

Chris Murphy  
February 2, 2025  
John 15: 9-17  
Sermon Title: Jesus Our Friend

Prayer...

Today, we continue our sermon series on Images of Jesus. We have looked at Jesus our Lord, our Mission partner Taliilee Fiqruu explored Jesus our Healer, and last week I preached on Jesus our Peacemaker. This morning, I will explore the topic of Jesus our Friend.

I have to say my favorite way to image Jesus is as our friend. Why, you may ask? Simply because my greatest desire is for people to experience God as a loving friend. My greatest sadness is when people either do not know God or when people image God as punitive. Many people suffer with the idea that God is an angry father who does not really love them.

Our Scripture today shows clearly that Jesus sees his disciples and his friends. The heart of Christianity is that we followers of Jesus are just like the disciples of the past and therefore Jesus also sees us as his friends. Since Jesus is the fullest revelation of God then we can trust that God is not an angry Father. He is a loving Father and Mother and is also a compassionate friend who is for us and not against, who actually died out of love for us, the way a caring friend dies to show his love for his friends.

If Jesus died so that we may know his deep love for us, we need to highlight that he is our greatest friend.

When Jesus is our friend, we also begin to realize that we are called to become friends with all of creation. We are to seek friendship with others and to love across differences. If Jesus desires friendship with all of his creation, then we too can show love to all creation. We too can seek to cultivate friendships and to forgive others.

The other revelation to seeing Jesus as our friend is that we may begin to cultivate a friendship with God that enables us to also cultivate a friendship with ourselves.

Do you see yourself as your own friend? Many people look inside their hearts and fail to feel self-love or what I might call self-friendship. Many people not only imagine that God is mad at them, but they also are mad at themselves. The truth is that if we do not love ourselves, if we fail to build a friendship with ourselves, it will be hard to have enough love to show compassion to others.

Jesus wants us to be his friend and then he wants us to befriend ourselves, especially our most vulnerable hurting selves, and finally he wants us to befriend others who are hurting in our world.

What if you looked at everyone and called them friend? What if you looked at the trees, the animals, the sky, the sun, and the moon and like St. Francis and St. Claire of old or like indigenous people of all time we see all of creation as our friend. What might happen? Well,

if we could live into this reality, families would heal, wars would cease, and creation would heal. If we saw everyone as friend, I imagine we would discover that we could grow enough food to feed everyone, we could educate everyone, we could live in community and provide housing for everyone.

What prevents our world from living into its full potential is we have gotten lost. Call it sin or evil, we have a vulnerability in our nature that makes it hard for us to accept friendship from Jesus. I do not think our deepest nature is sinful. No, our deepest nature is love and is quite attracted to friendship with Jesus, but there is a vulnerability in each person and in creation that makes it hard for us to accept friendship from Jesus. There is a woundedness that seems to lead us to try to live our lives alone without full honesty or community with God and others. Jesus comes as our friend and Savior to offer us the remedy for our own vulnerability. Jesus says, “Even though you sometimes want to resist my friendship and love, I will keep

pursuing you with kindness. I will keep calling you my friend. One day, you will know how much I love you.”

When Jesus shows this much love to us, my recommendation is we stop running. We turn toward Jesus and embrace him. We accept his friendship and offer to cultivate a friendship with him the rest of our lives.

Friends, some of you know that I think it is not a coincidence that Jesus called me to serve this church seven years ago. This marks my seven year anniversary of my first Sunday here as your pastor. Part of the fun of being here in Newberg is that I have Quaker roots. I am a Presbyterian pastor but in the 1860's my ancestors were Quakers in Johnson County Iowa. My dad's great great grandmother Miranda Chandler actually was a teacher for President Herbert Hoover when he was a small child in Iowa right before he moved to Newberg. I know this because my Grandpa Murphy said his grandmother Miranda once visited the white house to see her former student

Herbert Hoover. Miranda Chandler was also a direct relative of the sister of John Woolman. John Woolman is one of the most respected leaders of the Quaker movement in the 1700's.

As a Presbyterian, I believe in the sovereignty of God and God's providence. I think it part of God's plan that I landed in a Quaker community. I consider myself a Quaker Presbyterian because my roots go back to a movement known as the Society of Friends.

Quakers believe that Jesus is our friend and that the light of Christ is in every person. They also care about peacemaking. I am happy to say that the Presbyterian churches I attended growing up also invited me to see Jesus as my closest friend.

Through my experience in the church, I also was blessed to build many strong friendships that have helped shape my faith. As a young man, I was fortunate to attend Whitworth College in Spokane, WA. I met many great friends in college that helped me cultivate a closer friendship with Jesus. In college I helped start an urban

ministry called En Christo, which means In Christ in Greek. As part of our ministry, we would give our sack lunches to people living on the streets and in the low-income hotels of downtown Spokane. We talked often about this ministry as an opportunity to build relationships with our friends downtown. It was a ministry of friendship in the name of Jesus.

In college I also cultivated strong friendships with four particular men named Mark Terrell, Chris Koch, Harry Neff, and Brett Shoemaker. We would hang out at school and would do urban ministry with En Christo, but we also went on backpacking trips together. After college, we continued to backpack each year for about 20 years in a row. In recent years, we have not backpacked as much. We used to call ourselves the Backpack Boyz. Now we are more like the condo boyz, but we still do some hiking together.

Well about a week ago, I met up with my friends, Mark, Chris, Brett, and Harry at Whidbey island in the Seattle area. We enjoyed

reconnecting as friends. We actually practiced something called authenticity groups. We went around the room and shared deeply about both the joys and struggles of our present lives. After each person shared, we asked each other thoughtful questions and then we took time to pray for each other. It was a wonderful three days with my friends enjoying our friendship and the beauty of nature on Whidbey island.

Here at Newberg First Presbyterian Church, we want to cultivate friendship with Jesus, friendship with ourselves, friendship with one another, and friendship with all of creation. If you are in need of friendship with Jesus and others, we offer this worship service and community time afterwards in our Fellowship Hall. We invite you to hang out after church and get to know each other. We also have Men's team which it meets the first Saturday of the month in the Fellowship Hall for breakfast. We have Men's Fellowship, which meets the first and third Thursday at the Cherry St. Bistro in Sutton



Terrace at 9 AM. Space for Grace is our women's group that meets on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Fridays at 10 AM in our Christian Education building. We have a Youth and Family ministry and Children's ministry that also is working to build community together. We have our monthly prayer retreats on the First Friday of the month and we are beginning to have Saturday retreats as well through our Newberg Center for Christian Spirituality .

These are just some of the opportunities to build friendships with one another. My other suggestion is to find even one person at our church who you might invite for coffee or lunch. Some of the best friendships form one of one. As your pastor, my favorite thing is to build friendship with each of you. We can meet in my office, in your home, or at a coffee shop, or restaurant. Just contact me by email and we will make it happen.

Friends, Jesus wants us to know we are never alone because he is with us, but he also desires for us to cultivate friendship with one

another in his name. By God's grace may we be a church of deep friendship, a church that calls Jesus our friend. ( Pray pastorally for people to experience friendship with Jesus, self, and others).

John 15:9-17

9 As the Father has loved me, so I 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. 11 I

have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you and that

your joy may be complete.

12 "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have

loved you. 13 No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's

life for one's friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command

you. 15 I do not call you servants[a] any longer, because the

servant[b] does not know what the master is doing, but I have called

you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I

have heard from my Father. 16 You did not choose me, but I chose

you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so

that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. 17 I

am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.