

*Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

**The Friends of Christ**

**Part 4**

**John 15:16**

There is a hymn that was very popular when I was a young person entitled, “**What a Friend We Have in Jesus.**” Let me read for you the words of that song.

*What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear! What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer! O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear, All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.*

*Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere? We should never be discouraged -Take it to the Lord in prayer! Can we find a friend so faithful, Who will all our sorrows share? Jesus knows our every weakness -Take it to the Lord in prayer!*

*Are we weak and heavy laden, Cumbered with a load of care? Precious Savior, still our refuge - Take it to the Lord in prayer! Do thy friends despise, forsake thee? Take it to the Lord in prayer! In His arms He'll take and shield thee -Thou wilt find a solace there.*

I am not too ashamed to admit that I am weak and at times needy. I am not ashamed to say that there are times that I feel overwhelmed and beaten down. But in those moments I know that I have friend that I can turn to and that I can count on and His name is Jesus. And this confidence has been an incredible source of comfort for me in the times of my greatest need.

It is a wonderful thing to know that Christ in fact is our friend? I know that I have found this to be true in my life and hopefully you also have found this to be true in your life. But sometimes the friends of Christ when they are in the midst of a problem may need to be reminded of this fact and this brings us back to the passage that we are presently considering in **John 15:12-16** where Jesus, in light of His imminent departure, sought to comfort His Disciples by reassuring them that He was in fact their friend.

So let me read for you **John 15:12-16** and this is what He said, “**This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. (13) Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. (14) You are My friends, if you do what I command you. (15) No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. (16) You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He may give to you.**”

So did Christ, in these verses, in fact reassure His disciples that He was their friend? Absolutely! What did He say in **John 15:15**? “**No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what His master is doing; but I have called you friends.**”

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But Jesus did not limit what He said to His disciples to a simple declaration of His friendship. He also provided His disciples with a great deal of further information that outlined a number of different things that would in fact characterize a true friend of Christ. So how many of those things were there?

Jesus, in John 15:12-16, outlined for His disciples five different things that would characterize His friends. So, what characteristics of a true friend of Christ have we considered so far? The first characteristic that we considered was the friends of Jesus will be characterized by their love for one another (John 15:12-13). We saw this, I believe, very clearly in **John 15:12.** And what did Jesus tell His disciples in that verse? This is what Jesus told His disciples. He told them, **“This is my commandment, that you love one another.”** But not just that they would love one another but that they would love one another **“just as”** He had loved them, or that they would love one another sacrificially.

So, what was the first thing that Christ listed that should characterize His friends. Christ friends should love one another and love one another sacrificially. Then we came to the second characteristic and what was that second characteristic? The second characteristic was the friends of Jesus would know divine truth (John 15:15). Let me read for you **John 15:15.** **“No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.”** So how did Christ make His truths known to His disciples or His friends? He made His truths known to them by supplying them the faith to embrace and incorporate those truths into their lives. This is what separates the friends of Christ from the enemies of Christ. The enemies of Christ might have the truth in their possession and perhaps even be able to explain that truth. But without the faith that Christ provides those truths will never come alive for them or be made known to them as Christ would make His truths known to a friend.

So, what were the first two things that Christ listed that will characterize His friends? First of all, His friends will love one another, not superficially but sacrificially. And secondly, He will make His truths known to them as He would make His truths known to a friend.

So, what was the third characteristic that we considered? The friends of Jesus do not choose Him but rather He chooses them (John 15:16). Let me read for you **John 15:16.** **“You did not choose Me, but I chose you.”** Chose them for what? Friendship! In other words for salvation!

If our friendship with Christ, or in other words our salvation, depended upon us choosing Him, we would never have chosen Him. We would never have chosen Him because prior to Christ making us His friends, we were His enemies. We saw this in **John 15:18-19.**

And what does Christ expect us to do as His chosen ones once He has made us His friends? He expects us to go into the world and preach the gospel. This is our work. This is our mission. Certainly we know this to be true in light of great commission recorded for us in **Matthew 28:19-20** where it tells us to “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name ...” But we also saw this reinforced for us in **John 15:16** when after Jesus told His disciples, **“You did not choose Me, but I chose you.”**

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He went on to say, **“and appointed you, that you should go.”** This explains why we are still here in this world. We are not here to simply indulge ourselves; we are here to work. But we are not simply here to work. We are actually have been left in this world to produce.

This brings us to the next characteristic of a friend of Christ. Not only will the friends of Christ love one another and love one another sacrificially, not only will the friends of Christ know divine truth, not only have they been chosen and appointed to go but the friends of Christ will bear fruit (John 15:16). Let us continue to read the verse. **“You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit.”** So, what exactly is this “fruit” that Christ is referring to here in this verse?

When Christ spoke of “fruit” in John 15:16, He is spoke of new converts. In other words He spoke of those who would come to faith because His friends were faithful to go.

Certainly this may not always be the way the term “fruit” is used in the Scriptures but it does seem to be the case here in this context and it is consistent with how Christ used the term earlier in the Gospel.

Let us go back to **John 4** and to Christ's discussion with a particular Samaritan woman. We will pick up the story beginning in **John 4:28** at the point where Jesus had just told her that He was the Messiah. And this is what it says, **“So the woman left her waterpot, and went into the city, and said to the men, (29) 'Come, see a man who told me all the things that I have done; this is not the Christ, is it?'"** Then the next verse says, **“They [referring to the men that she had spoken to] went out of the city and were coming to Him.”** (Hopefully you are picturing what is now taking place.)

