May 5, 2025 **FRIENDS TOGETHER**

In our gospel passage this morning St. John 15:9-17, the writer John is helping us to understand the relationship between the servant and friend. For Jesus said in verse 15 “I do not call you servants any longer, but I have called you friends.” Does this mean something like a close friend who sits next to us in the church or our neighbor and our coworker or our employer. Jesus chose to change our relationship with us from servitude to friendship.

Jesus is the one in whom we can confide as he confides in us, that there is mutuality and equality, laughter and joy, trust and companionship, just like in our human relationship.  Let us look at what a servant is and what a friend is? Jesus said, “I do not call you servants any longer.”  The Greek word used here for servant is “douloi” which means servant or bondsman or slave. Servant sounds better than the word slave. There was slavery in the ancient world, Greek law defined slaves as “livingtool” and the purpose of a slave is to work. The slave was not free to refuse the tasks, but required to do whatever the master willed.

The basis of the relationship between a master and a servant was work. When orders were given obedience was expected without even knowing the master’s intentions. The Bible gives a completely different view. Biblical characters of great honor were named as servants of God. In Deuteronomy 34:35 Moses was called servant of God. In the book of Joshua 24:29 Joshua was mentioned as the servant of God. In Psalm 89:20 we read David as a servant of God. All lived as servants or slaves of God, in that they did what God had told them to do. In most of the cases we see that they were obedient to God’s word and their goal was to fulfill God’s will.

Like slaves they accepted and followed their masters’ instructions, doing what he told them to do and accomplishing the work set before them. Christ is our Lord and master in that our lives are dependent on his, we belong to him, we find no true freedom apart from him, and even though we do not fully understand the mind of God, we are to follow the instruction of our Lord. Being a servant of Jesus Christ is not a bad thing, it is an honorable way to live for a strong believer and a true Christian. Being a servant of Jesus Christ makes it better in our lives.

Jesus chose to call his followers, as his friends. It demonstrates that friendship is based on love. Jesus is not an uncaring master, but one who loves us and knows us by name. Like a friend, Jesus shares what he knows with us, claiming “I have made known to you everything I have heard from my father.” Jesus did not keep secrets but shared with his disciples the knowledge and relationship he had with the Father. Like true friendship Jesus’ relationship with his followers was marked by freedom. They were not forced to follow; they were called, and they were invited. Our relationship with Jesus is like a friendship.

Friendship is based on equality; we are not equal to our Lord. Friendships have a genuine sharing of concerns back and forth, and while we may pour our heart to God in prayer, we will never understand the mind of God. Jesus said, “you are my friends if you do what I command you.” In saying we are no longer servants but friends. Jesus is not saying that we are buddies on an equal level, but rather that we are loved. We are called friends because Jesus has chosen us to befriend all of us.

Friendship is a voluntary relationship. Jesus said to his disciples that you did not choose me, but I chose you. God chose to invite us to be friends, God takes the initiative, but in friendship, the choice had to be returned. Friendship also invites mutual sharing. I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. We sing the hymn, “What a Friend we have in Jesus all our sins and grief to bear.” God invites us to share “take it to the Lord in prayer.” Friendship is an open relationship.

If you like to know more about how to be a friend of Jesus please join us in our Sunday worship at 11:00 AM.

Peace!

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