

Being Jesus' Friend

John 15:9-17

Introduction

Last week, we said that this was part of the passage of Scripture known as the **UPPER ROOM DISCOURSES** whose theme is preparing the disciples for the mission of taking the Gospel message of salvation to the world. And we must interpret these passages for ourselves with that in mind. We keep these verses in the context of the mission of the church. Last week, we talked about what it means to abide in Jesus—that we abide in Him when we hold fast to His Word. In **verses 9 and 10**, Jesus continues with the concept of abiding. He says we are to *abide in His love* as He has *abided in the Father's love*. He has done this by *keeping His Father's commandments*. This is not a commingling of **LAW** and **GOSPEL**. Love and keeping commandments go together. We can't love God without keeping His commandments; and we can't keep His commandments without loving Him. We know it's not about Law since, He tells us that His goal for us is that our *joy may be full* (**v. 11**). Abiding in His love means we are His friends. **Verses 12-17** tell us how we are His friends and what it looks like to be His friend.

What We Look Like as His Friends

Obedience

"You are my friends if you do what I command you" (**v. 14**). The 'if' here does not show a causal relationship, but that these two things are intertwined. Keeping His commandments is a sign of being His friend. This is the first part of what a friend of Jesus looks like.

The Commandment—Love One Another

The commandment that we are to obey is to *love one another as Christ has loved us* (**v. 12**). Aren't there other commandments? What about loving God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength? Let's look at our Epistle lesson for today (Read **1 John 5:1-3**). Love of God and love of others are tied together. St. John says in the **4th chapter** of his first epistle that *if anyone says, "I love God", and hates his brother, he is a liar* (**1 John 4:20**). Love of God and love of our brother are intertwined, as are our love for God and keeping His commandments, as we said at the outset and as St. John says in our reading today. This love cannot be confused with the love of the world. To love others as He has loved us is to love sacrificially, to put our brother and sister ahead of ourselves.

Bear Lasting Fruit

"I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide" (**v. 16**). Jesus takes us back to last weeks' lesson about bearing fruit. While 'fruit' refers to people being won to Christ, it also here, refers to all works done for Jesus. Works done in Christ's name will last. And this points to the rest of that verse.

Pray in His Name

"So that whatever you ask the Father in My name, He may give it to you" (**v. 16**). To pray in Jesus' name means to pray according to His will. If we are abiding in Jesus, our yearnings will be in line with His will for our lives. So, we will pray for that which God already wants to give us.

How We Are Jesus' Friends:

So, how did we get to be friends of Jesus?

He Has Chosen and Appointed Us

Jesus says, *"You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you"* (v. 16). Before we had faith in Jesus, we were *dead in our sins*, according to the Apostle Paul (***Ephesians 2:1***). So, we couldn't choose Him. Some think that, in His foreknowledge, God saw we would be good or do something to merit His call. But ***Hebrews 11:6*** says that *without faith it is impossible to please [God]*. So, before being awakened to faith by Jesus, we could not do anything good. Only works done by faith can be called good works. Jesus has appointed us. We have not chosen to be His follower in any way. It is comforting to realize that our salvation in no way depends on us. If it did, we could never be sure of it.

He Has Revealed Himself to Us

(Read ***Colossians 2:24-26***). Paul is calling the Gospel a mystery. How is it a mystery? It is a mystery because the human mind cannot know it. It can only be known as God reveals it to us. Jesus is *the image of the invisible Father* (***Colossians 1:15***). As such, He has revealed God to us. He calls us His friends because He has revealed Himself to us. God has chosen to reveal Himself to us in His Word. He also revealed Himself to us through *the Word made flesh* (***John 1:14***). This is why and how He calls us His friends.

Means of Grace

We come to the Table because Jesus invited us as His friends to eat His body and drink His blood. When we partake of the Sacrament, we are being friends of Jesus. We are reminded that we are not His friends through any merit or work of our own. We are His friends by His choice, through His broken body and shed blood. And He has made us His friends to love one another as He has loved us, with the same sacrificial love.

*And the peace of God,
Which surpasses all understanding,
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
