Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Friends of Jesus
Scripture: John 15:12-16
Code: 1554

Turning in your Bibles with me this morning to the 15th Chapter of John, we're continuing in our study of John's Gospel and coming to this particular portion which is certainly a classic portion of Scripture. Verses 12 through 16 will be our text for this morning and there are so many tremendous truths here. This is the kind of aof a passage that you can't really preach as much as you can share with fellow believers. The topic is really, 'The Characteristics of the Friends of Jesus.'What it means to be a friend of Jesus Christ.

You know even as Christians, when we talk about something like friendship with Jesus, when we speak about something that intimate, it's absolutely thrilling to realize that the Son of God, who is responsible for the creation and the upholding of the Universe, is literally a personal intimate friend of those who are his own. It's an overwhelming thing when you really grasp that truth, and this morning I trust that you'll see it, perhaps, in a light that you've never seen it before. What it means is to really be a friend of Jesus Christ.

James made the statement that friendship with the world is hostility toward God. A man chooses in his own life whether he will be the friend of Jesus Christ or whether he will be the friend of the world. Friendship with Jesus Christ is intimacy with God. It is fellowship with the Trinity. It is joy unspeakable and full of Glory. Friendship with the world is hostility toward God.

Now, what it means to be afriend of Jesus, we aregoing to seeclearly in these verses. In this wonderful passage Jesus Christ is talking to his beloved disciples, eleven of them now, because Judas is perpetrating his deed of betrayal, so he's gone. These are the eleven remaining disciples, the abiding branches from the analogy in the last few verses that we've studied. They are sad because they are awaiting the departure of Jesus, Their hearts are filled with sorrow. They know he is going to leave them and in this kind of farewell speech that we've been studying through the last couple of Chapters and shall continue to Chapter even study all the way through Chapter 16 and/part of 17 still involves them. We see that in all of these words, Jesus is comforting them. And this beautiful concept that they are to be his personal, intimate, beloved friends has to be one of the greatest comforts of all the things that he says to them. I know how personally it affects me.

Just to give you a little highlight, look at Verse 15 and we'll use that as a springboard, "Henceforth, I call you not servants, for the servants knoweth not what his Lord doeth, but I have called you friends." and we'll stop there. That's the basic thought of this particular passage. He calls his true disciplesthe

abiding branches, the 'forreal' remaining, fruitbearing believersfriends. In the fullest sense of all that word implies, Jesus uses it in reference to his relationship to the disciples. As I saw this, my mind began to go back to many of the things that Jesus calls those of us who love him. In some places in the New Testament, he calls us 'Sons of God,' or 'Children of God'. In other places we are called, 'Brothers of Jesus Christ.' The writer of Hebrews says, "He is not ashamed to call us brothers." We are even called in one passage,, 'The sisters, brothers, and mother of Jesus Christ,' again implying intimacy. We are called disciples which means learners, We are called 'sheep' those who follow. In all of these things, the message is a message of intimacy. The message is that one who personally knows and loves Jesus Christ has a personal, intimate, love relationship with the Son of God, which is a fantastic concept. And the extreme dimensions of that concept will be measured by your understanding of the extreme dimensions of the person in essence of Jesus Christ, himself. If you see how unbelievably great and glorious Christ is, then you'll understand what it means to have an intimate relationship with himin all that it implies. And so he calls us his friends. Now, there's a very special meaning implied in this. He says, "I'm not going to call you 'servants anymore," in Verse 15, "I'm going to call you friends."

The word servant is the word dulas or dulag and it's the word that means slave. And what he is saying to them is, "You are no longer slaves you're friends," and that's quite an elevation. That's quite a step.The title which means servant or slave waswas really not a title of shame. It wasit was used very often in terms of people who served God. Many people are called a servant of God. Moses was called a servant of God, and it's certainly not a degrading term. Joshua and David, both, were called servants of God. In the New Testament, theapostle Paul, counted it an honor, as he said in Titus, Chapter 1, Verse 1, "To be a servant of God." James said the same thing in James 1:1, "That he was excited about being a servant of God." But Jesus said, "I am something even greater yet, some- thing even in a more intimate relationship, I want to call you friends." And in the Old Testament, I think only of Abraham who was called the friend of God. This is something that's new. This is a unique intimacy. And, of course, in the Old Testament, Abraham had a unique relationship to God. He was the father of Israel. And so Jesus Christ is saying to these blessed disciples, he is saying, "Men, I am about to establish with you a brand new kind of intimacya friendship." And to be a friend of Jesus Christ is something exciting.

