

Sermon 951720 You've Got a friend Revised

Songwriter.....

Winter, spring, summer or fall

All you have to do is call

And I'll be there

You've got a friend... You've got a friend. PAUSE

And isn't that what it's all about friendship... isn't that what it's all about...

caring... isn't that what is' all about? Friends? all you have to do is call... and

you've got a friend... and I've got a friend... God is our friend. What a friend we

have in Jesus ... all our sins and grieves to bear. What a privilege to carry

everything to God in prayer.

In our gospel reading this morning, Jesus... in his parting words... calls his

disciples to love one another. You are MY friends, says Jesus and you are to be

friends to one another and to others... In this passage, Jesus, takes the lead when

he paints a picture of what a friend is.. you are not just workers or servants... he

says...you are my friends... and friends love one another.

True friendship... the kind that Jesus is speaking of here holds us up through all

of life... a friend knows us.. a friend accepts us and a friend is here for you. A

friend knows us and when others walk out, a friend walks in

Friends are people with whom you dare to be yourself. You do not have to be on your guard. With them you breathe freely. They understand. You do not have to be careful. You can abuse them, neglect them, tolerate them. Best of all, you can keep still with them. It makes no matter. They like you. They understand. You can weep with them, sing with them, laugh with them, pray with them. And through it all-- -- they see, know, and love you. A friend? Just one, I repeat, with whom you dare to be yourself. (C. Raymond Beran, in *Bits & Pieces*, September 19, 1991, p. 3-4.)

CS Lewis said,. “Friendship is unnecessary. It has no survival value but.... rather it is one of those things that gives value to survival...love is not what makes the world go around... love is what makes it worthwhile.”

Author Samuel Coleridge describes friendship as a sheltering tree... where the large and spreading arms of love shelters us from the rains and winds of life...

And Theologian Paul Tillich ..says we only discover our souls through the mirror of those who look at us, and an old English proverb says the best mirror is an old friend... who knows us as we are... understands where we've been... accepts who we've become and still gently encourages us to grow...

Oprah puts it well: Lots of people want to ride with you in a limousine but what you want is someone who will take the bus with you when the limousine breaks down

Psychologist Abraham Maslow , in his *Hierarchy of Needs*, tells us *that friendship and family are some of our essential needs.*

Research also confirms that ... friends are important... fewer friends lead to higher stress and shorter lifespan... in a study a few years back it was discovered that men and women over the age of 65 who had more friends... had a lower risk of health problems and recovered faster when and if they did develop them... and a Yale study shows that having friends significantly reduced early age death rates...friends can help us reduce stress, improve the quality of our lives and derive more joy from life.

Friendships is.... as one person said, “the wine of life, which should be like a well-stocked cellar... ([www.homileticsonline](http://www.homileticsonline), Sermon Illustrations, “Friendship”, retrieved 8/10/20

Jesus obviously understood this and called his disciples to this. He taught his disciples....he teaches us that kind of love ...

We read in scriptures that like a true friend he cries for and with us...we know when Jesus saw Mary and Martha grieving over the loss of their brother and his friend Lazarus, ...he wept.

Not only does Jesus cry with us, but he celebrates with us in our joys...We read that Jesus celebrated weddings.... Family and friends gatherings... he ate with all sorts of people...he drank wine with them. Jesus was not just divine ... he loved life... he lived it...he celebrated it.. just as would our good friends

Like a good friend Jesus comforts us in our difficulties and he sends us the Holy Spirit...in fact we often refer to the Holy Spirit is The Comforter.

We also read in the bible how Jesus confronted people who were not walking in God's path... he confronted people who put rules and regulations above love and caring and friendship. And he confronts us when we slip into unhealthy ways of being and living. Likewise, loving sometimes means confronting as well.

Like a friend Jesus also cares for us... he loves us... he lifts us and he adores us. And we need to do the same.

And God expects us to be that friend to others... a friend who cries for and with us...one who celebrates with us...who comforts us and when we need it confronts us. But being a friend ... means to know that when we are called by

name... that we come running wherever we are to see your friend again. Being a friend is about faithfulness... It require actions.

Jesus also tells us tells us the cold, hard truth ...you can't be an enemy to your neighbor and be a friend to God. to be faithful to God, we must be faithful to our friends. So who are our friends... our friend is our neighbor and as in the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus tells us that our neighbor is a person, any person who lies wounded or hurting along our pathways of life.. makes no difference whether rich or poor, black or white, male or female.

And community is vital... it's essential... And the community of the church is considered so important.. we work to put into action the words Jesus spoke

The next time you're trying to exit the mall parking lot on a busy shopping day and some driver lets you in line in front of him...according to some research, there's a good chance that driver is a religious person... According to a study conducted by Harvard professor Robert Putnam and Notre Dame scholar David Campbell, *American Grace: How Religion Is Reshaping Our Civic and Political Lives*, religious people are three to four times more likely to be involved in their community than are nonreligious people. They're more apt to work on community projects, belong to voluntary associations, vote in local elections, attend public meetings and donate both time and money to public causes, including secular ones.

The studies also show that religious people are, in general, just “nicer.” They do good deeds, help both neighbors and strangers, give money to panhandlers and let others cut in front of them in line.

Putnam and Campbell say the reason religious people are nicer and are better citizens isn't because of religious teaching, per se. They behave well not because they're trying to secure a place in heaven or because they're afraid of divine judgment; rather, they're that way because of the *relationships* they have in their places of worship.