So then what happens next? Let us continue reading **verse 31**. It says, **“In the meanwhile the disciples were requesting Him, saying 'Rabbi, eat.' (32) But He said to them 'I have food to eat that you do not know about.' (33) The disciples therefore were saying to one another, 'No one brought Him anything to eat, did he?' (34) Jesus said to them, 'My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work.'”** His disciples were talking to Him about the kind of food that was necessary in order to nourish Him physically. But Jesus changed the subject in order to speak to them about the kind of food that was necessary in order to nourish Him spiritually and that food was, of course, to do the will and work of His Father. And what was His Father's will? And what was His Father's work that He had sent Him to do? It was to seek and to save that which was lost.

Why was Jesus speaking to them about the importance of this mission in respect to Himself and His spiritual well being at this particular time? Because He was about to apply what He had just said about Himself to them. Let me now read for you **John 4:35**. **“Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest?' Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest.”**

He is calling them to look out on the fields. And I believe on that particular day that He in fact was calling them to look out on the grain fields that literally surrounded them. And what would they have seen when they did this?

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Would they have seen a grain field ready to be harvested? No! The grain harvest was still four months away. But that did not mean that those fields were not ready to be harvested. They were ready! Those fields were ripe with “fruit,” in fact; they were so ripe with fruit that He called the field before them “white for harvest.”

And what was that fruit that was “white for harvest?” It certainly was not grain. If it was not grain then what was it? The fruit that Christ referred to as being “white for harvest” was not grain but the souls of the Samaritan men who were steadily and methodically pressing ever closer to them as a result of the testimony of the woman that Christ had spoken to earlier in **John 4**. They were the harvest that Christ was speaking of. And they were the fruit!

So how should we understand Christ's use of the term “fruit” in **John 15:16**? When Christ speaks of “fruit” in **John 15:16**, He is speaking of new converts. I believe this, first of all, because this would be consistent with our going into the world and, secondly, it is consistent with how Christ used the term earlier in **John 4** when speaking of the fields white for harvest.

Christ did not make us His friends to sit on our hands. He has appointed us to go. And as we go what should we expect to happen? We should expect to bear fruit. So, what is the will of God for us in Christ Jesus? The will of God for us in Christ Jesus is to go and to bear fruit (John 15:16).

The will of God for us in Christ Jesus is to get up every day and look out on the fields that are white for harvest and to approach those fields not only with a sense of urgency but also with a sense of great expectation. I don't care how inept or inadequate we might feel, it does not change the fact that Christ in this current age is building His church and He wants to use His friends to accomplish this work.

So how long will the fruit last once it is produced? In other words how long is the shelf life? Let us continue to read **John 15:16**. **“You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain.”**

The fruit that is produced by our going will not perish but will “remain,” because the fruit or the new converts that are produced by our going will be given the gift of eternal life (John 5:24).

Let me read for you **John 5:24**. **“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.”** Everything else that we might invest ourselves in this life will pass away: our careers, our homes, and our families. But the souls of the men and women who have placed their faith in Christ because of our going to them in obedience to Christ with the message of the gospel of Christ will not pass away. They, rather than being delivered into God's judgment, will find themselves in the presence of Christ in glory in the home that He has prepared for them.

Do you believe this? Do you believe that it is in fact God's will for us in Christ Jesus, that we go and bear fruit and that the fruit of our going will remain? I hope your answer is yes! I would hope that your answer would in fact be yes since that is exactly what the Bible teaches.

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But now we come to another question. How are we doing? The answer to this question will be directly proportional to the presence of the fifth and last characteristic that needs to be found in the friends of Jesus. So, what is that fifth characteristic?

The friends of Jesus will have their prayers answered (John 15:16). Let me once again read for you **John 15:16** but this time I will read the entire verse. **“You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He may give to you.”**

Now it might appear when we first read this phrase, **“that whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He may give to you,”** that it is communicating that going and bearing fruit is the necessary pre-requisite for answered prayer. But this is not how we should understand it. That of course would be absurd. We don't do His work in order for our prayers to be answered. We pray in order that we might be able to His works. I believe this is supported by the way Jesus uses the word “that” in **John 15:16**. So, what exactly do I mean?

Just as the word “that” (HINA) introduced Christ's call for His friends to go and to bear fruit, the same word “that” (HINA) introduces a parallel appointment, which is answered prayer. These two appointments need to be seen as linked.

When we understand that it is God's will for us in Christ Jesus for us to go and bear fruit and we pray accordingly, or in other words “in the name Jesus,” then guess what will happen? We will in fact go and bear fruit.

Going and bearing fruit must be combined with prayer because though we may present the gospel of Christ, it is the Spirit of Christ that will make His truths known to the hearts of those whom He has chosen.

In going and bearing fruit we are impotent. We depend wholly on God to make our witness effective. This understanding should drive us to prayer. Those who recognize their impotence pray and those who do not recognize their impotence do not pray. In other words, if we as the friends of Christ fail to pray for His grace in order to go and bear fruit we will neither go nor bear fruit (James 4:2). What does **James 4:2** tell us? It tells us that we do not have because we do not ask.

If we want to go and bear fruit then we need to pray for this. But if we are too proud or lazy to ask, then we need to be prepared to receive nothing.

Hopefully this does not describe us. Hopefully we understand how dependent we are upon Him so that when we have the joy of seeing conversions as a result of our praying in Jesus name we will not be tempted to ascribe them to our own gifts, or skill, or wisdom, or persuasiveness but rather to His work alone.

Now you might think that we are finished with this verse but we are not. There is still much to be understood about this harvest but there is still more for us to understand not only in terms of our individual role but the corporate role of the church as well. But that is for another day. For now may this be our prayer:

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May God give us the grace to prayerfully humble ourselves before Him so that we might not only find ourselves going into this world with the gospel of Christ but also bearing much fruit.