At the court of the Roman Emperor and at the courts of Eastern Kings, there was a very select group of men. These men were kind of like what we would call the 'kitchen cabinet' in America, except that they were intimate men. They were not just advisors who were schooled politically; they were dear friends of the King or the Emperor. They were his protectors as well as his advisors. They were the ones who were caring for his life, and at all times, they had immediate access to the King. They could enter into his bed chamber anytime they wanted. They could be with him whenever they needed to be with him. They had to gain no entrance from anybody because they were called the friends of the King. He talked with them before he talked with his generals. He talked with them before he talked with any other rulers of other nations or any other statesman. The friends of the King were those who

had the closest possible relationship with the ruler. They had an intimate connection with him, and they had the right to enter his presence at any time. And that's exactly what Jesus is saying to us. You don't need any particular authority. You don't have to pass any particular formality. You have immediate and instant access into my presence at all timebecause you're my friends. We're not like slaves who have no right to enter the presence of the master. We're not like subjects who crowd the sides of the street and watch the King pass by and hope, once in a while, we catch a glimpse of his robe flapping in the breeze. We have a complete and total intimacy with Jesus Christ, the Son of God. That's what it means to be a friend of Jesus. And he gives a clear cut condition for being his friend in Verse 14, he says, "You are my friends if you do whatever I command you." That's the key. The key to being a friend of Jesus is obedience.

And we'll get into this in detail. But isn't it interesting that the friendship with Jesus is predicated on obedience to what he says because that's always the standard for every relationship. Let me show you what I mean by that.

In the early part of John 15, we are branches, and he is the vine. Remember that? Now, we are branches only if we are obedient. Verse 10, "If ye keep my commandments; ye shall abide." The only real, true, abiding branch is an obedient one. So obedience is the key to being a branch in the vine. Over in I John 3, we are called his children and the key to being his child is this, I John 3:9, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." Those two things are commands of Jesus. To be legitimately a child of God, a Son of God, we must be obedient. Then, also, another passage that came to my mind is in Mark 3:31, and in that passage, we are called the brothers and sisters and mother of Christ, indicating our intimacy with him. And again it is based on obedience to his commands. Verse 31, Jesus was teaching, it says, "There came then his brethren and mother and standing outside, sent unto him, calling him, and the multitude sat about him and said unto him, behold thy Mother and brethren outside seek for thee. And he answered them, saying "Who is my mother or my brethren?" And he looked round about on those who sat about him and said, "Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister and mother." And again, you see, to be intimately connected with Jesus Christ, as intimately as a brother, sister, mother relationship; as a son relationship; as a branch in a vine; the standard is always the same; it is obedience to his commandsdoing his will. It is not that you become that by obedience, it is that if you are that, it is visible because of your obedience. Obedience if the proof that you are intimately connected to Jesus Christ. In John 10, we are called 'sheep who follow him,' and in Verse 27, we read this, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." Again obedience, the standard of a relationship to Jesus Christ. In John 8:31, we arecalled, "disciples," and there Jesus says this; "If you continue in my word, then are you my disciples for real." In every case where the New Testament talks about a relationship to Jesus Christ, that relationship is visible or made visible by obedience. A true branch; a true son; a true brother,

sister, mother; a true sheep; a true disciple; will obey Christ. That's the standard. That's not how you become saved, that's the evidence of it. And so it is that in every relationship with Jesus Christ, the mark is obedience. And it is no different for those who ever are his friends. "Ye are my friends," Verse 14, "if you do whatever I command you." Now, that's the mark of a friend of Jesus. So, we are in a beautiful intimacy with Jesus Christ, marked by our obedience. The world can tell who we are because we obey him. It's a fantastic thing to realizethis friendship. Next time you're in a group where somebody's dropping the names of their friends, drop that name. Tell them you're a personal friend of the Son of God. One thing about a friend, and particularly About Jesus Christ, a friend always seeks the good of the one he loves, and that's how it is with Jesus Christ; he always seeks our good.

