends that don't want anything to do with us because we go to

church.

Think about those friends that don't want anything to do with us because, or they don't want to invite us around because we might just bring Jesus into the conversation. And so suddenly, we go from being overlooked, we go from being overlooked to being sidelined to even being rejected altogether.

For no other reason, we've done nothing wrong to them other than the fact that we love the one that they don't love. Okay? We love Jesus who is our friend and they don't.

And that's it. And Jesus is fortifying our heart to be able to take that kind of hit because the biggest type of rejection we feel is not from an enemy, it's from a friend.

Okay? It's from a friend. There used to be a man who used to wander around the Roman Empire. He was always happy when somebody else was miserable.

[26 : 37] In fact, he was known for being happy because everybody else was miserable. One day, he wandered into town and he was so miserable, he looked like death and not even death warmed up.

he just looked like death. And someone pointed out that could only be one of two things. Either something really, really, really, really bad has happened to him or something really, really, really good has happened to somebody else.

Okay? Think about that. Are you like that? Jesus isn't. Jesus is the true friend.

Jesus is the one who prepares your heart for rejection. He doesn't reject. He forgives. The world rejects. The world distances themselves.

Jesus forgives and he forgives as a friend. So, before we conclude, remember this. As a believer, you need two things. You need courage, but you also need comfort.

[27 : 44] Okay? You need courage, but you need comfort. There is nothing more difficult than proclaiming to somebody in the world your love for Jesus. There is nothing more difficult than proclaiming to somebody else, even in the family, your love for Jesus and that you follow Jesus.

Okay? We need that courage, but we also need the comfort. And this is why Jesus, in verse 24, says that he will give that comfort in the form of a helper.

However, when the helper comes whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of Truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. How does a person, or how is a person, comforted by God?

Okay? This is how a person is comforted by God. We are reminded who he is. We think we need to be told that we're loved. Well, that's certainly true. Jesus does tell us that we're loved, but the Spirit, who is the helper, who is the comforter, comes and witnesses to us about him.

Comfort comes from knowing who Jesus is and not forgetting. Knowing that you belong to the friend. Knowing that you belong to one who loves you and who laid down his life for you.

[29 : 04] So here's the conclusion. As we have already seen, there are things to be believed and things to be done. Our hearts need to be fortified because we live in a world and we live in sinful relationships that will take massive withdrawals.

And we're not strong enough all by ourselves to be able to handle those kind of withdrawals. We're just not rich enough. But the riches of God in Christ are ours.

Okay? The riches of God in Christ are ours. Which means that when those withdrawals happen to us in any sinful environment, in any sinful circumstance with others, we are able to take those withdrawals because God loves us.

And God constantly fills us up. This is what the scripture says. That there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother. There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

I can remember one of my brothers saying to me, I have six younger brothers and I made a stand for Jesus which meant that I made a division according to him in our brotherhood.

[30 : 23] And he had this to say which shocked me because I never understood it at first. So he's my brother. brother, we had an argument over my stand for Jesus and him not.

But the interesting thing is we were both brought up in the same Sunday school, both heard the same message, we both decided to follow Jesus but I continued and he didn't.

Then there's this argument and then he said to this me one day, well I guess blood is thicker than water. Which puzzled me because I thought blood thicker than water meant the blood between brothers not between anything else.

But he had enough theological-ness about him to understand that the blood of Christ triumphs the blood of brotherhood. Okay?

The blood of Christ triumphs the blood of brotherhood. So the scripture says there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother. But who is he? And where can I find him?

[31 : 23] He is Jesus. He is known as the friend of sinners. Jesus wants you to consider who your friend is. Jesus wants you to consider what you think friendship is.

And Jesus wants you to know that he is your friend. What Jesus is describing here is not any kind of friendship. It cannot be compared with any earthly kind of friendship.

Rather, it's the friendship between God and man. In other words, this, Jesus, our Lord, should be your friend. Should be your friend.

Amen. Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ, I take you all your sacrifice.

We may have you hold out to them many times. I wonder how you're given to life.

[32 : 42] I'm in that place once again. I'm in that place once again. And once again I look from all when cross may you die.

I'm awful by your mercy and I'm broken inside. Once again I thank you once again I'm born at my heart.

I'm full of praise to the highest which we know will end.

I hope may I will but for now I marvel of this saving grace I'm full of praise once again.

I'm full of praise once again. And once again I look from all the cross may you die.

[33 : 49] I'm humbled by your mercy and I'm broken inside. Once again I thank you once again I'm full of praise.

tonight. Thank you Thank you for the cross, my friend.

Thank you for the cross. Thank you for the cross. Thank you for the cross, my friend. And once again I look for the cross where you die.

I'm humbled by your mercy and I'm broken inside. Once again I thank you. Once again I look for the cross.

Father God, we thank you for the love that you have shown to us in Jesus Christ. May we take hold of it, abide in it, and never forget it. In Jesus' name, amen.