

10.14.18 ~ John 15:12-16, Jesus Calls Us His Friends

John 15:12-14... Jesus commands His disciples to love one another with the ultimate expression of love, giving one's life for another. He is looking toward the Cross, when He would lay down His own life for them, and for us.

Jesus is talking about agape love, divine love, eternal love that comes from God to all who repent and believe in God's Son, Jesus Christ, for salvation.

See 1John 4:7-8, 20; 5:1-2.

Our love from God and for God is fully expressed by our love for one another, as Jesus told them before (**John 13:35**), "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

As Jesus is speaking to the disciples, He is just hours away from the Cross, when He would die for their sins, for the sins of all mankind, so that everyone who believes in Him will receive eternal life from God.

1Peter 3:18, "Christ died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit."

Our greatest need is forgiveness for sin, Jesus laid down His own life to pay for our sins, setting us free from sin's penalty (cf **Romans 3:10-12, 23-24; 6:23; 8:1**). When a person hears the message of Christ and believes in Him, that person is saved, and God turns no one away (cf **Romans 10:9-10, 13**).

When a person obeys the Word of God (**John 15:14**), they express their friendship with Christ, giving evidence that they belong to God, and are indeed one of God's children, a member of the eternal family of God.

John 1:12-13, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God."

In **Matthew 12** Jesus is talking to a crowd. They tell Him His family is there looking for Him, then Jesus responds in a very strange way (**verses 48-50**), "Jesus answered the one who was telling Him and said, 'Who is My mother and who are My brothers?' And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, 'Behold My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother.'" (biological/temporal vs spiritual/eternal)

In **John 6** Jesus is talking to a crowd, the people ask Him what they need to do to be right with God, and Jesus responds in **verse 29**, "believe in Him (God's Son) whom He (God the Father) has sent." Those who do the will of the Father in heaven are those who repent and believe in Jesus Christ for salvation.

Obedience to God (doing works) cannot in anyway bring about salvation; but genuine salvation will always produce good works in a believer's life.

Ephesians 2:8-10, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may

boast. For we are His [God's] workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them."

Titus 3:5, "He (God) saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy."

When we were reading **John 15:1-11**, a few weeks ago, we studied about the Vine and the branches. Like branches on a grape vine, those who are genuinely saved and sustained by Christ, will bear fruit, i.e., they will do the good works of God, serving God, because of Christ in them.

Read John 15:15... There are some examples, in the OT, of men who are described as slaves of God: Moses (Numbers 12:7), Joshua (Joshua 24:29), David (2Samuel 7:5), Isaiah (Isaiah 20:3), and the Messiah Himself (Isaiah 42:1). In the NT there are examples of men who are called slaves of Jesus Christ: Paul (Romans 1:1), James (James 1:1), Peter (2Peter 1:1), Jude (Jude 1), and John (Revelation 1:1).

The Greek word *doulos* is translated *slave* in the NT, it describes one who is in total submission too and sustained by his master, i.e., as Christians we are to live in total submission and service to God.

It is interesting that normally slaves did not know what their master was doing, as he did not confide in them, he merely told them what to do and when to do it. But as slaves to God through Christ, we are told our Master's plan, purpose and will; and in fact, even though we are His slaves, we are called His friends and He tells us what the Father wants us to know.

It is only the friends of Christ who are told what is in the heart and mind of God, the deep mysteries of God, those things which were veiled or hidden in the past and continue to be unknowable to those who reject God's Son.

What things am I talking about? I'm glad you asked! Here are a few:

- The mystery of the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 13:11)
- The mystery of God's will (Ephesians 1:9)
- The mystery of a Savior in human flesh, born to a virgin (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:21)
- The mystery of Immanuel [God with us] (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23)
- The mystery of being spiritually and eternally birthed as children of God (John 1:13; 3:3-8)
- The mystery of God living in us (Colossians 1:26-27)

You see, unbelievers are enemies of God and they cannot understand these mysteries; we all were at enmity with God before we repented and trusted in Jesus for salvation (**see Ephesians 2:1-3; Romans 5:8-11**).

Read John 15:16... In Israel, during the time of Christ, it was normal practice for a disciple/student to choose his own teacher [Rabbi] to follow; but Jesus says, "He chose them and appointed them [set them apart for a special purpose], that they would "go" and bear fruit, showing the presence of God through their lives.

Biblical Christianity is not a spectator sport, you do not enter into an eternal relationship with God through Christ, so that you can sit on the sidelines or be part of an audience. Christianity is about being, doing, going - for our purpose is to show and tell others about Christ.

In **John 15:16**, Jesus says we are to go and bear fruit, fruit that will remain. **See Matthew 28:18-20...** Do you understand that commission? If you genuinely belong to God through Christ, your purpose is to bear fruit that will remain, i.e., to tell others about Christ so that they might repent, believe and receive eternal life.

Talk about fruit that remains, nothing lasts longer than eternity; we are to be telling people about Jesus Christ [crucified, resurrected, and coming again] so that they might receive eternal life through Him; and we are to then be immersing them in the Bible's teachings about the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

I believe that is what Jesus has in mind when He commands in **verse 16**, "go and bear fruit that will remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you."

Jesus came to die as payment for our sins, to save us. We serve Him best by living out and proclaiming the simple message, "Jesus Saves!"

Look at John 14:12-13... We will never do anything greater than Jesus did; I mean, come on, He is the Creator of everything; and yet, He never preached the gospel outside of Israel (an area of 120 x 60 miles); but think about this, His true followers, His true friends, have taken His message to the ends of the earth.

If you are truly friends of God's Son, Jesus Christ the Lord, then you will earnestly seek to follow His example by bringing the Good News from God to the lost, for that pleases Him greatly, and is in fact His plan.

Paul writes (**1Timothy 2:3-4**) that God our Savior wants all men (women and children of age) to be saved through their knowledge of the truth. That is what God wants, that is God's will, for people to be saved through Christ's righteousness (**see 2Corinthians 5:17-21**)!

Jesus declares (**John 14:6**) that He is the only way to God, the only truth of God, and the only life with God, and no one enters heaven except through Him.

True friends of Christ will pray for the salvation of the lost (for our family, friends, acquaintances, enemies, and those we have never met), but we are not just to pray and then leave the rest for God.

We are to pray, continually, but we need to get up and go, to be about our Master's business, sharing the message of hope and eternal life, introducing people to Jesus Christ, God's Son, Savior and Lord, Sustainer and Judge over everything.

We don't serve the Lord out of fear, or to be praised, or to receive more rewards in heaven, or to procure a bigger and better room in the New Jerusalem that is pictured coming down out of heaven in **Revelation 21**.

As believers and followers of Christ, we serve Him because He is our Master, the KING of Kings and LORD of Lords; but He is also our dearest Friend, and (**1John 4:19**) "we love [Him], because He first loved us."

Our greatest joy ought to be introducing others to our Friend from heaven, Jesus Christ, God's Son, who loves us all so much, that He died to set us free from sin's penalty and curse, that we might be recipients of eternal life in heaven with God, where everything will be made new and never again will there be any sorrow, or pain, or suffering, or death.

It is no wonder that John writes, in the closing two verses of the Book of Revelation, "Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen."

Pastor Mike

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