

Sunday November 22, 2026
John 15:12-17

Message

Good morning and welcome to Kingsview. If you are new here, we're just a community of people who believe in the power of His Word, the Presence of His Spirit and the beauty of belonging. And my hope and prayer is that you would experience all that and more over the coming weeks and months.

Now, as a church, we've been walking through the book of John and today we find ourselves halfway through John 15 where Jesus continues to give his final instructions to His disciples just hours before entering the trials of the cross. If you have your Bibles with you this morning, I'd like to invite you to turn with me to John 15 where we will be reading verses 12 to 17. I'd also like to invite you to stand- if you are able to - for the reading of the word of God.

John 15:12-17
'12 "This is my command: Love one another as I have loved you. 13 No one has greater love than this: to lay down his life for his friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command you. 15 I do not call you servants anymore, because a servant doesn't know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have heard from my Father. 16 You did not choose me, but I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce fruit and that your fruit should remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he will give you.

17 "This is what I command you: Love one another.'

This text contains a wonderfully simple, yet complex message in which Jesus makes a number of significant statements directly to His disciples about how he views them and what his expectation will be for them once he is gone.

And if you notice, this entire section is bookended with the command to love one another as Christ has loved them. And so, even though this section is only six verses long, by bookending it with the instruction to love one another, Jesus creates a beautiful little package here - almost like a sandwich, where the bread holds everything together, and the ingredients in between add depth and substance and even flavour to the whole thing.

And so today, I want to walk through each of these layers to see what Jesus is communicating to the disciples and how/if it eve applies to us.

Part of the reason I want to take this approach is because sometimes, when searching the scriptures, Jesus can give specific instruction that is meant for the individuals in the story, but not necessarily meant in the same way for those of us reading it thousands of years later.

Take the rich young ruler for example. When he came to Jesus asking what he needed to do to inherit eternal life, Jesus told him to sell everything he owned, give it to the poor, and follow Him. Now, does that mean that every Christian is required to sell everything they own and give it all away? Not necessarily. Jesus was speaking directly to this particular man, exposing the hold that wealth had upon his heart. But the broader principle about the danger of loving money and the importance of surrendering everything to Christ certainly applies to all of us. But the specific example is only for the rich young ruler.

And so, whenever we approach Scripture, it's important to understand who Jesus was originally speaking to, why He was speaking to them, and whether what He was saying was intended exclusively for them or whether it also applies to us today.

And that's particularly important in our passage today, because Jesus makes three significant statements to His disciples. He commands them to love one another, He tells them that they're His friends, and He reminds them that He chose them, rather than the other way around. And then He returns once again to the command to love one another.

And so the first instruction is interesting because here we see a connection between love and friendship. Notice what Jesus says. He instructs them to love one another in the same way that He has loved them. And then he goes on to describe the greatest expression of that kind of love, which is to lay down his life for his friends. Which, interestingly, he now addresses His disciples as His friends.

Which raises the first question for you and I here today. Is Jesus calling just His disciples friends, or is that a reference to all christians? Are you and I friends of God? Can we confidently sing that chorus, 'I am a friend of God???'

The first thing we need to look at here is that this isn't just a label or new identity for the disciples - Jesus doesn't simply call His disciples friends. He actually makes a comparison between being a servant and being a friend.

And when we look at the original Greek language, the distinction becomes a little clearer.

The word for servant in the Greek is the word 'doulos,' which literally refers to a slave or bondservant. Someone who belongs to a master and is under their authority and submits to the will of the master.

Now, the Greek word for friend is 'philos,' which describes someone who is loved, someone who enjoys a personal relationship marked by affection and trust.

And notice how Jesus explains the difference between the two:

He says that a servant doesn't know what his master is doing, but that He has called them friends because He has made known to them everything He has heard from His Father.

And if we back it up to chapter 14, we're reminded that Jesus had already told his disciples that:

John 14:15
'If you love me, you will keep my commands.'

And then here in John 15:14, He says:
'You are my friends if you do what I command you.'

In other words, this is relationship language. Jesus isn't suggesting that His disciples are no longer under His authority. He's not saying that they're now His equals, or that they no longer have to obey Him. He's saying that they obey Him because they love Him - not merely because of obligation or fear. And so within that loving relationship, Jesus now extends an extraordinary level of trust toward His disciples, entrusting them with the very knowledge and purposes of His Father.

This is what it means to be a friend.

Now, here's where it gets really interesting for me. All throughout Scripture, we see individuals being referred to as friends of God, but what we don't see is them claiming that designation for themselves. Even after Jesus said this in the Gospels, whenever the apostles introduced themselves in their respective books they never used that designation. Paul, Timothy, James, Peter, Jude, John all introduce themselves as servants or slaves of Christ. The exact same greek word doulos.

I think this is intentional, because by calling them friends, Jesus wasn't removing the servant designation. He was bringing them into a deeper relationship that changes the heart behind their obedience.

