

## Friend of Sinners

**Key Verse: John 15:13-16**

**Key Thought: Jesus calls us His Friend despite our downfalls.**

*“Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.”*

*John 15:13-16 NIV*

Webster’s dictionary defines “*friend*” as “*a favored companion.*” Aristotle was once asked, “What is a friend?” He replied, “A single soul dwelling in two bodies.” I personally am grateful to the friends that I have made as I have traveled through this life. The Lord has allowed my life to be blessed by having the opportunity to enjoy the friendship of some very special people. Many of them sit in this very room this morning!

However, there is a Friend who is more special than any other I have ever met in this life. His name is Jesus and I do not call Him my Friend, but He calls me His. ***Think about that for a minute.*** If the Prime Minister were to call me his friend, it means that he has raised me to his level. However, if I presume to call him my friend, I have not elevated him at all, but I have brought him down somewhat. It is one thing for me to sing “***What A Friend I have In Jesus.***” It is quite another when Jesus says that He has a friend in me! There is a vast difference between the two!

As I read my Bible, I can find several places where God and Jesus referred to certain ones as their friends. For instance, in the Old Testament, God spoke to Moses as a man speaks to his friend,

***“The LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend.”***

***Exodus 33:11 NIV***

Abraham is called the friend of God,

***“And the scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,” and he was called God’s friend.”***

***James 2:23***

Abraham’s seed, the faithful of Israel, are called the friends of God in ***Isaiah 41:8***. In the New Testament a man named Lazarus is called a friend by Jesus, ***John 11:11***. In our text, the disciples are called Christ’s friends. Even more amazing is the fact that one of the charges His enemies made against Jesus was that He was a ***“friend of publicans and sinners”***, ***Matthew 11:19***. But, even this makes sense against the backdrop of ***Matthew 26:50***. In that verse a man named Judas is leading an army to arrest Jesus and the Lord calls this Judas ***“friend”***.

This morning I want to talk about this man Jesus, who is The Sinner’s Friend. I believe that these verses reveal some ways in which His friendship toward you and me can be readily seen. Let’s look at these ways that we can know that Jesus is our Friend, as we think about the subject: ***The Friend of Sinners***.

## **I. HIS FRIENDSHIP IS SEEN IN HIS SACRIFICE**

- a) **It Was Voluntary** – The statement, “*Lay down his life*”, indicates a voluntary act. No man “murdered Jesus” or took away His life against His will. He voluntarily gave up His life on the cross. He makes this clear by several statements that He made during life and during death:

*“No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.”*

*John 10:18*

- b) **It Was Vicarious** – The word *vicarious* means “*performed or suffered by one as a substitute for another or to the benefit or advantage of another.*” Jesus tells us in this verse that His life was being given up “*for his friends*”. In other words, His death was not for Himself, but it was for others. When Jesus went to the cross, He was doing so on the behalf of others. It was for those people that He called His friends.

*“He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.”*

*1 John 2:2*

Jesus was dying for you so that you wouldn't have to go to Hell!

c) **It Was Vicious** – The phrase “*lay down his life*” is wholesome on the surface. It doesn’t nearly convey the depths of suffering that Jesus endured when He gave up His life for us. It is only by looking at several verses throughout the Bible that the picture begins to become clear that He paid a terribly high price when He died for us.

- **Betrayed by Judas and deserted by the disciples - Matthew 26:47-56**
- **Beaten by the Temple guards - Luke 22:63-64**
- **Rejected by the very people He came to save - Matthew 27:17-25**
- **Scourged - Matthew 27:26**
- **Mocked by the soldiers and crowned with thorns - Matthew 27:26-29**
- **Beard plucked from His face - Isaiah 50:6**
- **Stripped Naked - Matthew 27:35**
- **Crucified - Nailed to a cross and hung up to die – Matthew 27:35**
- **Absolutely beaten beyond belief - Isaiah 50:14**

When His death is considered from this viewpoint, it takes on renewed significance and glory! He did all of this for you!

d) **It Was Victorious** – There are those who look at the death of Jesus on the cross and cry “*What a tragedy!*” Yet, His death was not tragic! His death ranks as one of the most glorious days in the history of this world! When He was nearing the end of His time on the cross, Jesus uttered a cry that proclaimed His death as a time of great victory!

*When he had received the drink, Jesus said, “It is finished.” With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.*

*John 19:30*

He knew that in His death, He had satisfied the righteous demands of God concerning the atonement for sin. The fact that God was forever satisfied was proven three days later when Jesus was resurrected from the dead - Now, sin could not only be forgiven, but redeemed sinners would live forever!

It is easy to see His friendship in His sacrifice! However, His friendship is also seen on other ways as well.

## II. **HIS FRIENDSHIP IS SEEN IN HIS SHARING**

These two verses tell us that as our Friend, Jesus shares some special gifts with us.

