

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

The Friends of Christ

Part 3

John 15:16

Having a friend is a wonderful thing. It is a wonderful thing because friends are typically people that we can count on. But unfortunately this might not always be the case. Not because people are unwilling to be a friend, even a good friend, but rather because, given the right set of circumstances, they just can't within them selves pull it off.

This brings me to a fictional story about two friends who were out walking in the woods. They stumbled upon a mama bear and her two cubs. She reared up and gave a loud bellow as a warning. One of the friends dropped down and began to pray, the other dropped down and tightened his shoelaces. The friend who was praying said, "What are you doing, you can't hope to outrun that bear," to which the second friend replied, "I don't have to out run the bear, I only have to out run you!"

Given the right set of circumstances even our best friend might disappoint us. Not because their spirit would be unwilling to support us, supply for us, or even to defend us but rather simply because they are not perfect just as we are not perfect. Our spirit may be willing but our flesh may be weak.

But there is someone who is in fact perfect and that is Jesus. And if there is anyone who we would want to know is in fact our friend it would be Him for the simple reason that once we became the friend of Christ He will remain a faithful friend to us in any and every situation both in time and eternity and this is an extremely comforting thought.

This brings us to the passage that we are currently considering in **John 15:12-16** where Jesus seeks to comfort His disciples by reassuring them, even in light of His imminent departure, that He is in fact their friend.

So let me read for you **John 15:12-16**. **"This is my commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. (13) Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. (14) You are My friends, if you do what I command you. (15) No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. (16) You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He may give to you."**

So did Christ in these verses in fact reassure His disciples that He in fact was their friend? Absolutely! What did He say in **John 15:15**? **"No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what His master is doing; but I have called you friends."**

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But Jesus did not limit what He said to His disciples to a simple declaration of His friendship. Friendship with Christ is a wonderful privilege, and those who are enjoying it will be characterized by five different things outlined for us in **John 15:12-16**.

Several weeks ago we covered the first of those five characteristics. And what was that first characteristic? The friends of Jesus will be characterized by their love for one another (John 15:12-13). We saw this I believe very clearly in **John 15:12** when Christ said, **“This is my commandment, that you love one another.”** And of course as we discovered last week, the love that we are to have for one another should be sacrificial in nature. And why is this?

Our love for one another as the friends of Jesus needs to be sacrificial in nature because this is the way that Christ in fact loved us and this is exactly how He has commanded us to love one another. Let me again read for you **John 15:12** but this time I will read the whole verse. Speaking to His friends Jesus said, **“This is my commandment, that you love one another just as I have loved you.”** And how had Jesus loved them? He had loved them sacrificially.

So, what is the first characteristic of those who are enjoying a friendship with Christ? They will love one another and they will love one another sacrificially. So, what was the second characteristic that would be true in respect to a friend of Christ?

The friends of Jesus will know divine truth (John 15:15). Let me read for you **John 15:15** **“No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.”** Christ did not keep His eleven disciples in the dark like a typical master might keep their slaves in the dark. Rather what did Christ do? Christ made what He was doing known to His disciples.

He made His truths known to His disciples, as He would make His truths known to a friend by supplying them the faith to embrace and incorporate those truths into their lives.

If we are a friend of Christ and He has made His truths known to us as He would make His truths known to a friend then we will be changed. We will become a new creature in Christ, old things will have past away and new things will have come.

We are now ready to go on in our study to a third characteristic of those who are enjoying friendship with Christ.

The friends of Jesus do not choose Him but rather He chooses them (John 15:16). Let me read for you **John 15:16**. **“You did not choose Me, but I chose you.”** So, what exactly did Christ seek to communicate to His disciples when He used these words? This is what He sought to communicate: When Jesus told His disciples that they had not chosen Him but rather He had chosen them He in effect told His disciples that apart from His choice they would never have become His friends.

Why would they never have become His friends? The reason why they would never have become His friends apart from His choice is because prior to His choice they were His enemies (John 15:18-19). Let me read for you what Christ said to His disciples in **John 15:18-19**.

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“If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. (19) If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.”

The world hates Christ and those who are of the world are the enemies of Christ, and apart from Christ's choice these enemies of Christ would remain forever the enemies of Christ.

Isn't that so? If we have an enemy, how likely would it be that they would want to have anything to do with us? I would think that the probability of that would be incredibly small. In fact, as long as they are an enemy I would say that the probability of them wanting to be our friend is non-existent.

Therefore the only way for anyone who is a part of this world and therefore the enemy of Christ to become a friend of Christ is not for them to choose Christ but rather for Christ to choose them. And this is of course in essence is what Jesus told His disciples He had done for them in **John 15:16**.

So now let me ask you this question. If the Disciples of Christ did not choose Him but rather He chose them, when in fact did He do this? Christ chose His disciples and certain others to become His friends before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4). Let me read for you **Ephesians 1:4** where we find the Apostle Paul addressing the Church at Ephesus. **“Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world...”** And who is the “us” here in **Ephesians 1:4**? The “us” would be genuine, born-again Christians or in other words His friends.

