

Jesus' Friendship Completes our Joy

John 15:9-17

Easter 6

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What do you look for in a friend? What do you consider to be the qualifications of a good or best friend?

A lot of people expect their friends to be there for them when in need. In need of someone to talk to, in need of someone to look past their mistakes at times, in need of someone to set them straight, in need of someone willing to drop everything when the time comes, and in need of someone to have a great time.

These types of people are more than just acquaintances or those you get a long with. These types of people are extra special because they give us joy.

Unfortunately, no friend can give us what we need all the time. That is because they are not perfect and so sometimes our friends fail to give us joy. Instead, they can bring sadness to our lives.

Jesus today tells us that he is our friend. He is a friend who meets our needs and then some. He is a friend who loves us more than we can understand because he is a friend who gave up his life for us. When we realize that Jesus is our best friend, then we will have joy that is filled to completion.

On Maundy Thursday the disciples needed a friend. Except the person they often turned to for relief was the one weighing them down with sad news. Jesus' message wasn't giving them much to be joyful about. Jesus was going to be betrayed by one of them. He was going to suffer. He was going to leave them. They were going to abandon him and deny knowing him.

This wasn't good news. These disciples needed to be given something good to hear and Jesus delivers.

⁹ "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept 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: to lay down one's life for one's 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 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. ¹⁷ This is my command: Love each other.

Yes, Jesus was going to suffer, and the disciples were all going to fail him, but, they didn't need to feel sad because of what Jesus was doing for them. He was going to lay down his life for them. Why, because they were his friends.

That must have struck the disciples. They often called Jesus their Lord, Master, or Teacher, but never Friend. They didn't because of what Jesus indicated these verses. They saw themselves as servants who didn't know their master's business. But, now things were different. Jesus was telling them everything including his plan for them after he rises from the dead. He wasn't treating them as servants but as friends.

Then Jesus would proceed to show them the full extent of his love for his friends. He laid down his life for them. By doing so Jesus acted as the ultimate friend. He gave them everything they needed. He gave them pardon from their sins. He gave them someone who they could turn to when in need. He gave them someone who would listen to them always. He gave them someone that they could cast all their cares on, so they didn't have to burden the load alone. He gave them all of that and he didn't fail once.

What is more, is that Jesus calls us his friends too because he did and does all of that for us. How amazing it is to know that Jesus considers each us his friend. He also laid down his life for us too because he wanted a great relationship with us. He chose us. He wanted us. He loves us that much.

How have you repaid that friendship? Have you given back to Jesus equally? Do you complete Jesus' joy? Do you lay down your life for Jesus, do you call him your friend, do you let him in on your life, do you go to him for help, do you accept his discipline, or show your love back by following his commands? The answer is easy, isn't it? The answer of course is, "No".

We often reject our friend Jesus by choosing the world and our selfish desires first. We don't lay down our lives for him but instead try to save ourselves by not speaking his Word to others. We don't even call him our friend when we don't agree with what he is doing in the world and in our lives. Instead of friends we might look at Jesus as big a bully or a kid with magnifying glass trying to burn us like we were helpless ants. When troubles come we tend to try and rely on ourselves and never even think about asking for help from our God. Finally, when it comes to serving him and obeying his commands we can't begin to count the times we have failed today, forget trying to count the times we failed our whole lives.

As a result, we deprive ourselves of joy. We might think that we are happy because we have our family, friends, jobs, or comfort. But, how often do these things bring sadness? It isn't perfect joy. You don't have the confidence of knowing that these things will always be there to help you when you are in need.

There is only one source of joy and that is from the one we tend to reject daily. It comes from the one who still wants to be and chooses to be your friend. That friend is Jesus. Jesus really is a friend who will never fail us and therefore he is a friend who gives us complete joy because the joy we have with him will last forever.

He gave us that joy by being our friend first. When we didn't even know him or want his friendship he treated us as his best friends by laying down his life for us. In doing so he gave us what we needed the most: forgiveness. He didn't just give us a pass on our mistakes, he took them away altogether.

But, Jesus isn't done. He has more to give his friends. He gives us someone we can turn to when we are in trouble or being tempted. He gives us an ally who can help us because he defeated all our enemies. That is why we want to go to him in prayer every chance we get because nothing is impossible for our God to handle.

Often, we think that when bad things happen or when we don't get what we want God isn't answering our prayers. However, because Jesus is our friend we are getting a better answer than, "no". Our God is instead saying I will answer you with what you need so that your faith will remain in him and he in us so that we will always be with him.

Jesus shows us why we want him as our friend and why we want to treat him as our best friend. He truly gives us everything we are looking for in a friend because he is always there. Knowing that Jesus is our friend then we can have true joy and that is complete because we have something the rest of the world could never hope to give us in forgiveness and heaven.

That is why we want to serve our Lord by obeying his commandments. We want to trust in him and love him and to follow him because he truly loved us first and showed it to us in the most convincing way on the cross and again on Easter and again in our lives by always being there when we need him.

In our lives we will have many or at least one or two people we will consider to be good friends. But, they will never compare to our great and best friend, Jesus. He rises above all friends by giving us complete joy in knowing that we are saved, forgiven, watched over always, and have someone who will hear us and help us at a moment's notice and even before we ask. That is a true friend. Amen.