Now, as we approach these verses, and we're going to go through them verse by verse, Christ gives us five characteristics of his friends. These are manifestations of the friends of Jesus. This is not how you become a friend of Jesus, this is how it becomes visible that you are his friend. These are five marks, characteristics, or manifestations of the friends of Jesus, and they're really wonderful. The friends of Jesus, incidentally, you have an outline with you to follow, the friends of Jesus, in your bulletin, love each other, know divine truth, are chosen out of this world, bear remaining fruit, and have their prayers answered. Boy, I tell you, as I begin to study these things I get so excited about them that I, you know, I felt like ol' Billy Bray, who said that held shout "Glory" and if someone stuck him in a barrel he'd shout "Glory" through the bungholes, whatever those are. But the idea of all these things belonging to the believer is absolutely beyond imagination. The friends of Jesus love each other, know divine truth, are chosen out of this world,bear remaining fruit, and have their prayers answered. What tremendous promises!!! You know it would be great if we had only one of those but to realize that the friends of Jesus have every one of those. Such love!!!

All right, let's look at them separately: Number one, Jesus'friends love each other. Verses 12 and 13 deal with this. And again I want you to get the pattern here. John never makes any exceptions, remember that. John always puts it down in black and white. This is how it is, just as simple as that. John doesn't mess with any exceptions, any allowances, wastes no time on the exception to the rule. He deals purely with the general pattern. In other words, the unbeliever does this, the believer does that, and that's how John leaves it. He doesn't get messed up in exceptions. He just says, this is the believer, this is the unbeliever, draws the line, black and white, and that's it. And so what he's doing is giving the general pattern of the characteristics of a Christian. And in Verses 12 and 13, the first basic characteristic of a friend of Jesus is that he loves his brother. Verse 12, "This is my commandment, that ye love one another as I have loved you." Verse 14 says, "If you are my friend," you'll what? "You'll keep my commandment." So it is that the friend of Jesus loves the other friends of Jesus. The true believer, the true Christian, has a love and by that I mean a legitimate, deep, honest, love for other believers. You say, "Yeah, but there are some exceptions." That's right, there are, but John's not concerned about exceptions. He is stating the general pattern. Jesus commands us to keep on loving each other, in the progressive sense. And a true Christian will. A true Christian is one who has in his heart love, and I'll tell you something, that's the greatest thing to have. In a world that is seeking

and hungry for love, we experience love. Our hearts are full of love. That's a part of being a believer. Romans 5:5 tells us, "The love of Christ is shed abroad in our hearts." We experience love. We bask in it. We live in it. What a tremendous privilege!!! And the true believer shares it with the other believers. You can't be a true believer in Jesus Christ and not have a love for other believers. I John 2:9, "He that saith he is in the light, and hates his brother is in darkness until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is no occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not where he goeth because darkness has blinded his eyes." The true believer doesn't hate his brother. A man who says he believes and hates his brother is a liar. I John 5:1, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." That's how a man is saved. That's how you become a friend of Jesus. You believe that Jesus is the Christ, receive him into your life. And then, he says, "Everyone that loveth him that begot, loveth him also that is begotten of him." Did you get that? "Everyone that loveth him who begot, alsolovethhim that is begotten of him." Now you can take that all the way down the chain. If you love Christ, you'll love the Father, and if you love Christ, you'll love the ones that he begot. There's no such thing as loving God without loving Christ and there's no such thing as loving God and Christ without loving other believers begotten by God and Christ. It is characteristic of a true friend of Jesus that he loves the other friends of Jesus. In I Thessalonians 4:9, one of my favorite verses in all the Bible, I love this on, says this. "But as touching, brotherly love," listen to this, "ye need not, that I write unto you, for ye, yourselves, are taught of God to love one another." Do you see that's part of being a believer. That's part of being a friend of Jesus and You have to actually violate your nature in Christ not to love somebody. You've got to conjure up sin to turn off the love that is there. Because it's natural for a believer to love the other friends of Jesus. Oh, I tell you it's a sweet fellowship of love, isn't it? The world doesn't know much about it. They don't know anything about it, really because, "It's the love that passeth knowledge." Paul says in Ephesians. And, so, really those of us who are the friends of Jesus have a fellowship of love. Oh there's some kinks in it once in a while, some pretty serious wrinkles, but nevertheless, the general pattern of our lives is to love each other and when we don't, we're violating our new nature.