We might become the friend of Christ at a point in time or in other words when Christ makes the truth of His Gospel known to us as we would make the truth of His Gospel known to a friend, but we were chosen by Christ to be His friend even before the world began.

Last week I shared with you that 45 years ago at a Baptist Church in Compton that Christ made His gospel message known to me as He would make His gospel message known to a friend by providing me the faith to believe. If Christ had not done this I would have remained a part of this world and therefore His enemy.

If we become the friend of Christ by placing our faith in Him at a certain point in time, it is only because Christ had chosen us before the foundation of the world to become His friend because He is the one who has to supply to us the faith.

This teaching is called the doctrine of election. It is a difficult doctrine but it is what the Bible teaches. If you would like to learn more about this particular doctrine I would encourage you to visit our web site and go to “resources” and then to “position papers” and then open up the page entitled “election.” But now we need to go on.

Christ had just told His disciples that He had chosen them to be His friends but He is not finished. He goes on to alert them to the significance of this choice in light of how they might in fact expect to live their lives.

So let us continue to read **John 15:16**. **“You did not choose me, but I chose you, and appointed you.”**

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So, what does the word “appointed” mean? The word “appointed” (TITHEMI) is different from the word “chosen” (EKLEGO). It means “to appoint for special service” (Luke 6:12-14; 1 Corinthians 12:27-28; 2 Timothy 1:10-11). Let me illustrate this for you from other passages.

Let me read for you **Luke 6:12-13**. “**And it was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God. (13) And when day came, He called His disciples to Him; and chose (TITHEMI) twelve of them, whom He also named as apostles.**”

So, what happened here? Jesus in these verses collected all of His disciples together but then from among those He chose, or in other words “appointed,” twelve of them for special service.”

Let me read for you **1 Corinthians 12:27-28**. “**Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it. (28) And God has appointed (TITHEMI) in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues.** Paul in these verses is making it quite clear that the Lord has appointed each us within Christ's church for some kind of special service.

Let me read for you **2 Timothy 1:10-11**. “**But now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, (11) for which I was appointed (TITHEMI) a preacher and an apostle and a teacher.**” Why did Paul do what he did? He did what he did because he believed that God had appointed him to do it. He believed that God had appointed him to special service.

Therefore when Paul uses the Greek word “TITHEMI” which is translated “appointed” in **John 15:16** He is communicating something very specific. He is communicating to us that not only has He chosen us to be His friend but He has also chosen us for some kind of special service. But what exactly would that be?

The special service that Christ has appointed His friends to do involves “going” (John 15:16). Let us once again go back to **John 15:16**. “**You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that you should go.**” So let me ask you a question. Where would Christ have appointed His friends to go?

When Christ spoke of His friends having been appointed to “go,” it needs to be understood as a going into the world to preach the gospel (Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8; 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12).

No friend of Jesus was ever chosen to stand around and watch. We were chosen to go and tell the world about Christ for the simple reason that the world apart from our going will not be able to come to Christ! Isn't this exactly what we see the Scriptures repeatedly telling us?

Let me read for you **Mark 16:15**. And “**And He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.'**”

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Now let me read for you what Jesus told His disciples in **Acts 1:8** shortly after His resurrection. **“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”**

Did these disciples whom He had chosen to be His friends actually do what Christ had appointed them to do? Absolutely! This is exactly what they did. And this is exactly what we need to do?

Do we believe this? Do we believe that this is what Christ wants us to do? Do we believe that this is what Christ has appointed us to do as our special service?

I would hope that the answer to this question would be yes! How could it not be yes? What did Jesus tell His disciples? What did He tell these friends? He told them, **“You did not choose me but I chose you and appointed you that you should go.”**

When Christ appoints His friends to go He in effect has made them His ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:17-20). Let me read for you **2 Corinthians 5:17-20**. **“Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. (18) Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, (19) namely that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. (20) Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ.”**

There is no higher calling that anyone in this world could ever be given than to go into this world as a minister of reconciliation, an ambassador of Christ, the King of kings and Lord of Lords. What a high privilege.

When you get up tomorrow morning and you are getting ready to go to school you should not simply go out of that door as a student but rather as a minister of reconciliation an ambassador of Christ. And you might say but where is my authority? John 15:16 is your authority. You have been appointed for this special service.

When you as a homemaker get up tomorrow morning and face your family and later go out into the community in order to supply for your family you are not simply getting up out of your bed or going out into the community as a homemaker but rather as a minister of reconciliation an ambassador of Christ.

When you as an employee get up tomorrow morning and face your commute to your workplace you are not simply getting up and facing that commute to your workplace as an employee but rather as a minister of reconciliation an ambassador of Christ.

Do we believe what I have just shared? Then we need to act on this as best as we can. I know some of you might feel inadequate. Some of you might be fearful. But none of these excuses are sufficient in light of what? None of these excuses are sufficient in light of the fact that we, as the chosen ones of Christ, have been appointed to go into this world with the gospel of Christ as His ambassadors.

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I believe that this morning I have shared truth. May God grant us, the chosen ones, the grace to go into this world with the gospel just as He has appointed us.