A heart of love, not merely obligation.

After all, what kind of friendship would it be if it were based on obligation or even fear instead of love?

And I think there's something beautiful about this.

Friendship was the privilege Jesus extended to them. Servanthood was the posture they maintained before Him.

So, in this sense, after looking in depth at what Jesus means here, I would absolutely say that as Christians, Jesus also calls us friend. But we have to understand that friendship with Christ does not look like friendship with your pickleball buddy.

You see, in the ancient world, friendship could communicate more than simple personal affection. In a royal setting, a friend of the king could be someone who enjoyed privileged access to the king and knowledge of his purposes.

And isn't that exactly what we have? Because of Jesus Christ, we now have privileged access to the Father through the Holy Spirit, and we have intimate knowledge of the plans and purposes of God through His written Word. And so absolutely, that would qualify us for the designation of. And especially as we just read, that as we live our lives obedient before him through a heart of love, he calls his friend.

So go ahead, folks, sing it loud, sing it proud - I am a friend of God!

Not because of how significant we are, but because of how gracious He is.

He trusts us….He brings us into the inner circle….wow, wow, wow!!

The next thing Jesus says is in:

John 15:16a
'You did not choose me, but I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce fruit and that your fruit should remain…'

And so this creates another interesting layer in the sandwich example. And I think there's something particularly significant about Jesus reminding His disciples that He chose them, and not the other way around. I think it's because this reminder leaves very little room for pride to settle into their hearts.

Think about it. Jesus knows His disciples. They've repeatedly wrestled with questions of position and importance for the past three years. They've wanted the seats of honour in His kingdom, and even here, around the table at the Last Supper, we know from Luke's Gospel that they were still arguing about which one of them was the greatest.

And so what does Jesus do? He - the greatest among them - gets down on His knees and begins to wash each one of their feet.

And now, when Jesus opens up this section by reminding them to love one another the way that He has loved them, He points them toward the greatest expression of that kind of sacrificial love - laying down one's life for one's friends.

Because ultimately, that's the kind of heart with which He wants them to treat each other. It's not a competition. They're all on the same team, living with the same purpose.

Because when His physical presence is no longer among them, they're going to have to learn how to lead, serve, and support one another without falling back into those old patterns of comparison and competition.

Which is why Jesus now says, 'You did not choose me, but I chose you.' Because He's calling them back to their roots. Back to the moment where God's plans and purposes had absolutely nothing to do with their skillset or abilities. Because not one of these men could claim that he had earned his place above the others. Every one of them was only there because Jesus had called him.

And when you recognize that your calling is a gift of grace instead of something that you've earned, there's no room for pride or superiority. There's only room for things like thankfulness, humility, and love.

So they did not choose Christ in this sense, rather He chose them.

Chose them for what though?

John 15:16b
'...to go and produce fruit and that your fruit should remain...'

To produce good fruit. Which, isn't it amazing how Jesus brings us right back to the beginning of this chapter? Because He opened this entire conversation by explaining that just as branches must remain connected to the vine in order to produce fruit, His disciples must also remain in Him in order to produce good fruit.

So Jesus is basically bringing it back full circle by reminding them that this is exactly what He's chosen them for. To be carriers of His message...to bear good fruit. To live in such a way that the world would see something of Jesus Christ through their lives.

And so absolutely - unequivocally - yes!! We too have been chosen for exactly such a cause as this. Every single person who now calls themselves a christian as a branch connected to the vine has been chosen to bear good fruit. We are in essence set apart to do His will in a dark world that desperately needs the light of Christ.

As Peter would later say:

1 Peter 2:9
'But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of the one who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.'

So to you who have been newly baptized today and to all of us here today. I leave you with three things:

Love like Jesus. View one another as brothers and sisters - as family, not as competition. Be willing to sacrifice for one another rather than seek your own interests.
Continue to live in obedience to Christ, knowing that the very One we call Lord also calls us friend. He has revealed Himself to us through His Word, and through our relationship with Jesus Christ, we have access to the King of all kings. What an incredible privilege that is!
And never lose sight of the fact that you've been chosen with purpose. That although God's plans and purposes for each of our lives may look a little different, we've all been drawn into the same mission - to bear fruit that lasts, to glorify our Father in Heaven, and to make Jesus known to the world around us. And remember, none of this happens apart from our connection to the vine. It's as we remain in Christ that His character is formed in us, His love flows through us, and our lives begin to produce the very fruit that He's chosen us to bear.

And perhaps that's why, after everything Jesus has just said about love, friendship, and being chosen with purpose, He now brings this entire section to a close with the very same instruction with which He began.

John 15:17
'This is what I command you: Love one another.'

BLESSING
May the Lord Bless you and Keep you
May He cause His face to Shine upon you
May He be gracious towards you
Lifting up His countenance before you
And may He give you peace
In Jesus name, Amen.

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