

“Chosen to Be Friends” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Friendship Sunday August 24, 2025

- I. **John 15:16** – As Jesus said, “You did not choose Me, but I chose you.”
- II. **Sometimes you run across a friendship** that makes you think, “How did *those two* end up together?”
 - a. I read about one of those unusual friendships in Smithsonian Magazine.
 - i. Near the end of her reign, Queen Victoria of England (died 1901), was one of the most powerful rulers in the world... and was given a young Indian servant named Abdul Karim.
 - ii. He was sent to help with ceremonial duties at her Golden Jubilee, or to celebrate her 50 years as Queen of England.
 1. By every standard, he did not belong in the royal court... He wasn't a polished server, he wasn't trained in courtly life, and the rest of the household thought he was beneath them.
 2. However, when the queen met him, she saw something different.
 - a. She invited him closer than others... She made him her teacher, or her “Munshi”, as he taught her the Indian language, and about India.
 - b. He even introduced her to curry... which she liked so much that she added it to her regular meal rotation.
 - c. She showered him with gifts, honors, homes, and land...
 - d. She treated him not as a servant, but as a trusted friend.
 - iii. The royal family and court were outraged.
 1. They mocked him, despised him, and whispered behind his back that he didn't deserve any of this treatment.
 2. Yet the queen defended him fiercely... and she turned the tables on them by saying it wasn't pride or arrogance that was coming from him, but prejudice was coming from them.
 3. She stood by him until the end of her life and made sure that he would walk with all the most honored mourners at her funeral one day.¹
 - iv. Think about that... one of the most powerful people in world chose to befriend a lowly servant.
 1. She lifted him up to a place he could never have earned.
 - b. Now, if you found that story surprising, how much greater is the friendship of Jesus?
 - i. The Lord of heaven calls us, even though we are undeserving and sinful... and so far beneath Him.
 - ii. In fact, the Lord of heaven doesn't call us servants, but friends... “You did not choose Me, but I chose you.”

III. **All who are chosen in Christ enter into a new relationship.**

- a. Yes, anyone chosen by Jesus has faith, which is the gift of a true connection with Him...but we also enter into a new relationship with others.
- b. Just as Jesus says in our reading, “love one another as I have loved you.”
- c. Now, many of you might be considering what a friend is... because there are so many levels of friendships in today’s world... from the lowest on the scale – a “friend” on Facebook who could be nearly anyone... to a lifelong friend you connect with every day.
 - i. For our purposes today, along with the Christian and Biblical understanding, we will say that a friend is not just someone you know, or even someone you like to spend time with.
 - ii. A true friend is someone who loves you enough to stand with you, to forgive you, to sacrifice for you, and to tell you the truth... just as Christ has done for us.
 - iii. Oftentimes, we are connected to friends in the Church who are unusual by the world’s standards, but they can be the best friends you will find.
- d. The problem is that we are human, and so we qualify people by all kinds of measures that are usually given to us by the world.
 - i. We are often unwilling to extend friendship even within the church.
 - ii. We avoid people different from us... rather than letting faith in Jesus be the starting point.
 - iii. We keep our distance from certain people by avoiding connections, conversations, and Bible studies or small groups.
- e. Another reason Christians don’t want friendships in the Church is their relationships lead to that dreaded word, accountability.
 - i. When we have a solid Christian friendship, we are accountable to our choices and lifestyle... and we feel like that’s “judgy” or that no one should tell us what to do.
 - ii. Yet, God never says to tell another Christian what to do, we are simply told to tell the truth... we tell the truth that’s in Scripture.
- f. So, Jesus chooses us to be in relationship with Him, and then our relationships flow out of the love that He was willing give us... the people He had to stoop down so low to call friends.

IV. **The disciples were all chosen by Jesus.**

- a. Go back through all the Gospels and the disciples were approached by Jesus who chose them to follow Him.
- b. In this section of John’s Gospel, Jesus is preparing His disciples in the final hours before His arrest and execution.
 - i. He has shown them by example what servant leadership is like in washing their feet and calling on them to love others humbly.
 - ii. He reminds them of the gift of the Holy Spirit, who will come to support them even when Jesus is in heaven with the Father.

- iii. In our reading today, He takes loving our neighbor the next step... from servanthood to sacrifice.
- iv. Here, Jesus is giving them a glimpse at what will soon happen to Him, but also what their mission will be like as well.
- c. You see, the connection that these disciples will have together and with many new believers... will reflect Jesus – and the covenantal love that defines their relationships.
 - i. Their friendships would not be superficial or sentimental, these friendships would be wrapped in the New Covenant in Jesus' blood... the covenant of love, forgiveness, and sacrifice.
 - ii. Our friendships in the body of Christ are more than just getting along or tolerating each other... we are rooted in the love and sacrifice of Jesus that chose us, stands by us, and tells us the truth.
- d. If we are honest, this idea of being friends in the body of Christ is more than we can give, but Jesus fills in the brokenness and limitations.
 - i. Remember, it's not about us so much as it's about what Jesus does.

V. **We have been chosen and redeemed by our Friend.**

- a. Jesus makes it clear that we are not the choosers... we don't qualify Him or judge Him first to see if He's worthy ... no, He says, "You did not choose Me, but I chose you." (v 16)
 - i. By God's infinite mercy the choice that Jesus' makes is not based on our worth, but His grace.
 - ii. He is intimately aware of our sins and failures... of all the ways we fall short of godly lives... of all the brokenness that keeps us from loving others... and He still chooses us.
- b. Consider for a moment what it means for Him to choose us... because it meant that He had to choose to lay down His very life in order for that to happen.
 - i. His choice was to lay down His life for His friends. (v 13)
 - ii. The cross on which Jesus died is the ultimate act of friendship because He didn't have to do it... but He loved us all so much that He would die to restore us to the Father.
 - iii. The greatest love of all was His blood poured out for our forgiveness.
- c. By His death and resurrection, He makes us His friends, not servants.

VI. **Now that we are chosen by Jesus**, we become friends with those around us.

- a. The unique thing about Christianity is that being chosen puts us in a community... the body of Christ... or the Church.
 - i. We have no special status or worth, except that we all happen to be chosen by God's grace.
 - ii. As Christ saw us as redeemable, that's exactly how we see others.
- b. So, go from here with a new attitude about what friendship means...
 - i. In Jesus, we are forgiven, redeemed, and called friends.

- ii. And as a friend of Christ, we love... we sacrifice... and we welcome others into the community.
- c. The King of kings chose *you* as His friend... who in your life needs that friendship today?
 - i. May Jesus open our eyes to all who might become friends. Amen

¹ www.smithsonianmag.com/history/victoria-and-abdul-friendship-scandalized-england-180964959/