

SERMON : *WHAT A FRIEND WE HAVE IN JESUS*

CALL TO WORSHIP (based on Psalm 100)

L The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

P And also with You.

L Shout to God, all the earth.

P Worship the Lord with joy and gladness.

L Come before God with laughter and praise.

P Adore the One to whom we belong,
the shepherd who tends us with everlasting care.

L Come to God's gates with thanksgiving.

P Enter his courts with reverence and bless His holy name.

L Bless God's name for He is good. His love endures forever.

OPENING PRAYER

Gracious and Loving God, we praise You this day and bless Your name for You have done great and marvellous things. You have made known Your victory and revealed Your saving love in the sight of all nations. You have lifted up the lowly and given them honour. You remember all Your promises and love us with a love that is strong and true. We pray to You this day, O God, that you would confirm in us once again the wonders of Your love. Touch us with Your Holy Spirit and lead us by the power of Your living Word that we might love that which You love and do that which You do.

We come also knowing that You forgive us when we come to You. As we come to You now, forgive us of our sins whether they were in thought, word or deed.

Be with the health care workers, the doctors, nurses and first responders. They are carrying tremendous burdens for us to keep us safe and healthy.

Be with the leaders of this country as they make important decisions about returning to some sense of normalcy in this country.

There are many people in this community who are suffering in body, mind or soul. Give them comfort and a sense of healing and safety as they face their world. As we are here with You right now, we remember them by name.

As we continue to worship with You let us pray the words You have given us to pray: *Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power, and the glory, forever and ever.*
Amen.

I JOHN 5:1-6

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well. This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. This is the one who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.

John 15:9-17

"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. {10} If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. {11} I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. {12} My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. {13} Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. {14} You are my friends if you do what I command. {15} 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. {16} You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit; fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. {17} This is my command: Love each other.

SERMON: "WHAT A FRIEND WE HAVE IN JESUS"

Let us pray: Gracious God, as we celebrate your love and your grace, help us to receive what you have prepared for us.

Grant that we might hear what you would have us hear, see what you would have us see, and do what you would have us do.

Amen.

Last week was Mother's Day and we talked about love. We remembered the New Commandment that Jesus gave us.

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so, you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

This week I want to continue that theme from the words of Jesus again.

On the night of His betrayal, Jesus spoke these to His disciples.

"I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have heard from my father. You did not choose me, but I chose you."

Some of the best and some of the worst moments of my life have to do with being chosen. Do you remember, as a child what it felt like not to be chosen to play a game? It would make us sad and it was not nice to be left out. It was a pretty ego bruising thing to not be chosen. But what a different feeling it was to be among the chosen. Maybe you were chosen for a job or admission to college or university. Maybe you were chosen to sing in the choir or to be part of that "in" group. What a wonderful experience it is to be chosen! To know that we are important to someone, that we are valued, that we are desirable.

Being chosen is important stuff.

Today, in our text, we hear that the Son of God, the Christ, the Chosen One of God, has chosen us and chosen us not simply to be servants, but to be His friend and without us even seeking Him, without us even choosing Him.

That is incredible to me. Incredible and wonderful.

We, you and I, are of value, of worth to Jesus, to the son of the living God.

I want you today to think about what this means.

I am sure you have had the experience of being told by someone that they love you, or that they think you are very special. But maybe you have had a hard time accepting their statement; a hard time accepting it not because of their

behaviour but because of your own behaviour; your sense of your inadequacy; your sense of your sinfulness, or your lack of ability.

So often as we travel through this life, we turn away the love of others, not because of anything in them, that puts us off, but because of things inside us. Maybe it is because of the fear that friendship being promised to us isn't applicable to the "real me". Maybe it is because of the fear that the other person will end up discovering the truth about us; whatever we think that truth is. We are afraid that they will turn away from us when we need them the most.

So many of us are so frightened, so afraid, so uncertain that even when we are chosen, we do not feel the joy that being chosen can bring to us.

And again, some of us are so suspicious, so uncertain of ourselves, so afraid that when we are chosen, we think that we have been chosen, not for our selves but what it is that we can do for the one that has chosen us.

This should not be!

Not everyone is user.

Not everyone judges by the exterior.

Not everyone expects things of us that will end up dragging us down and wearing us out.

Hear this! **You are chosen!**

Chosen by the Christ, the Chosen One himself!

He wants you on His team, not for what you can or cannot do, not for your abilities or lack thereof, but because He loves you and wants to show His love to you and through you to others.

He knows who you are, and He calls you.

He knows what you have done and what you will do, and He chooses you.

He chooses you, not to be His servant or His slave but to be His friend.

That is His love, and the love of the Father, for you.

That's what it says in today's gospel reading!

Jesus calls those who have been following Him His friend; those who have been listening to Him; those who have been trying to do what He asks of them, whether they have done it well or poorly.

"I do not call you slaves or servants any longer", He says, "but I have called you friends"

Now that is a saying which would be even greater to those who heard it for the first time than it is to us.

The term "Doulos", which is translated as the slave or the servant of God in this passage, was no title of shame at the time Jesus spoke it. It was a title of the highest honour.

Moses was the Doulos of God (Deuteronomy 34: 5); so was Joshua (Joshua 24: 29); so was David (Psalm 89:20). Doulos was a title which Paul counted it an honour to use (Titus 1: 1); and so did James (James 1:1).

The greatest men and women of the past had been proud to be called the douli, the slaves of God.

And yet Jesus says: ***"I have something greater for you than this, you are no longer to be called my slaves; rather I call you my friends."***

Christ offers an intimacy with God which not even the greatest and most worthy people knew before He came into the world.