As we abide in Christ, remember how we learned that principle? As we abide in him, that's how we experience the fruit of the spirit, which is love. If you don't have love for somebody in your life, the problem is not conjuring up love, as I told you last time, the problem is just to get close to Jesus, so that love becomes a fruit produced by him through you, the abiding branch. Then he gives the nature of our love and this is what really is fantastic. Verse 13. Well, the end of Verse 12, let's go to that one first: "As I have loved you, "that's the character of our love. We are to love each other as he loved us. "Greater love hath no man than this, then that a man lay down his life for his friends." Jesus says, "I want you to love as I loved you." Now you say, well, I can't love in a substitutionary way. That's right; you can't. But you don't have to put too much into this verse. You can't love to a point of redeeming the whole world, we know that. And you can't love with the pure undefiled total agape that Christ can love with, but you can love in character as he loves, and that is, you can love with a sacrificial giving kind of love, and that's what he's saying. He's not expecting you to love in an eternal divine dimension

of love equal to Christ. He is expecting you to love as Christ loves. And how does he love? He loves with a sacrificial, selfgiving, kind of love. The disciples are not merely to attach themselves to one another externally and be devoted and helpful to each other. They are to agape. They are to love like Jesus loved. They are to love with total selfgiving. You are to look at your brother in Christ, not as somebody who's to be kind of your external acquaintance, not some kind of a superficial relationship. You're to look at your brother in Christ and to see him like Jesus would see him. You're to see him in terms of his soul's need. You're to see him in terms of eternal interests. You're to see him in terms of what is his deep heart cry and the anguish of his soul. You're to see him in terms of a selfgiving, comforting, spiritually instructing, and burdeningbearing kind of love. And I think sometimes, we substitute this kind of superficial, very much superficial, really on the surface, relationship, for something that is deep and that is really soultosoul love, where we care about the intimate needs of the man and the woman who is around us, who is our brother in Christ. And our love like that is going to be our testimony. Remember what Jesus told the disciples back in the 13th Chapter, the 35th Verse? He said, "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another." This is how we are to show the world who we are. And this kind of love and this kind of caring that reaches into the heart and soul of somebody that allows us to give our time to that individual; to give our wealth to that individual; to bear that individual's burdens; to empathize, to feel what they feel; to hunger for their needs, and to get inside their life, and to do what we need to do to show the fullest kind of lovethe intensity of it is described in Verse 13. It is to be so intense that if need be we would literally die for them. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." The world over, for all of history, the world has always acknowledged the supreme evidence of love, is when a person would die for the one he loved. And that's exactly what Jesus is about to do. He loves these disciples. If he doesn't die, they'll spend forever in hell, and so would you and so would I and so would everybody else, who ever lived, because there would be no sacrifice for sin. Jesus knows his death is only a few hours away. He's not dying for himself. He bore our sins in his own body on the tree. He became sinfor us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. He was dying a substitutionary death, and we are the beneficiaries. We're not just witnesses of Calvary. We're the recipients of what was accomplished there. We reap the benefits of his life and his free surrender in death. And so the nature of our love is to be the kind of love that causes us, if need be, to die for another believer.

And you know it's hard to think about that but you know the world does that in some dimensions. I always think of the story of the mother, who loved her child, in Scotland in the highland country, and was taking the baby from one place to another and a snowstorm came and the baby was cold and the mother took off all of her clothes to keep the baby warm, tucked the baby in a place by a tree and naked the mother died. They found her frozen the next day and the baby was warm and alive. That's giving your life. William Gladstone, one time, stood up before the parliament in England, and he was to tell them that Princess Alice had died. And he told them how Princess Alice died. Princess Alice had a little daughter, who contracted diphtheria, and the little girl was lying on her bed in the palace dying and Princess Alice, her mother, came over to the bedside and the doctor had instructed her to

