"Friends of Jesus"
October 11, 2026
John 15:9-17

I. Introduction

It was late and Jesus was on the move again. It's after midnight and it's been a long day and a long week with many emotional highs and lows. The disciples are tired—physically, mentally, and emotionally. They can't wait to get to the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus will pray and they can rest. But they are in for a surprise! Jesus knew that in less than four hours, their world was going to experience a gigantic upheaval. He was going to be arrested by a mob led by the traitor Judas Iscariot and Jesus' disciples were going to scatter like scared sheep. So, in these last hours, Jesus prepared His disciples for life "*after Jesus."*

On the way to the Garden of Gethsemane, they would have passed vines—even a vineyard or two—and Jesus had taught them that they are like the branches and He is like the vine. If they are going to be His disciples, they must bear fruit. And the only way that this can be done is through the power of the Holy Spirit who will live in them. Just as a branch must remain in the vine to be productive, the disciples must remain in the Lord Jesus Christ to have fruit—remaining in Christ demands worship, meditation on God's Word, prayer, sacrifice, and service.

As branches, believers today have the privilege of sharing in Christ's life and the responsibility of abiding or remaining in Him. Jesus said that if we are to abide in Him or remain in Him, we must keep His commands. As we experience Jesus' love, we will share in the joy that He shares with the Father. That joy will fill the believer. A fruit-bearing Christian, an obedient Christian will have a joy filled life. As an old hymn says, "There is joy in serving Jesus." As Peter awaited his execution, he wrote in 1 Peter 4:13**, "But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed."** While in jail, Paul wrote in Philippians 4:4, **"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!"** A life in fellowship with Jesus Christ is a joyous life in the midst of any turmoil that may come.

After using the analogy of branches and the vine, Jesus went on to use another picture of believers—believers are Jesus' friends. In today's Scripture, Jesus gives 4 characteristics of His friends.

II. Characteristics of Friends of Jesus

A. First, **friends of Jesus love each other.** In verses 12-13 Jesus said, **"My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."** Earlier, in John 14:13, as they all reclined around the Passover table in the upper room, Josus said, **"If you love me, you will obey what I command."** Now He repeated His command: **"Love each other as I have loved you."** Actually, this is the fulfillment of all of God's commands. Turn to Romans 13:8-10.

Only those who remain in Christ, those who, like branches, are firmly attached to the Vine, have the ability to love as Jesus loved—to have agape love—sacrificial love. Romans 5:5 says, **"God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us."** 1 John 4:7-8 says, **"Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love."** Such love, this sacrificial love is more than a *"feeling;"* it is an act or a choice of one's will. This is why Jesus can command Christians to **"love each other."** The proof of our love is not in our feelings but in our actions—even to the extent of laying down our lives for Christ and for one another—just as Jesus loved us. As John will write in 1 John 3:16, **"This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers."** But Jesus' example went beyond that. Romans 5:8 says, **"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: Whie we were still sinners, Christ died for us."** John 3:16 begins with **"For God so loved the world."** Jesus laid down his life for both his friends **and** his enemies. While the emotions are certainly involved, real Christian love—agape love—is an act of the will—it means choosing to treat others—Christians and non-Christians—the way God treats us--sacrificially. In Matt. 5:45 Jesus said that God **"causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous."** Turn to 1 John 3:17-18. We must **"love with actions and in truth."**

The high standard for believers' love for each other is set forth in Jesus' words, **"As I have loved you."** Christians are to love each other as the Lord Jesus Christ loves them. There is no way we can love

perfectly as Jesus did. But just as Jesus loved sacrificially, so also Christians must choose to love sacrificially. Ephesians 5:2 puts it this way, **"And live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."** The love believers have for each other, and even for non-Christians, is to be a selfless devotion to meet one another's needs; it is not mere sentiment or superficial attachment. Christian love—agape love—for each other is one of the greatest testimonies for Christianity. In John 13:35, Jesus said, **"By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."** Friends of Jesus love each other.

B. Friends of Jesus obey Him. In John 15:14, Jesus gave the second characteristic of His friends: **"You are my friends if you do what I command."** Friends of Jesus obey Him. Obedience doesn't earn salvation or Jesus' friendship. Turn to Ephesians 2:8-9, now look at verse 10. Obedience doesn't earn salvation; it is the result of salvation. It is proof, a demonstration that a person has a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. True disciples, true friends of Jesus obey God's Word—in John 8:31 Jesus said, **"If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples."** Notice, by the way, that Jesus didn't say *"**some** of my teachings"*—followers of Jesus, Christians must obey all of God's Word.

The Christian life is following all of Jesus instructions, and these instructions are clear—turn to Mark 12:28-31. In His love for us, Jesus laid down His life for us, now He asks us to obey Him because of our love for Him. He is our friend because, in love, He died for us. We are His friends when we, in love, keep His commands. And this obedience will lead to bearing much fruit all bringing glory to God.

C. Third, **Friends of Jesus know God's plans.** A slave was bought, owned, subject to, provided for, and protected by his master. A slave lived in total submission to the will of the master. Slaves didn't usually have an intimate relationship with their earthly master. Seldom did they know their master's plans.

