

The Human-Heartedness of Jesus

by J.R. Miller

J.R. Miller's sermon explores the humanity of Jesus and the significance of His friendships, emphasizing the transformative power of personal relationships with Him.

Scripture: Matthew 11:19, Matthew 26:38, Mark 3:14-15, Luke 2:52, Luke 22:44, John 10:14, John 11:35, John 15:13-15, Romans 5:8, Hebrews 4:15

Topics: "Friendship with Jesus", "Humanity of Christ"

Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the human-heartedness of Jesus, arguing that while we often view Him as divine and separate from ordinary human experiences, He truly shared in the struggles and joys of humanity. Jesus learned, grew, and formed friendships just like any other person, craving love and companionship despite His divine nature. Miller highlights that understanding Jesus' humanity allows us to appreciate His compassion and the depth of His relationships with others. The sermon encourages believers to recognize the significance of their friendship with Jesus, which transforms lives and enriches the human experience. Ultimately, Miller asserts that the friendship of Jesus is a profound blessing that connects us to His love and grace.

Transcript

There is a natural tendency to think of Jesus as different from other men in the human element of his personality. Our adoration of him as our divine Lord, makes it seem almost sacrilege to place his humanity in the ordinary rank with that of other men. It seems to us that life could not have meant the same to him--that it means to us. It is difficult for us to conceive of him as learning in childhood, as other children have to learn. We find ourselves fancying that he must always have known how to read and write and speak. We think of the experiences of his youth and young manhood, as altogether unlike those of any other boy or young man in the village where he grew up. This same feeling leads us to think of his temptation as so different from what temptation is to other men, as to be really no temptation at all.

So we are apt to think of all the human life of Jesus, as being in some way lifted up out of the rank of ordinary experiences. We do not conceive of him as having the same struggles that we have in meeting trial, in enduring injury and wrong, in learning obedience, patience, meekness, submission, trust, and cheerfulness. We conceive of his friendships as somehow different from other men's. We feel that in some mysterious way, his human life was supported and sustained by the deity that dwelt in him, and that he was exempt from all ordinary limiting conditions of humanity.

There is no doubt that with many people, this feeling of reverence has been in the way of the truest understanding of Jesus, and oftentimes those who have clung most devoutly to a belief in his deity--have missed much of the comfort which comes from a proper comprehension of his humanity.

Yet the story of Jesus as told in the Gospels furnishes no ground for any confusion on the subject of his human life. It represents him as subject to all ordinary human conditions, excepting sin. He began life as every infant begins, in feebleness and ignorance; and there is no hint of any unusual development. He learned--as every child must learn. The lessons were not gotten easily--or without diligent study. He played as other boys did, and with them. The more we think of the youth of Jesus as in no marked way unlike that of those among whom he lived--the truer will our thought of him be.

Millais the great artist, when he was a young man, painted an unusual picture of Jesus, He represented him as a little boy in the home at Nazareth. He has cut his finger on some carpenter's tool, and comes to his mother to have it bound up. The picture is really one of the truest of all the many pictures of Jesus, because it depicts just such a scene as oftentimes may have been witnessed in his youth. Evidently there was nothing in his life in Nazareth that drew the attention of his companions and neighbors to him in any striking way. We know that he wrought no miracles until after he had entered upon his public ministry. We can think of him as living a life of unselfishness and kindness. There was never any sin or fault in him; he always kept the law of God perfectly. But his perfection was not something startling. There was no halo about his head, that awed men. We are told that he grew in favor with men as well as with God. His piety made his life beautiful and winning, but always so simple and natural that it drew no unusual attention to itself. It was richly and ideally human.

So it was unto the end. Through the years of his public ministry, when his words and works burned with divine revealing, he continued to live an altogether natural human life. He ate and drank; he grew weary and faint; he was tempted in all points like as we are, and suffered, being tempted. He learned obedience by the things that he endured. He hungered and thirsted, never ministering with his divine power to any of his own needs. "In all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren."

In nothing else is this truth more clearly shown, than in the human-heartedness which was so striking a feature of the life of Jesus among men. When we think of him as the Son of God, the question arises: Did he really care for personal friendships with men and women of the human family? In the home from which he came--he had dwelt from all eternity in the bosom of the Father, and had enjoyed the companionship of the highest angels. What could he find in this world of imperfect, sinful beings--to meet the cravings of his heart for fellowship? Whom could he find among earth's sinful creatures worthy of his friendship, or capable of being in any real sense his personal friend? What satisfaction could his heart find in this world's deepest and holiest love? What light can a dim candle give to the sun? Does the great ocean need the little dewdrop that hides in the bosom of the rose? What blessing or inspiration of love can any poor, marred, stained life--give to the soul of the Christ?

Yet the Gospels abound with evidences that Jesus did crave human love, that he found sweet comfort in the friendships which he made, and that much of his keenest suffering was caused by failures in the love of those who ought to have been true to him as his friends. He craved affection, and even among the weak and faulty men and women about him, made many very sacred attachments from which he drew strength and comfort.