- a) **He Shares His Love** – Jesus reminds us that He loves us! This is a truth that fills the pages of the Word of God! His love is said to be “*everlasting*” in *Jeremiah 31:3*. His love is said to be the motive behind the cross in *Romans 5:8*. His love is something from which those who are in it can never be separated, as stated in *Romans 8:38-39*. Love is said to be the essence of divine nature in *1 John 4:8*. There is nothing in the world like knowing that you are loved by God! Of course, this is just like a true friend!
  
- b) **He Shares His Life** – These verses tell us that Jesus not only gave His life FOR us on the cross, but that He also IMPARTS His life to us day by day. This is seen in the great change He makes in every life He touches. He takes us with all our sins and fleshly desires, saves us by His grace and gives us a heart to live for Him! The redeemed sinner literally becomes a vessel in which the life of Jesus Christ lives, and every life He touches, changes! This is seen countless times in the Gospels. When Jesus passed by, lives were forever changed! The blind, lepers, deaf, possessed, lame, sick, and dead. All were miraculously, perfectly, and permanently changed by the power of His touch!
  
- c) **He Shares His Lessons** – Jesus tells His disciples that He has chosen to treat them like friends. He will not keep the truth hidden from them, but He will teach them all things about the Father. This is another blessing of having Jesus as a Friend. He teaches us truth about God, His work, and His word.

Of course, He does this through the works of the Holy Spirit,

***“But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.”***

***John 16:13***

He teaches us about God: How to love Him; How to live for Him; How to worship Him; How to praise Him; How to enjoy Him; How to fellowship with Him; How to share Him with others. He shares with us the deepest secrets of divine truth. He holds nothing back from His friends!

If these two ways were all we had to show us how Jesus reveals Himself as our Friend, they would be enough. However, there is another way that Jesus shows His friendship to you and me.

## **II. HIS FRIENDSHIP IS SEEN IN HIS SALVATION**

**We Are Convicted by Him** – If you are saved, or if you ever get saved, it is because the Lord is graceful! ***Hebrews 13:18*** says ***“Pray for us; we are convinced that we have a clear conscience and desire to live honorably in every way.”*** Before the sinner can be saved, he must come to the Lord for salvation. That drawing toward Him is what we call conviction. It is an inner awareness of one’s sins and a certain knowledge that Jesus Christ is the only hope of the sinner. When sinners are called to come to Him and they respond in faith, salvation is the result.

Thank God for a Friend like Jesus who would take our place on Calvary, and in spite of our sins, love us enough to call us to Himself for salvation! That is what I call a true Friend!

a) **We Are Called by Him** – If salvation weren't enough, after He saves us, He calls us into His service, as stated in *Ephesians 2:10*. He does this by gifting each of us to fulfill a special place in the body of Christ. His plan for us after salvation is to use us for His own glory in the world. He desires that we be actively involved in His work. He has promised those who will serve Him that they will enjoy His power and His success in His service. His promise is that we will be used to accomplish things that will be eternal in their scope. That is a true Friend who knows us as intimately as Jesus does, and yet still He chooses to have intimate contact with us, and beyond that, He chooses to use us in His service for the glory of God.

b) **We Are Comforted by Him** – He lets us know that our relationship is further blessed by the fact that He promises us that we will enjoy an intimate relationship with His Father also. Jesus tells us that because of our friendship, we are brought into a place where we will receive answers to our prayers. This is a great comfort as we travel through this world! Because we are in this relationship with Jesus, we are reconciled to the Father, and as a result, we are invited to come before Him and to make our petitions and requests known. The idea here is that we do not travel through this world without a Helper and without a Friend.

In closing, I want to talk about one of the all-time greats in baseball, Babe Ruth. His bat had the power of a cannon, and his record of 714 home runs remained until Hank Aaron came along. The Babe was the idol of sports fans, but in time age took its toll, and his popularity began to wane. Finally, the Yankees traded him to the Braves. In one of his last games in Cincinnati, Babe Ruth began to falter. He struck out and made several misplays that allowed the Reds to score five runs in one inning. As the Babe walked toward the dugout, chin down and dejected, there rose from the stands an enormous storm of boos and catcalls. Some fans shook their fists. Then a wonderful thing happened. A little boy jumped over the railing, and with tears streaming down his cheeks he ran out to the great athlete. Unashamedly, he flung his arms around the Babe's legs and held on tightly. Babe Ruth scooped him up, hugged him, and set him down again. Patting him gently on the head, he took his hand and the two of them walked off the field together.

Once, I was like Babe Ruth. I had nothing to offer. I was used up and wasted by sin. Yet, a man named Jesus leapt across the railing of Glory. He came to this world, lived a perfect life, shed His blood on Calvary, and arose from the dead. All for me! Then the day came when He came to where I was, took my hand in His and saved me by His grace. Now we are walking across the field of this life together, headed toward the dugout! He isn't ashamed of me! He isn't disappointed in me! He just loves me and walks with me. That is what I call a Friend!

***Do you know Him today? You can!  
If He is calling, then you need to answer that call and be saved.  
Will you do that?***



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Date: October 29, 2023

Place: FCA

Time: 10:30am

After Service Song: Jesus, Friend of Sinners