**November 3rd, 2019**

**John 15:15-17**

**Friendship with God**

**Introduction: We are in our fourth week of our sermon series entitled, *Traits of a Disciple.* Today we are looking at John 15:15-17 as we continue to work our way through John 15. We’ve talked about staying connected to the vine, we’ve talked about the urgency and the importance of love as believers in Jesus and today Jesus gives yet another lesson about the type of relationships he has with us as his disciples.**

***I. 15 No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing;…***

 A. In the Greco-Roman context in which Jesus lived he was vastly different from the other gods of the day. Zeus, Aphrodite, and Apollo were not gods that spent time among the people. The Greco Roman gods didn’t really care about the people. Those gods were all about their own glory and fame.

 B. The gods were unpredictable and certainly did not reveal their plans to the common people. Jesus was nothing like the Greco-Roman gods of the day. He is not an ivory tower type figure sitting all by himself on his throne in heaven waiting to strike you down when you sin. In all of the crazy myths we have on the Greco-Roman gods none of those gods are coming down and living among the people. And yet, Jesus does that.

 C. What Jesus is telling his disciples here seems to be a contradiction to what we see in the writings of Paul. In fact, many of Paul’s letters say that he is a servant of Jesus Christ. But Jesus is telling his disciples that they are not servants.

This is where it becomes very important to understand the context in which John and Paul are writing. The context of John’s writing is the relationship between Jesus and his disciples, but when Paul writes of being a servant of Jesus Christ he is talking about a servant of Christ as opposed to a servant of sin. Contradictions are almost always cleared up when we take the time to understand the context of the individual writers.

D. Jesus is basically saying that servants are told what to do and they are expected to obey simply because the master said so. In a servant-master relationship, the servant obeys because the master expects them to. The master really doesn’t care about the servant as a person but rather expects them to perform their duties simply because they owe it to the master to do so. The servant obeys the master simply out of duty or obligation not out of love. We should be serving Jesus out of love towards him not out of duty or obligation.

 E. Pastor Tim Keller in New York City points out that Christianity is the only religion where the verdict is delivered before the performance. Buddhism you perform then receive a verdict. Islam you perform then receive a verdict. In almost all of those religions you perform out of duty or obligation so that in the end you are made right with God. But that’s not our motive as Christians. We don’t perform in order to be made right with God. We serve Jesus out of love because of the performance he made on the cross for us.

 F. If you are a believer in Jesus Christ you have freedom in Christ. You are no longer a slave to sin as Paul tells us. The chains of sin have been broken and you walk in freedom in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. This is the power of the cross and the power of Jesus’s resurrection. Do not walk around thinking you are in bondage to the commands of Jesus, they do not put you in bondage instead they make you free.

**II. …*15 but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.***

 A. As I was studying and preparing for this sermon, I found out that Abraham and Moses are the only two OT characters who are called friends of God. These two men had incredible access to the mind of God. I also found out that neither Jesus nor God are ever referred to as the friend of anyone. In other words, in scripture some people like Abraham and Moses are called friends of God, but nowhere does it say that God was Abraham’s friend. It’s not that Jesus or God do not love you it’s just that our modern understanding of what friendship describes doesn’t accurately reflect God and Jesus in the right way.

 B. So as Jesus teaches his disciples which includes many of us in this room what does he mean by friendship? Friendship in this particular passage is understood in terms of revelation. He calls us friends because everything that he heard from God he made known to his disciples.

 C. Do you understand what Jesus is teaching? He is speaking to us things that God has revealed only to him. Jesus has clearly told us his plans, his motives, and his purposes. His actual words are recorded in the pages of Scripture. Jesus walked and talked with his disciples. He allowed them to witness miracles and he taught them the scriptures. He spent almost every waking hour of his public ministry with these 12 men. He gave them a revolutionary job description shortly before he ascended into heaven. That job description is the same job description that you and I have today. Go and make disciples. Jesus’s entire ministry from the very beginning was designed so that he could give it way to others so that they could keep it going after he was gone.

 D. This is exactly what I want our church to be. I don’t have the vision formalized to share with you on paper yet, but I know that it is my job as a pastor to equip every one of you to feel confident in teaching the scriptures, sharing your faith, and managing events and programs. I want to train everyone in this room to be completely confident in running the church that you don’t even need me. That’s how equipped and trained I want you to be. Where one day you look up and say what are we paying Taylor to do exactly? That means I’ve succeeded as a leader because I have developed you through the power of the Spirit to be a disciple of Jesus.

 E. What this verse shows us is that it’s not that hard to determine God’s will for your life. He isn’t hiding it from you. If you want to know what God’s will for your life is read his Word. He has revealed exactly what he desires for each Christian to do. I can remember as a high school student really stressing over God’s will for my life. Perhaps you students in the room are stressing over God’s will for your life. Don’t stress over it. God can use you in whatever profession you choose. Try to find a job in an area that suits the gifts God has given you, and then use that job as an opportunity to bring glory to God. His will for your life is to make disciples, and you can do that in any number of jobs.

