



St. Paul Evangelical Community Church (SPECC)

Worship Address : Cerritos High School Auditorium
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January 24, 2010

Theme: Jesus Is My Friend

Text: John 15:9-15

One of the best known sayings of Jesus is this one: "Greater love has no one than this: that he lay down his life for his friends." One common way of referring to Jesus is to say: "Jesus is my Best Friend." Our passage for today is the only context in the New Testament which speaks of believers as Jesus' friends. It may come as a surprise to some that there are only two people in all of Scripture who are called God's friends. It is correct to say that Jesus is the friend of believers, but we must understand what it means to be Jesus' friend. Many people assume that it means that we are Jesus' good buddies. We must remember that although Jesus calls us his friends, He is also the Lord of Glory, and we must worship Him as such.

There are three passages in Scripture which refer to Abraham as God's friend: Two of them are in the OT and one is in the NT. Both of the OT passages first speak of God as the Lord of the nations; then, they refer to the Israelites as the descendants of Abraham, who was God's friend. These passages first speak about God's Glory and Majesty and then they speak about Abraham's friendship with God. It is interesting, in light of our passage for today, that Isaiah refers to the Israelites as the "descendants" of Abraham and as God's "servant." However, Isaiah does not call them God's friends.

James, Jesus' brother, is the only NT author who speaks of Abraham as God's friend. James gives us two elements that marked Abraham as God's friend: (1) First, Abraham believed God's promise that he would have a son. (2) Second, he says that Abraham obeyed what God told him to do. So Abraham was a friend of God because of his faith and his obedience.

Jesus' requirement for being his friend is quite like James' description of what it meant for Abraham to be God's friend. The first action we must take is to receive Jesus' love and to remain in it. Jesus said, "As my Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love." This is a statement that goes beyond our comprehension. Our first task, believe it or not, is to receive Jesus' love and then to remain in it. But how do we remain in Jesus' love exactly? Jesus taught that if we obeyed His commands we would remain in His love, just as He had obeyed God's commands and remained in His Father's love. Does this mean that God stops loving us when we disobey? No it doesn't. It does mean that we will not experience God's love when we are disobedient. God has provided a way to cleanse us from disobedience when we confess our sins.

Often people have a negative view of obeying someone's commands—even God's commands. We don't usually think about obeying someone's commands as being



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something positive. However, Jesus teaches that he instructs us to keep God's commands so that we may have His very joy in us and have it to the full. When I obey Jesus, I conform my life to God's own life. God's life is marked by grace, mercy, love, beauty, holiness, and justice. When we relate to God in this way, we glorify Him. This is why we were created.

So we must obey Jesus' command if we want to be His friend. Just what are his commands? He gives one in this context. He tells his disciples: "This is my command: That you love each other as I have loved you." Jesus laid down His life as proof of His love for us. He said that no one had a greater love than this. This statement is also beyond our comprehension. Jesus had said earlier in John's Gospel, "...He who has seen me, has seen the Father..." This means that if Jesus loves us so much that he would lay down His life for us, God loves us than much also. In fact, Paul writes in his letter to the Romans of God, "Who did not spare His only Son, but handed Him over for us all..." The awesome truth about all this is that God loves us as much as He loves Jesus!

Jesus concludes by saying that he no longer calls us "slaves;" instead, he calls us "friends." He calls us friends now because he has revealed to us everything that God revealed to Him. Jesus is the King of Glory. As His friends, we are like members of His royal court. We are like nobles to whom the King makes all His plans known. He also gives to His nobles the privilege of carrying out His plans. Being Jesus' friend does mean that we have a close, intimate, personal relationship with Him; but we must also remember that being Jesus friend, means that we obey Him as the Lord of Glory.