stay away because diphtheria can be contracted from the breath, and most of all not to kiss the child, but as she saw the struggles of the last moments of life, she couldn't resist picking up that little life and planting a kiss that only a mother can plant on a dying child; contracted diphtheria and died. Charles Dickens, in the classic tale, THE TALE OF TWO CITIES, records, for us, the story of Charles Darney, who caught up in the swirl of the French Revolution, was innocently found guilty. He was really blameless and it was unjust. He was put into prison to await the guillotine. He had a friend, Sidney Carton, who came to the prison, drugged him, took his clothes and because he was so close resembling Darney, took the guillotine for him the next morning, while friends took the 'body' of Darney out. His life was spared because his friend died for him. We read about this in the world. We read about it in those dimensions. Certainly, of all the loves that exist, the divine agape that we believers know between us should be infinitely greater than that. There have been missionaries, who died to take the Gospel to others. We are to love with a selfless sacrificial love. Some of us don't even love enough to give our time to somebody, let alone our life. Some of us don't even love enough to take a group of little children that may be around us in our neighborhood or maybe somewhere, that need to know the truth of Jesus Christ; we can't even give them the time and the energy, let alone our life. Some of us know believers who aren't growing, who need help, who need ministration of gifts, and some of us aren't even willing to give them the spiritual gifts that we have of the Holy Spirit, let alone die for them. There are places around the world where there is money needed for ministries to be carried on, some of us aren't even willing to do that, let alone give our lives. Some of us operate within the framework of the body of Christ evidently in secret because it's not obvious that we're doing anything. We haven't even learned how to live for others, let alone die for them. Total sacrifice of our life is what it's all about and we are to love like Jesus loved. I'll tell you something, friends, when we begin to do that, the world is going to get in a state of shock and they're going to listen to our message. Philosopher, once said, Heine, in Germany said, "You show me your redeemed lives and I'll believe in your redeemer." Jesus Christ died for us when we hated him. Paul said, "For adventure for a good man, some would dare to die," but then he said this "But God commended his love toward us while we were yetwhat?sinners."

Sacrificial love for the unlovable person. Have you been able to do that? Have you ever given yourself to somebody? Have you ever met somebody's need? The friends of Jesus love each other. Let me read you a verse or two in I John 3:16, "By this, perceive we, the love of God because he laid down his life for us." Isn't that good? Say, how do you know God loves you? Well, 'cause he laid down his life. My little Matt, when he was real little, used to say, "I love you, Dad." and I'd always ask him, "How much do you love me?" and he'd say, "I love you big much." you know, and Id say, "How much is big much?" and he'd do the same thing, jump up into my lap, put his arms around my neck, and squeeze as tight as he could and he'd say, "That's big much." If you could get up on God's knee sometime and say, "God, I want to know, really, how much you love me?" I believe he'd point to a rocky hillside outside Jerusalem, and he'd say, "You see the cross in the middle? That's my Son. That's how much I love you." That's what he says right here: "By this, perceive we, the love of God because he laid down his life for us." Listen to it, here it comes, "And we ought to lay down our lives

for our brothers." Are you ready to do that? Do you really care about each other? There are some of you that need to be rebuked. Some of you need to be restored. Some of you need to be loved. Some of you need to be aided in many ways. Some of you need to be taught. Some of you need physical needs. Supplies. Some of you need to have somebody pray with you. Have you looked around to see who needs what and minister to them, in love? We talk about loving but I don't know if it's therein every instance. Verse 17, "But whosoever hath this world's good," here's practical, "and see if his brother have need and shuteth up his compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" You see someone with a need and don't supply it; does the love of God abide in you? "My little children," listen to this, "let us not love in word, neither in tongue but inwhat?in deed and in truth." We talk about it yet I wonder if it's there. So Jesus says, "My friends love each other.

Second characteristic, and this is good, oh, this is good!!! The second characteristic, Jesus' friends know divine truth. I mean just to think about that absolutely blows my mind. When I stop to realize that I literally, little ol' puny little me, you know, in my little brain know divine truth. I mean that's fantastic. I mean I got a ID' in Algebra. Do you understand what that means? I know the truth of the Universe. So do you, if you know Jesus, if you're his friend. Watch it in Verse 15 "Henceforth, I call you not servants," watch this one, "for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth. But I have called you friend, for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you." Is that fantastic? Everything that Jesus heard from the Father he tells us. The slave could never be a friendthe slave in the Greek was really a living tool is what he was. His master never told him why he just told him what, you know, go do that. The master didn't disclose all of his goals, and all of his passions, and all of his loves, and all of his purpose to the slave, he just went out and said, you go over here and do this, and you go over there and do that and he'll take care of the purpose for all of it. But we who are Jesus' friends are not blindly obeying; we are in on the details. We share his heart. We share his plans. We share his motives. We share his purposes. Slaves serve so they can earn money. Right? They serve toget their keep. Servants work just to get their money, get their keep. They could care less what the master's wishes are. Mostly they have a crummy attitude toward theboss. They just serve. They just crank it out to get it doneearn their money. Not us. Not friends. Oh no. Our passion is the passion of Jesus. We want what he wants accomplished. And so, we're not working to earn anything, we're working because it's our heart's desire to do it. Because we know the whole plan from beginning to end. He's revealed it to us past, present, and future. Jesus said, "if you are my disciples and continue in my word, "John 8:32, " you shall know the truth." We have a scoop, inside scoop, on divine truth. Over in the 17th Chapter of John, Verse 6, "I have manifested thy name under the men who now gavest me out of the world. Thine they were and thou gavest them to me and they have kept thy word". Watch this, "Now they have known that all things whatever thou have givest me are of thee, for I have given unto them the words, which thou gavest me and they have received them and have known surely that I came out from thee and they have believed that thou didst send me." Jesus says, Father everything you told me, I passed on to them. In Matthew, I love this one, 13th Chapter, Verses 10 and 11. It says, concerning the parables which Jesus gave and the disciples came and said unto him, "Why speakest thou unto them in parables?" He answered and said unto

