

The 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter  
May 9, 2021

"Jesus, your One True Friend"  
(John 15:15)  
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LSB 770

“Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Today’s text for this 6<sup>h</sup> Sunday of Easter is from our Gospel reading John 15:15

**“No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.”**

Here ends our text.

What a Friend we have in Jesus! He has called us His friends! What a friendship we have with our Lord! Today, our Gospel reading picks up where we left off last Sunday in John chapter 15. Last week we heard Jesus tell us that He is the Vine and we are the branches. This beautiful connection of life sustained in the Vine is now described in a way that we can most easily understand – friendship.

We all have different friendships in our lives. There are friendships that we have begun since grade school, high school, or college. And every so often there is a reunion that classmates attend to catch up with each other. There are friendships at work, friendships with other Lutherans in our sister congregations, friendships that we especially enjoy during the winter season with those who come down from the north. There are many different levels of commitment and involvement with those whom we consider our friends.

But, the friendship that our text describes, that each believer in Christ has, is the greatest of all friendships. It is on a level of trust above all others. It is formed on the basis of a love unlike all other relationships. For the friendship with Jesus is based on His perfect love for us.

Our Gospel reading begins with this comforting understanding. **“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you;” (v.9)**

The same level of love with which the Father loves His Son is the level of love that the believer in Jesus can count on in this friendship! And then Jesus invites each branch, each believing friend, once again to **“abide in My love”**. It’s constantly present for you. It will never diminish. You’ll never start a new day worried that your Friend Jesus has decided to not be your Friend anymore.

What a Friend we have in Jesus! You can rely on Him every second of your life, in the most difficult of times and the quietest of moments. On Friday, our sister in Christ, Lori Marchant received a call from her daughter, Jacquelin. She could hardly understand her because she was gasping for breath. “I was just in a car accident.” As Lori quickly left to help her daughter, I asked the students to pray with me to our dear Friend Jesus to help and protect them. We found out later that one of the drivers in this three-car collision was taken to the hospital, Jacquelin was ok. Thanks be God! We prayed again when Lori returned to school. Thanks be to God for His guardian angels that watched over Jacquelin. And they watch over you!

So, we spoke in Psalm 66 earlier,

**“Oh, bless our God, you peoples!  
And make the voice of His praise to be heard,  
9 Who keeps our soul among the living,  
And does not allow our feet to be moved.”**

Our Friend Jesus, the True Vine, who gives us physical life, sustains us all our days until He calls our souls to our heavenly home. God helped the Israelites cross the sea over dry land as they escaped the Egyptians who pursued them. So, Psalm 66 tells us.

**“Come and see the works of God;  
He is awesome in His doing toward the sons of men.  
6 He turned the sea into dry land;  
They went through the river on foot.”**

And because Jesus wants our friendship to always be stronger, He uses our tests in life to trust more and more in His love for us. So, Psalm 66 continues,

**“For You, O God, have tested us;  
You have refined us as silver is refined.  
11 You brought us into the net;  
You laid affliction on our backs.  
12 You have caused men to ride over our heads;  
We went through fire and through water;  
But You brought us out to rich fulfillment.”**

Rich fulfillment! What a Friend we have in Jesus!

Our Friendship is based on the ultimate proof of His love – Jesus laid down His life for us, His sheep. Jesus tells us in our Gospel reading in verse 13, **“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.”**

And that is what Jesus did on the cross for you and me. That is how Jesus loved His Father, by fulfilling His will in paying for the sins of the whole world. Jesus had to pay for all of our unrighteousness so that He could then call us His friends. Without Jesus shedding His blood for us, we could not enter into a relationship with our God, for it requires us to be holy.

So, we heard last week in verse 3 of our Gospel, **“You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.”** His word of forgiveness cleanses us and so that Jesus can call us His friends. This was all His work and doing! Today’s reading says in verse 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 the Father in My name He may give you.”**

We couldn’t choose Jesus because of our sinfulness. But Jesus chose us and brought us into a new relationship with Him. The Formula of Concord cites this verse as speaking of the foreknowledge and predestination by Jesus of the believers. They are brought into this new friendship to have a life full of joy, bearing much fruit of love and with an open communication with the Father in prayer! “What a privilege to carry, everything to God in prayer.” What a Friend we have in Jesus!

Of course, any friendship takes two persons. We can rely absolutely on Jesus to be our perfect Friend. But, Jesus continually encourages us to also love Him more and

more as we have been loved first. In this we are not perfect. Jesus doesn't say the word "as" with us like He does for Himself. He says the word "if".

**"As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. 10 If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love."**

"If" reminds us that we sometimes don't keep Jesus' commands. Sometimes we don't act as a true friend when we break His commandments. When we act selfishly and don't love God first we don't keep our side of His friendship.

I have a friend who I've known over the years who is an electrician/plumber/AC technician. He basically can fix all the problems that happen to a house or the church. So, whenever there is a problem, I give him a call. And the first words he always says are, "Good to hear from you, my friend." He's very reliable and comes when he says he will. Sometimes, the work might involve crawling up into a hot attic to which he jokingly says to me, "You're not my friend anymore."

Whenever we mess up in our friendship with Jesus, He has every reason to say to us, "you're not my friend anymore." But, Jesus calls on us to repent daily and then He lovingly forgives us. We can count on His forgiveness always. That's why He calls us friends and not servants. For He has revealed to us His salvation. **"all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you."**

And those things chiefly include the Gospel! What a Friend we have in Jesus! "All our sins and griefs to bear".

So, we read in Psalm 98 earlier,

**Oh, sing to the Lord a new song!  
For He has done marvelous things;  
His right hand and His holy arm have gained Him the victory.  
2 The Lord has made known His salvation;  
His righteousness He has revealed in the sight of the nations.  
3 He has remembered His mercy and His faithfulness to the house of Israel;  
All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God."**

Our end of the earth, our intimate friendship with Jesus has seen and continually sees His faithfulness and salvation. He makes it known to us in His word and sacraments. When Jesus says, **"If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love,"** Jesus is speaking not only of His law but His Gospel. All that He has

taught and commanded. And the Gospel continually renews and strengthens our relationship with Jesus. It's the only way we can stay friends with Him. For we sin daily. But our epistle reading from 1 John 5:4 reminds us, **“For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.”**

We live with this victory constantly in our friendship with Jesus. Though we fall into sin, our Victor Friend Jesus lifts us up, forgives us and leads us to grow stronger in our friendship with Him and our love for others.

In a word, our friendship that Jesus has given us is one of “joy”. **““These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.”**

What a Friend we have in Jesus! **Amen.**

**The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)**