We must distinguish between Christ's love for all men--and his friendship for particular individuals. He was in the world to reveal the Father, and all the divine compassion for sinners was in his heart. It was this mighty love that brought him to earth on the mission of redemption. It was this that impelled and constrained him in all his seeking of the lost. He had come to be the Savior of all who would believe and follow him. Therefore he was interested in every merest fragment or shred of life. No human soul was so debased, that he did not love it.

But besides this universal divine love revealed in the heart of Jesus, he had his personal human friendships. A philanthropist may give his whole life to the good of his fellow-men, to their uplifting, their advancement, their education; to the liberation of the enslaved; to work among and in behalf of the poor, the sick, or the fallen. All suffering humanity has its interest for him, and makes appeal to his compassion. Yet amid the world of those whom he thus loves and wishes to help--this man will have his personal friends; and through the story of his life, will run the golden threads of sweet companionships and friendships whose benedictions and inspirations, will be secrets of strength, cheer, and help to him in all his toil in behalf of others.

Jesus gave all his rich and blessed life--to the service of love. Power was ever going out from him--to heal, to comfort, to cheer, to save. He was continually emptying out from the full fountain of his own heart, cupfuls of rich life to reinvigorate other lives in their faintness and exhaustion. One of the sources of his own renewing and replenishing, was in the friendships he had among men and women. What friends are to us in our human hunger and need--the friends of Jesus were to him. He craved companionship, and was sorely hurt when men shut their doors in his face.

There are few more pathetic words in the New Testament than that short sentence which tells of his rejection, "He came unto his own--and his own received him not." Another pathetic word is that which describes the neglect of those who ought to have been ever eager to show him hospitality: "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests--but the Son of man has no where to lay his head." Even the beasts of the field and the birds of the heaven had warmer welcome in this world--than he in whose heart was the most gentle love that earth ever knew.

Another word which reveals the deep hunger of the heart of Jesus for friendship and companionship, was spoken in view of the hour when even his own apostles would leave him: "Behold, the hour comes, yes, is now come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home. You will leave Me all alone." The experience of the garden of Gethsemane also shows in a wonderful way, the Lord's craving for sympathy. In his great sorrow he wished to have his best friends near him, that he might lean on them, and draw from their love--a little strength for his hour of bitter need. It was an added element in the sorrow of that night--that he failed to get the help from human sympathy which he yearned for and expected. When he came back each time after his supplication, he found his apostles sleeping.

These are some of the glimpses which we get in the Gospel story of the longing heart of Jesus. He loved deeply--and sought to be loved. He was disappointed when he failed to find affection. He welcomed love wherever it came to him--the love of the poor, the gratitude of those whom he had helped, the trusting affection of little children. We can never know how much the friendship of the beloved disciple, was to Jesus. What a shelter and comfort the Bethany home was to him, and how his strength was renewed by its sweet fellowship! How even the smallest kindnesses were a solace to his heart! How he was comforted by the affection and the ministries of the women friends who followed him!

In the chapters of this book which follow, the attempt is made to tell the story of some of the friendships of Jesus, gathering up the threads of thought, from the Gospel pages. Sometimes the material is abundant, as in the case of Peter and John; sometimes we have only a glimpse or two in the record, albeit enough to reveal a warm and tender friendship, as in the case of the Bethany sisters, and of Andrew, and of Joseph. It may do us good to study these friendship stories. It will at least show us the human-heartedness of Jesus, and his method in blessing and saving the world.

The central fact in every true Christian life, is a personal friendship with Jesus. Men were called to follow him, to leave all and cleave to him, to believe on him, to trust him, to love him, to obey him; and the result was the transformation of their lives into his own beauty! That which alone makes one a Christian, is being a friend of Jesus.

Friendship transforms--all human friendship transforms. We become like those with whom we live in close, intimate relations. Life flows into life, heart and heart are knit together, spirits blend, and the two friends become one.

We have but little to give to Christ; yet it is a comfort to know that our friendship really is precious to Him, and adds to His joy--poor and meager though its best may be. But He has infinite blessings to give to us.

"I have called you friends." No other gift He gives to us--can equal in value the love and friendship of His heart.

When King Cyrus gave Artabazus, one of his courtiers, a 'gold cup', he gave Chrysanthus, his favorite, only a 'kiss'. And Artabazus said to Cyrus, "The gold cup you gave me, was not so precious as the kiss you gave Chrysanthus."

No good man's money is ever worth as much as his love. Certainly the greatest honor of this earth, greater than rank or station or wealth--is the friendship of Jesus Christ.

And this honor is within the reach of everyone. "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his 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." John 15:13-15

The stories of the friendships of Jesus when He was on the earth, need cause no one to sigh, "I wish that I had lived in those days, when Jesus lived among men--that I might have been His friend too, feeling the warmth of His love, my life enriched by contact with His, and my spirit quickened by His love and grace!" The friendships of Jesus, whose stories we read in the New Testament, are only patterns of friendships into which we may now enter, if we are ready to consecrate our life to Him in faithfulness and love.

The friendship of Jesus includes all other blessings for time and for eternity! "All things are yours, and you are Christ's!"

His friendship sanctifies all pure human bonds--no friendship is complete, which is not woven of a threefold cord. If Christ is our friend, all of life is made rich and beautiful to us.

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