them, "Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries, the sacred secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven, but to them it is not given." To those who are the friends of Jesus, he discloses his inmost heart's desire. In Luke 10:23, it says, "And he turned unto his disciples and said privately, 'Blessed are the eyes which sees the things that ye see.'" Isn't that good? Verse 24, "For I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see and have not seen them, and to hear those things which ye hear and have not heard them." For those who are the friends of Jesus, there is an intimacy of knowledge that came from the Father through the Son to us. You know it first came to those apostles and to Paul and they passed it to us in the pages of the word of God. They learned it straight from Jesus and passed it to us. And Paul says in Acts 20:27, "I have not failed to declare unto you the whole counsel of God." It's right here in the book. We have it in Scripture. In Ephesians 3, Paul talks about the mystery being disclosed unto us. At the end of the book of Romans in the 16th Chapter in Verse 25 and 26, he says, "Now is made manifest and by the Scriptures of the prophets according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith." In other words, the manifestation of God's truth, through the Scripture. You say, "Well, that doesn't set us apart. Anybody who buys the Bible can read it." Not sot Not so. Read again I Corinthians 2 and you'll find out the natural man does not understand the things of God; they have to be discerned spiritually. And by the indwelling spirit and the word of God, we know divine truth. We know things no one else knows. All the philosophers and all the scientists, of our world, searching and seeking for truth, are like babes in the woods, compared to the simplest Christian, who is exposed to the revelation of God through the word and the ministry of the Holy Spirit. I think, sometimes, we take it for granted, don't we? I really think we do. I don't think we really get a grip on what it is, to know what we know. And so Jesus never expected his disciples to be blindly obeying him and just kind of dragging along, cranking it out, but they were to be his friends, intimately acquainted with all his heart's desires, all his work and all his missions. And what a privilege that is. In fact, he even lives his life through us. So the friends of Jesus love each and they know divine truth.

Thirdly, Jesus' friends are especially chosen. This is good. Friends usually, you know, in a human situation mutually chose each other. Not so in this case. Verse 16, just the first part, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you and ordained you, watch this, "that ye should go." And we'll stop right there. I like that. He says, I have chosen you, you've not chosen me and he's talking about salvation there. Verse 19, says, "I have chosen you out of the world." Jesus has chosen certain ones to be

His friend and he chose them out of the world. That refers to salvation. In Ephesians, Chapter 1, Verse 4, "According as he has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world." Chosen out of the world. In Mark, a Verse comes to my mind, I think it's the 13th Chapter and the 20th Verse, which says, "And except that the Lord has shortened those days," talking about the tribulation, "No flesh should be saved but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days." Jesus chooses his friends. In fact, if you read carefully the 6th Chapter of Luke and down in Verses 13 and 14, you'll find that he directed that especially to the disciples. "When it was day he called unto him, his

disciples and of them he choose twelve." And then it names them. We know that he choose the salvation and we know, secondly, that he also choose these to be his 'particular disciples.' Then I want you to see another word in that verse. He said, "I have chosen you," and we've talked so much about that in the past, "God's Great Decree," then he says, "I have chosen you and ordained you." Now that's a different word. That's a Greek word and it's an interesting word because it means to appoint for special service or to set for a special reason. In several places in the New Testament, it talks about certain individuals being appointed or being ordained. And I think it's a very important word because it introduces to us here a very important concept. In Paul's letter to TimothyIn Paul's letter to the Church at Corinth, in Chapter 12, he says he's appointed some to be apostles, prophet, teachers, and so forth and then lists the gifts in Verse 28 of Chapter 12. In II Timothy 1, he saystalks about being appointed or set for a certain purpose. The word ordained meansimplies the idea of service. Chosen to salvation, ordained to special service. That's the distinction in the verse.I have chosenyouthat is to salvation. I have ordained youthat is to service, special service. Jesus' friends, then, are specially chosen and as I said in Verse 19, they are chosen out of the world. Now, I want you to see what they're chosen for, and I love this. First of all he says, "You are chosen and ordained that you shouldwhat's the next word?little wordgo." That you should go. I like that. No Christian was ever chosen to stopor to stand around and watch.

