

Friends of the King

by Richard E. Bieber

The sermon emphasizes the profound friendship we have with Jesus and its transformative impact on our lives and relationships with others.

Scripture: John 13:34, John 15:13, John 15:16, Hebrews 4:14, 1 John 4:7

Topics: "Christian Friendship", "Redemptive Love"

Description

Richard E. Bieber preaches about the profound friendship we have in Jesus, who never fails us and calls us His friends. Through Jesus, we are included in His redemptive work, His expense account, and a new relationship with each other. As friends of the King, we are empowered to bear fruit, pray with confidence, and love one another deeply, reflecting the glory of our merciful Savior.

Transcript

The longer we live...

...and the more we find ourselves having to be in touch with the world as it is,

the more we begin to appreciate the words of the hymn,

"What A Friend We Have In Jesus."

As so many whom we regarded as our friends let us down, what a comfort to discover that there is One who is always there and never fails.

But this friendship with Jesus has two sides to it. Jesus is not only our friend; He now calls us His friends.

Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide; so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. This I command you, to love one another.

What's it like to be close to "the man at the top"? Well, when the man at the top is having a bad mood, all his friends have a bad mood. And when he becomes suspicious, they become suspicious. How much of

their life is wrapped up in "the great one." But when we translate this phenomenon into a relationship, not with the President of the United States, or the premier of some great nation, but a King who is sheer goodness, pure glory, yet utterly lowly,

and when we discover that this King knows us by name and calls us his friends,

then walls break within our hearts, and we begin to reflect the King's glory.

When David was hardly more than a boy he came to the camp of Israel, where his brothers were soldiers, to bring them food. The army was in disarray, the morale was down because the Philistines, on the other side of the valley, were championed by a giant. To David's eyes the fear of the Israelites was ridiculous. Why should this giant be permitted to defy God and disgrace the armies of Israel? Out in the wilderness shepherding his sheep David had developed an awareness that God, the God of Israel, was his friend. David knew this as practical truth. When a beast attacked his sheep David delivered them with the strength of a man who was confident of God's presence. Now in the presence of a swaggering giant David was confident.

"Today God's going to deliver Israel, and the world will know that there is a God in Israel; and this assembly will understand that God delivers, not by means of sword and spear, but the battle is the Lord's."

- And it was done!

We who call ourselves followers of the Lord are so often like the armies of Israel...

- we're demoralized and blaming other people for our problems.....

- we think that God has turned His back on us....

- we're depressed.

We're like the land surveyor in Kafka's novel, *The Castle*, who comes into town, enters a tavern, picks up the telephone to call the castle, beginning a relationship with the castle (with God) which becomes increasingly tenuous and unclear. He never knows where he stands.

"Have I been hired or haven't I? Do I belong here or don't I?"

As long as we're unsure of whether or not we are God's friend, we are without light. But when the blood of the Lamb has removed every last vestige of guilt, and the Spirit of God has come, He causes us to know that the living God has drawn near to us and that we are indeed on intimate terms with Him who holds the stars together.

No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide; so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. This I command you, to love one another.

Jesus didn't choose us because he was looking for the cream of the crop....

-or because we're so appealing,

-or so wise,

-or so pious,

but because we are in such great need of His mercy. He chose us as a manifestation of His own heart which is mercy.

Nor did Jesus come to us like some kind of supernatural social worker, who's going to straighten us out and take us home as pets in a cage. Jesus chose us to be His friends. He wants to share with us all that He has. This means three specific changes in our lives:

1. The fact that Jesus has chosen us to be His friends means that He has included us in His redemptive work.

"You did not choose me, I chose you and ordained you that you should go and bring forth fruit.... that will remain."

One day soon Jesus will rule the nations of earth with a rod of iron. There will be ...

no more disease,

no more injustice,

no more pain,

no tears,

no sorrow.

If we have suffered with Him then we will also reign with Him at that hour. But at this hour our Lord is concerned about one thing only: Jesus is here in the Spirit in order to redeem. To redeem, to save us from our sins by His blood. To save all men who will be saved and to set them free from their bondage to Satan through their fear of death, and to anoint them with the Spirit of His Father (which is sheer mercy).

Jesus doesn't do this alone. He includes us in this work.

"I'm not going to do this by myself, I'm sending you. I chose you that you, in my name, should go forth and bring forth fruit.

- You are going to touch lives with healing.

- You are going to bring them under the peace of my blood.

- Through you people will experience the outpouring of my Spirit.

- Their lives are going to be changed."

Every believer has been called into the redemptive activity of the Son of God. Every believer is sent forth to touch lives with healing in the name of the King. Granted, not all the seed that we sow is going to grow. Some is going to fall by the wayside and be carried away by the birds. Some is going to grow among rocks and wither. Some is going to grow among thorns and be choked out by the cares and riches and pleasures of this life. But some of the seeds that we sow will bring forth fruit which will last forever.

2. Because we are His friends, Jesus has included us in His expense account.

"Whatever you ask the Father in my name, He will give it to you."

We do not pray with the thought, "God owes me something because I'm good, or because I know my scripture well." Nor do we pray as groveling slaves who serve a tyrannical God.

"Oh! where's God?! He answers other people's prayers, but He never does anything for me."

No, we pray as friends of the King knowing that for His sake the Father hears.

Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

That confidence and that boldness comes to us as we allow the Spirit to make clear to us that He has made us His friend. All we have to do is remove our masks, and come to the Father the way we are. Soon we find ourselves praying for the things that are on the Lamb's heart.

We find ourselves, to our own amazement, praying mercy on those around us...

- on our enemies,

- on the people who have abused us and slandered us and done all kinds of evil to us.

We pray that God will bless them. Not, "Show them how wrong they are," but "Lord, pour out your richest blessings on them, fulfill their heart."

And we pray for those who are wandering and stumbling and confused with a concern that's real. We pray with a confidence we never had before, knowing that it will be done, because we are His friends.

3. The fact that we are friends of the King brings us into a new relationship with each other.

This I command you that you love one another.

We're no more able to love each other than stones are able to love each other, until we begin to experience what it means to be friends of the King. There is so much talk about love and so little of it. It's as if two men who are arch enemies by some coincidence find themselves in the lobby of an apartment building one evening.

"What are you doing here?", they ask each other.

"I've come to see a friend."

"So have I."

Quite embarrassed they board the elevator and both nervously exit on the 10th floor. They both stop in front of Room 1017 and when the door opens they are both overjoyed to see one they both call friend. When they leave, the wall between them is gone. In the presence of this one whom they love their pride

melts, the walls come down and they enter into unity with one another.

It's only in the presence of our Friend that we begin to experience what it is to truly love one another. We can preach to each other and talk to each other about love, and still live in enmity. But when we come close to Him who is our Friend, we come close to each other. And when we eat His flesh and drink His blood the forgiveness that we receive has to flow. It either flows out in forgiveness, or it flows in as judgment.

Before Jesus took His leave to go back to the Father, He said to Peter,

"Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these fish? More than these other things your heart has been attached to? Do you love me?"

"Lord, you know everything, you know that I love you."

"Feed my sheep."

In other words, "let's forget about the past. Pick yourself up and go attend to my sheep."

If there is someone reading these words who is depressed over past unfaithfulness to the Lamb, listen to His words to you:

"Do you love me more than these things you've been attached to?"

"Lord, you know that I love you"

"Then feed my sheep. Go out there and minister. You didn't choose me, I chose you and ordained you that you should go and bring forth fruit and that your fruit should remain so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, He will give it to you.

This is my command to you that you love one another."

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/richard-e-bieber/friends-of-the-king/>

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