 F. None of us are left in the dark when it comes to what Jesus expects of us. He clearly lays out what he expects of those that choose to follow him. The question for us is are we living how he wants to live? Are we truly willing to forsake all things in order to follow him. Would we sell our home tomorrow and move to the mountains of Nepal if Jesus asked us to do so? Would we leave the comforts and family of friends for no other reason than Jesus commanded us to do so?

 \*I use the Joshua Project app every day. It has a different unreached people group to pray for everyday. It tells you the % of Christians in that people group, the primary religion in that area, and it also provides some ways to pray. Almost every day one of the prayer requests is that the people in this group would be bold enough to follow after Jesus even though it might cost relationships with their families and loss of life. It’s a good reminder for me every day to realize just how much we as American Christians don’t have to sacrifice. And it motivates me to take up my cross daily and follow Jesus.

**III.**  ***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 abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.***

A. Jesus wants to make sure the disciples understand that the revelation they received from God had nothing to do with them. He reminds them that they were chosen not the other way around. Peter, Andrew, James, and John did not walk up to Jesus and ask if they could follow him. The Gospels are very clear to point out that Jesus goes to these men and asks them to follow him.

 B. These men were not wiser, smarter, richer, or more charismatic than anybody else. What set them apart was that Jesus chose them. Plain and simple. None of us are qualified to be Jesus’s disciple. We haven’t earned the right to do so, but Jesus in his grace and mercy offers us the opportunity to be his disciples. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, Solomon, and any other influential biblical figure you want to name were chosen by God. The Israelites were not the cream of the crop in terms of successful nations, but God chose them to be his holy people.

 C. Not only have we been chosen but we have also been appointed. We have a specific assignment given to us by Jesus. You haven’t been chosen just to sit there and look pretty. He has an assignment for you.

 \*Have you ever been in a job whether it be volunteer or paid, and you weren’t given clear expectations of what is required of you? It’s a terrible feeling to be told you are responsible for this or that, and yet not be given a specific job description of what is expected of you. One of the things that I promise you as your pastor that you will know is what I expect of you as a member of this church. Over the years churches in America moved away from placing expectations on people in an attempt to reach more people. The thinking was that if we place all of these expectations and requirements on people than they won’t want to join our church. What happened was a lot of people were coming to church but they didn’t know what was expected of them. They were keeping the seats warm on Sunday, but they weren’t really engaged in the life of the church. One of the initiatives that I will be implementing here is membership class. It will lay out exactly what we believe as a church theologically, it will communicate expectations that we as a church have of all of our current members and potential members, and it will communicate ways to get involved and put your faith into action. Before we begin this class with potential new members, I’m going to teach you the class as a church because I don’t want anyone in the dark over what is expected of them as a member of this church. It’s not beneficial to you and it’s not healthy for our church either. So be on the lookout for this sometime soon.

 D. In this verse Jesus tells his disciples to go and bear fruit. But the fruit he is talking about here is not the many good works that we have been discussing over the last few weeks. This is a very clear command that he is giving his disciples. He is telling them to go and make new converts to the faith. This is our mandate as well. The growth that I want us to experience at this church is new creation growth. I want lost people to come to faith in Christ and join our congregation. That’s kingdom growth. We might add people from other churches, but our goal is to reach people who do not know Jesus and disciple them in the teachings of Jesus.

 E. So I ask you this question: When is the last time you shared the Gospel with someone? Not invited them to church, not told them about the new preacher in town, but shared with them the hope that can only be found in Jesus. That’s the message that will grow this church. It’s not going to me the new preacher. It’s going to be the spirit of God working in the hearts of those who don’t know Jesus. If you come to our prayer service tonight at 5pm the entire focus of that service is going to be praying for people we know in these four circles of influence: 1) family members; 2) coworkers; 3) neighbors; and 4) friends. We will have prayer prompts on the screens and we will have some music playing in the background and we will spend some concentrated time in praying for those that do not know Jesus.

 F. If we get serious about praying in this way, I believe God will give us opportunities to share the gospel and that people will come to faith in Christ because this verse tells me Jesus will give me what I ask in his name. If we are in sync with his desires for the world than I believe he will answer our prayers.

**IV. Obey These Commandments: 17 *These things I command you, so that you will love one another.***

A. Jesus concludes the first half of the chapter with this verse. It’s a summary verse to remind his disciples of everything he has taught them so far. So here’s a recap of what we have learned so far:

 B. #1 Jesus is the vine and we are the branches. This means that our source of strength and our accomplishments in this world are a result of Jesus working in our hearts. #2 Jesus prunes the good branches so that they can bear more fruit and he gets rid of the bad branches. So what kind of fruit is growing on your branches? #3 We are not left in the dark with how to grow fruit on our branches, we grow fruit on our branches by abiding in Jesus. He is the source of the growth of our fruit. #4 Jesus commands us to love one another, which has both an internal component to it and an external component to it. We are to love one another in this room and love those outside this church who are in desperate need of the gospel. #5 The way we love people is to lay down our lives for them. That means we are willing to be uncomfortable and sacrifice ourselves for the needs of others. We have to inconvenience ourselves for the sake of others. And #6 we are commanded to go and make disciples. To share the hope of the gospel with people who think there is no hope and who think no one could possibly love them. If we do these things Jesus says we will love one another the way we should.

**Conclusion: Still thinking through this.**