Yesterday, I was in Santa Barbara and I had an all day conference with the students at the University of California at Santa Barbara, Isle Vista, and you know that's been a pretty hot deal up there. And so, there's a lot of really strange, various kinds of groups and things. But I was speaking to them, three or four times yesterday, and one guy came to me and I said, "Are you a Christian?" We began to talk and, of course, you know, he was a Christian and we talked further and found out that he had been to seminary and dropped out and I said, "What are you doing now?" And he says, "Well, we have a little fellowship up here and we just praise God together and we don't have anywe don't meet or anythingwe just meet every day in homes, we don't have a building," and he was going on and on about this kind of an underground church type of thing. "And we just meet together," and I said, "Well, what do you do? Who teaches you?" and he said, "No, no. Nobody teaches us, we just share. No one ever teaches." And I said, "Do some of the people feel they have the gift of teaching?" He said, "Probably." And I said, "Well, what do you do, what's your purpose?" "Well, we just praise the Lord a lot." "Well," I said, "you probably go down the street and share your faith? Right? He said, "No," he said, "we've been in existence two and a half years and we've never told anybody." He says, "We don't feel we're called to that." He says, "We feel we're still an infant church and the infant church never went out and evangelized." I said, "How long have you been a Christian?" "Fifteen years." I said, "My friend, you're not an infant believer." Plus I'm not too sure that's legitimate anyway. But the idea was they had been called and chosen to sit with each other, and sing songs every day. My friend you were chosen to go.The world isn't about to come, you have to go. The Bible doesn't say, "Hey, all you in the world, come to the Church." "Go out on the highways and the byways and compel them to come in." Jesus said. "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." Jesus said, "After the spirit of God has come upon you, you should be my witnesses, Jerusalem, Judea, Sumeria,

and the other most part of the earth." Get out and reach the world". My friend you were chosen to go, not to come. And come 'til you're ready to go and then go. So Christ elected a group of men out of the world of darkness. He saved them first, he trained them, he loved them, he called them his friends, he ordained them, sent them right back in the world where he got them, only when they went back they were ready to do something to the world they came out of. What a high calling. Every believer has been chosen for salvation, ordained to special service and you're to be fired right back into the world again to communicate Jesus Christ. The idea is motion in the Christian life. The idea is to go. I'm thinking of a verse in II Thessalonians 1:11. Paul says "Wherefore, also, we pray, always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power; That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you." Boy, we're called and ordained to glorify the name of Jesus Christ in the world. We're called and ordained to let God work his perfect will through us. We're not called to sit. We're called to go. So Jesus' friends love each other, know divine truth, and are especially chosen.

And fourthly, Jesus' friends bear remaining fruit. Verse 16 says this in the middle, after 'ago'. It says, "And bring forth fruit and that your fruit should remain." We'll stop right there. You know, oneof the fantastic things about the Christian life is that it's so purposeful. I mean, do you realize that when you go out and communicate the Gospel of Jesus Christ to somebody and they receive Christ, you have brought about an eternal transaction. I mean, you know, just to look at life apart from Jesus Christ and just to watch it kind of dwindle away, day after day, meaninglessly, with no results and no effect on anybody for any time at all and then to compare that with the life of a believer, a friend of Jesus, who bears fruit that is eternal, what a fantastic realization! Just like the ripples in the pond when a rock goes in, your life will ripple throughout all eternity with fruit, born in time, to the Glory of God ... Boy, I'm telling you, it's exciting. A wonderful promise. That you'll have fruit that remains. You say, what is fruit? Remember what it is? It's Christlikeness. It's confession of praise. It's a contribution of love. It's communication also that blesses others. It's conduct in generalgood works, and it's also converts led to Jesus Christ. All of that is fruit and your fruit, my friends, is eternal. Those are commodities that affects people's lives, forever. You say, "Well, I don't have any eternal fruit,, I never led anybody to Jesus. Maybe, you never had the final result, maybe, you never reap the harvest, but every time somebody saw love or joy or any other fruits of the spirit in your life, the planting of the truth of God was there and when that person came to Christ, you were part and parcel of the experience. And it was your fruit as well. And when you've taught somebody else the word of God and enriched their Christian life, which gives more Glory to God, you have thus born eternal fruit. I'll tell you, it's wonderful to have a life that has products going on forever. Boy, do you ever get a grip on really the significance of your own life in Christ. Just to realize that you're not just, you know, one little tiny dot in the world that's meaningless. You have eternal consequence attached to your life. You affect eternity, forever. Promise of a life with eternal fruit, how fantastic! No. sir, a true branch doesn't just make a temporary splashabiding fruit. I love what Paul said in II Corinthians 5:17, he said, "I witness because if any man be in Christ, he's a new creature. Old things are passed away and behold all things become new." You know why Paul was in the ministry? Because he had such a tremendous