Jesus is our Lord and our Master. Romans 10:9 says, **"If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."** Christians are to be submitted to and dependent on our heavenly Master, but He does not treat us like slaves; Jesus said, **"instead I have called you friends."** And friends of Jesus know God's plans. As Jesus' friends, Christians

have the privilege of knowing God's mysteries—God's secrets—God's plans. For example, in Isaiah 41:8 God called Abraham, **"My friend,"** and in Genesis 18 God told His friend Abraham His plan to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. You probably remember the subsequent discussion between God and Abraham.

The commentator William Barclay wrote about this special friendship. *"In the courts of the Roman Emperors and of the eastern kings, there was a very select group of men called* the friends of the king*, or* the friends of the Emperor. *At all times they had access to the king: they even had the right to come to his bedchamber at the beginning of the day. He talked to them before he talked to his generals, his rulers, and his statesmen. The friends of the king were those who had the closest and the most intimate connection with him.*" It is that kind of intimate access that Jesus grants to His friends. No longer do we need to look at God from afar; we are not slaves who have no right to enter into the presence of the master. God is no longer a distant stranger, but our close Friend. For this reason, Hebrews 4:16 says, **"Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."**

As friends of Jesus, Jesus promised to share everything He learned from the Father with us. Romans 16:25-26 says that friends of Jesus have insight into **"the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him."** The unsaved don't have the same privileges—1 Cor. 2:14 says, **"The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned."** Friends of Jesus know God's plans.

D. Finally, **Friends of Jesus have been chosen by Him.** Back in John 15:16, Jesus reminded His disciples that they/we have this privileged position—friends of Jesus—only because of His grace. They did not choose Him; He chose them. Friends of Jesus have been chosen by Jesus. As John 15:19 says, He chose them/us out of the world. But Jesus didn't just choose them; He also appointed them to do His will. Friends of Jesus are appointed to do God's will.

Having chosen and trained the disciples, Jesus commanded them to go into the world and bear fruit. Jesus said in Matt. 7:20, **"By their fruit you will recognize them."** The Christian life is not a spectator sport. Jesus didn't choose believers to stand by doing nothing while the world continues on its way to hell. We have the commission to **"go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you"** (Matthew 28:19-20).

While talking about "Friends of Jesus," Jesus brought up the privilege of prayer. In "olden times," the friends of the king certainly spoke to their sovereign and shared their burdens and needs with him. In the days of monarchies, it was considered a special honor to be invited to speak to the king or queen; yet the friends of the Lord Jesus Christ can speak to Him at any time. Similarly, the throne of grace is **always** available to believers.

As the chosen friends of Jesus, Christians need to keep their ears open and listen to what He says—as Psalm 25:14 says, **"The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant."** We must be attentive and alert to our King. But the purpose for all of this is that we might obey Him and get His work done. The King has tasks that must be performed. His will and purpose must become our will and our purpose. If we love Him, we will obey His commands. We will seek to bear fruit that will please Him and glorify the Father. Our joy should be to please Him.

Jesus closed this part of His teaching by reminding His disciples (and us) of the most important command of all: **"Love each other."** Jesus had already given this commandment to the disciples in John 13:34-35 and now He has repeated it twice—once in verse 12 and once in verse 17. The friends of the king must not only love Him but also, they must love one another. What joy it brings to God's heart when He sees His friends loving one another and working together to obey His commands.

III. Conclusion

So, are you a friend of Jesus? Is He your Lord and your Savior? One commentator wrote, *"Each of us is as close to God as we choose to be."* What is your choice? If you are truly His friend, a Christian, you

ought to be near the throne, listening to His Word, enjoying His closeness, talking to Him, and obeying His commandments. As a child of God, a friend of Jesus, you have many privileges beginning with the promise of eternal life in heaven. But along with the privileges comes responsibilities. The fruit that Jesus expects from the branches and His friends is first and foremost **sacrificial love.** It is the nature of a Christian to love— in Galatians 5:22 agape love is the first fruit of the Spirit. But there is more to it than "*just*" love. 1 Peter 1:22 says, **"Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply from the heart."** Do you choose to love every brother and sister deeply? As a friend of Jesus, you have the privilege to know God's plans but to know them you must continue to study God's Word diligently--2 Timothy 2:15 says, **"Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth."** Do you study God's Word? As friends of Jesus, you have been called out of the world, so you must be careful not to love it—1 John 2:15 says, **"Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."** Where is your heart? Where are your treasures? What is really number 1 in your life? Being a Christian—a friend of Jesus—isn't just saying some words like the Sinner's Prayer and you're done. There are expectations of those who are friends of Jesus—turn to Ephesians 4:1-3. Are you living a life worthy of your calling? Do you love every brother and sister deeply? Do you study God's Word? Are Jesus and His will your top priority?

If we do not love one another, how can we ever hope to love lost men and women in the world? If we are not standing together as the friends of the Jesus, we will never present a united front to the enemy. In John 15:5 Jesus said, **"Apart from me you can do nothing."** We aren't simply hindered, we are paralyzed. We can do nothing. Isaiah 64:6 says that without Jesus, **"All our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away."** BUT if we remain in the Lord Jesus Christ, if we stay close to the throne, we can do anything—everything—that He commands us to do—as Philippians 4:13 says, **"I can do everything through him who gives me strength."**

So, WHAT KIND OF FRIEND ARE YOU?