The idea of being the friend of God has a background.

Abraham was the friend of God (Isaiah 41:8). In The Book of Wisdom (7:27). Wisdom is said to make us the friends of God. But this phrase of Jesus is really seen by a custom which was practised both at the courts of the Roman Emperors and those of the eastern kings.

At these courts there was a very select group called the friends of the king, or the friends of the Emperor. At all times they had access to the king: they even had the right to come to his bed chamber at the beginning of the day. He talked to them before he talked to his generals, his rulers, and his statesmen. The friends of the king were those who had the closest and the most intimate connection with him. Jesus calls us his friends. He has chosen us for that role, that position, that intimacy, even when we, like the first disciples, have not thought or dared to choose him or regard him in that fashion.

What a tremendous thing!

It means that we do not need to gaze longingly at God from afar off. We are not like slaves who have no right whatever to enter into the presence of the master but are simply expected to obey his order. We are not like someone in a crowd whose only glimpse of the king is in the passing on some state occasion, but who nonetheless must pay taxes and serve that king. Rather, we are privileged to enter into the very bed chamber of our God and to speak with Him in the most intimate of terms about those things He wants us to do and those things we would like Him to do. We are allowed to see what is in His heart to share His joys and concerns

and we are told that He will listen to those things upon our hearts; those things that excite us and those things that disturb us.

Our Lord, our friend, our God, has cried with us and for us.

He wept over Jerusalem and those who would not come to him for His healing touch and forgiving word.

He cried at the tomb of Lazarus for Mary and for Martha and for all who were gathered there with Him.

He weeps today for us and with us when we are hurt and when we are lost and when are afraid.

He knows us and He loves us so much. He love us so much that He became one of us.

That is part of what makes the gospel such good news.

Jesus has walked our walk and He did it as friend does it, not simply to show us how things should be done, but to accompany us on our way.

He wants to be our companion as well as our guide; our support as well as our teacher.

He does all this without a word of judgement, except that judgement which a friend makes; the judgement of mercy, and of encouragement, and of gentle correction.

Like other friends Jesus shares Himself with us.

He trusts us with His treasures.

He is faithful to us even when we do wrong.

He does things for us even when we are not able to do things for Him.

He treats us as an equal, as His brothers and sisters before the Father.

He forgives us when we ask for forgiveness and often when we don't and He seeks for us the joy that should be ours,

As our Lord says to His disciples in today's reading: ***"I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy be full."***

Jesus is our friend. He is a friend who shares with us all that He knows of the mystery of God. He is a friend who opens to us the gates of heaven that we, with Him, might rejoice and be glad and enter in.

We are His friend, chosen by Him and appointed to bear fruit; fruit that will last; fruit that will please the Father.

As you go forth today, go knowing that Christ has chosen you, that He finds you worthwhile; that He values you; that He thinks you are important and that He

wants you for His friend. And rejoice in it! Take the joy in it that Christ wants you to have!

And as you go, go resolved to make friends of others, no matter who they are, or what they are about, or what they have or have not done. For that is what it means to have been appointed by Christ to be fruitful.

A final story; one that I have told you before.

A man went to his pastor to say that he felt there was a lack of friendliness among members of the congregation and that people were reluctant to greet one another in church. The pastor agreed with him and said that he had devised a plan to change things. During services the next Sunday, the pastor described the situation to the congregation and said that the following Sunday they would have a brief pause to allow parishioners to turn to those seated behind them and greet them with a friendly hello. After the service, the same man turned around to the woman behind him and said, "Good morning." She looked at him in shocked indignation. She snapped, "That doesn't start until NEXT Sunday!"

The truth is that some folk aren't ready to be friends of either God or us but, regardless of their choice, we are called to be friends to them, to choose to act in love not only towards those who love us but to those who may not fit into our level of society; to people we've never met; to anonymous drivers on the road; to little children who are lost, to aged people who need help to take care of themselves, and of course to our neighbours in the pew no matter how grumpy he or she may be.

Remember, that God has chosen you to be His friend, despite the fact that you and I at the first did not choose Him.

Let us therefore choose, as he asks of us, to be friends to others regardless of what they think or what they do.

Amen.

LET US PRAY

Lord Jesus, Loving God we give You thanks today for choosing us to be Your Friend, for reaching and embracing us and supporting us and helping us even when we have not been ready or willing to reach out and embrace and help You. So often Lord we forget that You are so much more than our Creator; so much more than our guiding light and the judge of what is right and wrong.

You know this, O God. You know how we turn away from You at the very time we need you most; how we seek comfort in those things which do not satisfy, yet You accompany us and reach out to us even in those times.

Truly Lord, you are a friend to us. Help us be a friend to You.

Lord Jesus, Holy God, You have chosen us to be Your friend and You have appointed us to go and bear fruit. We pray that we may indeed bear fruit that results in bringing praise and glory to Your name. Help us to love one another as You love us that this may occur. Show us how to reach out in friendship to everyone who enters our lives and not just to those who reach out in friendship to us. Protect us from the arrows of our enemies as we pray for them. Bless us as we bless those who curse us, and strengthen us as we lift up those who have fallen.

We ask all these things and give You our praise and our service, through Christ Jesus.

Amen.

Here is a YouTube rendition of “What a Friend We Have in Jesus” I hope you enjoy it!

https://youtu.be/cwi_qKVI8lQ

BENEDICTION

Go in peace, love and care for one another in the name of Christ; and may all the blessings of God Almighty, the Father, The Son, and The Holy Spirit, rest upon you now and always.

Amen