joy in seeing the finished product and knowing it was eternal. The things that you do for God never pass away. Did you know that? Remember the little saying, "Only what's done for Christ will last. All the fruit you bear is forever." Boy that's fantastic. Remember in Revelation have what it says about the Saints who have died? It says, "They have died and gone to Glory and their works do what?follow them." See? Their fruit goes right with themforever.

Lastly, Jesus' friends not only love each other, not only experience divine truth, and all these other things, but Jesus' friends have their prayers answered. Look at the end of Verse 16, "That whatever you shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you." Isn't that exciting? A true friend of Jesus has his prayers answered. Now, we've talked so much about the principle of asking in Christ's name. It simply means to say, I'm asking this because this is what Jesus would want. Selflessnot to consume in all your own lusts. But because this is the desire of Jesus Christ. I'm asking for Jesus because this is what he would want, and God will answer.

I wanted to spend more time on that but we're done. Here they are, the characteristics of those who are the friends of Jesus. They love each other. They know divine truth, They have a special calling apart from the world to go back into the world. They bear remaining fruit that is eternal. They have their prayers answered when they pray in the name of Jesus Christ. That's what it means to be a friend of Jesus. Now, let me add one thought. This is a key thing. These are all characteristics of you who know Christ. All of them. But in every case, now watch this, in every case, though these are yours by the general pattern and by your position in Christ, the New Testament takes it a step further and encourages you to really operate on those principles. The true friends of Jesus love each other and yet the Bible says we much love each other fervently, pushing us to the extreme. The true friends of Jesus know divine truth and yet the Bible says study the word of God to show yourself approved, rightly dividing it. The true friend of Jesus has been called out of this world and yet the word of God says so carefully to us, walk worthy of such a high calling. A true friend of Jesus bears eternal fruit and yet the Bible says seek to bear more fruit in response to the purging of the Father. The friend of Jesus prays and God answers and the Bible yet says pray fervently, pray effectually, and pray withoutwhat?ceasing. You see in every one of these patterns and positional truths, there is that practical implementation, to get in on all that there is available. The resources are all yours, if you're Jesus' friends. You say, "What about those who aren't his friends?" Well, now, Jesus said this, "He that is not my friend, he that is not with me, is against me." Are you searching for love? Are you searching for truth? Are you longing for purpose, to live for something, to be a part of some plan? Are you longing for a meaningful, productive life? Are you searching for supernatural resources to all your needs? Then I say to you simply, be a friend of Jesus and you'll have them all. You say, Can 19 1 thought Jesus chose his own friends." He does and if he's speaking in your heart right now, and calling you to himself, you must respond personally and individually.

Father, we thank you for teaching us this morning again, and Lord, we know there are some here this morning who have never received Jesus Christ. Father, there are some that you're calling right now to

be your friends. Lord, Jesus, there are some you've chosen to be your friends and you're waiting for them to respond and right now in their hearts they sense you saying, come to me and believe in me and give me your life and receive my friendship and all that it implies. Father I pray that they might do that. That they might become that friend. Father, those of us who are your friends are ready to love you. Help us to take all these general patterns and positional patterns that we have and stretch them to their limit. Help us to be the truest kind of friends, that you might be glorified in us. We pray in Jesus' name, whom we love and whom we serve with love. Amen.

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