A congregation as a whole is a place where we draw forth good things from one another for the benefit of others. Religious people are good for their communities, for civic life, for those around them. And part of the reason is because they call forth good things from one another. (“Supercharged Friendships, ([www homileticsonline](http://www.homileticsonline.com)).

Church is... it would seem a good place to be...to grow... and a place to feel loved and cared for. And a good place to make friendships and to grow in love and to share that love with the world. And it is Jesus .. the Jesus who offers the hand of friendship and love to us all... and should we not too the same?

There is an account of that kind of love ..... and an unexpected love at that

One author says, "One example of friendship remains with me as vividly as the moment I first heard of it as a boy. In his first seasons with the Brooklyn Dodgers, Jackie Robinson, the first black man to play Major League baseball, faced venom nearly everywhere he traveled--fastballs at his head, spikings on the bases, brutal racial slurs from the opposing dugouts and from the crowds. During one game in Boston, the taunts and racial slurs seemed to reach a peak. In the midst of this, another Dodger, a Southern white named Pee Wee Reese, called timeout. He walked from his position at shortstop toward Robinson at second base, put his arm around Robinson's shoulder, and stood there with him for what seemed like a long time. The gesture spoke more eloquently than the words: This man is my friend.

*Willie Morris in Parade.*

yet loving one another.... it not always an easy thing to do....to love one another requires forbearance...Forbearance is the unsung champion feats of the spiritual life. Yet it is not easy to embrace... For one thing...one doesn't have to be forbearing when things are fine.... only when things are tough already

And forbearing goes against our natures. When we are disturbed, or upset, or offended, or wounded, or suffering from injustice, the last thing we want to do is to “hold ourselves back” or “restrain ourselves.” Our natural inclination is to “get in there swinging and straighten this mess out.” We want resolution, not forbearance. We want justice, not forbearance. Forbearance is like mercy and forgiveness. The only time we are whole heartedly in favor of it is when it is not needed.

Then why forbear? Perhaps this story tells it all: Just as

According to a traditional Hebrew story, Abraham was sitting outside his tent one evening when he saw an old man, weary from age and journey, coming toward him. Abraham rushed out, greeted him, and then invited him into his tent. There he washed the old man's feet and gave him food and drink.

The old man immediately began eating without saying any prayer or blessing. So Abraham asked him, "Don't you worship God?"



The old traveler replied, "I worship fire only and revere no other god."

When he heard this, Abraham became incensed, grabbed the old man by the shoulders, and threw him out his his tent into the cold night air.

When the old man had departed, God called to his friend Abraham and asked where the stranger was. Abraham replied, "I forced him out because he did not worship you."

God answered, "I have suffered him these eighty years although he dishonors me. Could you not endure him one night?"

The most powerful motivation to be forbearing is gained by considering God.

As one author said, God is perfect purity, perfect holiness, perfect goodness, and perfect righteous. Yet he puts up with me.... God forbears and endures me and all of us. I don't know about you, but I am constantly amazed by this.

Can we do less?

Firther, forbearance is an absolute necessity if we are to have community. Look around this sanctuary. See all the beautiful parts of it... the windows, the pews,

the woodworking, the carpeting, the chancel area, the organ... Did you ever stop to think how much forbearance the folks in this church must have had?

Now judging by some of the work we have done together in the last numbers of years, I find it hard to believe that all minds were in one accord, that everyone was in agreement about the colors on the wall or the carpet or the design here in the chancel area or how the windows were placed and what would be the patterns of them... and how the balcony would look .....Yet they and we who have lovingly built and cared for our church did build it, did remodel it. And all of this came about because of forbearance. Maybe some of us would rather have had a different color, a different style chair in the lounge, maybe carpet instead of tile...yet because we practiced forbearance, we were able to be patient with one another; we able to tolerate others and their ideas; we refrain from being too pushing and always wanting our way. And when we may have been provoked with one another, we control ourselves. That is forbearance... and that's what a church has to have to survive.

Just as Christ's is the cement of humanness so endurance love and forbearance is the cement that holds our church's community together.

So how do we forbear in healthy and relationship-building ways...

- 1) We remember that each of us is a child of God... each of us is precious in God's sight; therefore we need to treat one another that way.
- 2) We need to guard against a critical spirit ... not to always look for slights and grievances.... To let some things roll off.... Who of us has not slighted someone.... Often unintentionally... we need to have the grace to let it go....to forgive.
- 3) Laughter.... This one works pretty well Laughing at ourselves can calm and ease a tense moment....we sometimes take ourselves way too seriously.
- 4) Forbearance also calls us to listen... to have a calm spirit.. to hear and accept someone else ideas or feelings....

I know, I know... forbearance goes against our nature.... It's like justice and mercy.... We want justice for the other's guy's mistakes and sins....but for our selves we want mercy... Same with forbearance.... We want others to

forgive and forbear our foibles and follies but we sure are not always anxious to do the same....

Leonardo da Vinci said: Patience serves as a protection against wrongs as clothes do against cold. For if you put on more clothes as the cold increases, it will have no power to hurt you. So in like manner you must grow in patience when you meet with great wrongs, and they will then be powerless to vex your mind.

Forbearance reminds us; Each of us is a child of God. Each of us is precious in God's sight; therefore we need to treat each other that way.

."Clearly Jesus offers the hand of friendship... puts his arm around us and offers that love and friendship to us/ Can we love one another as Christ commands?

James Taylor says in another of his hits, Caroline in My Mind....says

There ain't no doubt in no one's mind

That love's the finest thing around