

February 11, 2018

“The Gift of True Friendship”
1 Samuel 18:1-5

FCF: Our inexperience with true friendship

PROPOSITION: (anchor) God has provided the gift of true friendship.
(magnet) We have but to heed His Word and pursue it.

SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:

We began with a quote from Lewis’ The Four Loves. Here’s another (**READ quote**):

Friendship arises out of mere Companionship when two or more of the companions discover that they have in common some insight or interest or even taste which the others do not share and which, till that moment, each believed to be his own unique treasure (or burden). The typical expression of opening Friendship would be something like, “What? You too? I thought I was the only one.”

We’ve all tasted this as we were growing up. Whether on the playground or in the library, there’s a childhood friend that comes to mind even now. Unfortunately, as we moved from childhood to adulthood, that experience became exceedingly rare, if not non-existent. And that’s a problem.

Typically, I do a relationship-themed message around Valentine’s Day. This morning, we’re going to be looking at the text that comes immediately after where we were last week. I didn’t plan that with our guest speaker. But, apparently, that’s part of the Lord’s purposes for us.

SCRIPTURE READING: 1 Samuel 18:1-5**PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION****SERMON INTRODUCTION:**

South Korea was named as the host nation for the 2018 Winter Olympics in 2011. Since that moment, the quiet coastal city of Gangneung has been preparing for hundreds of thousands of visitors. Highways have been upgraded. A high speed train station has been added. Hotels and restaurants have been spruced up. Extensive renovations were made throughout the city. All of this is part of South Korea’s desire to extend itself to the world as it hosts the Winter Games. And now, finally, with the opening ceremonies behind them, it’s time for the athletes to compete.

It’s something like that in our text. The table has been set. The way has been cleared. All the provisions have been made. A gift is now held before us, a gift of God - a horizontal bond, that of true friendship. This gift is a wonder to behold, a treasure to be sought. And we have so very much to learn from the friendship that we see between Jonathan and David.

God has provided us the gift of true friendship. We have but to heed His Word and to pursue it. He has set the table and cleared the way. We have but to lay hold of it. What does that mean? To get at this, we’re going to look at three points. First, the possibility of true friendship. Second, the principles of true friendship. And, third, the power of true friendship.

I. THE POSSIBILITY OF TRUE FRIENDSHIP

First, the possibility of true friendship. Could such a thing be real? Could it even exist?

A) The Context

The context of what’s going on here is vital. We have a collision of two things.

1. The ascendancy of David

On the one hand, we have the ascendancy of David. In 1 Samuel 16, we see David anointed by Samuel. In 1 Samuel 17, we read of David’s victory over Goliath. David’s star is on the rise.

2. The hostility of Saul

So we have the ascendancy of David. And then the hostility of Saul. David's popularity has provoked a jealous rage within the king. And set loose a series of attempts on David's life.

B) The Parties

That's the context of this friendship. Who are the parties? What do we know of them?

1. The differences

Jonathan was Saul's son, the prince, the next in line to the throne. He was raised among royalty, invested with authority within the army. David was from the backwater town of Bethlehem. His background was not as a warrior but a shepherd. Not as a politician but a singer-poet.

2. The declaration

And yet, there was this bond between them. Despite the differences, listen to this declaration. After David gets word that Jonathan had fallen in battle ([READ 2 Samuel 1:25-26](#)). We hear this with suspicion of something else. But this was nothing but a bond borne of selfless devotion.

It's truly an amazing and beautiful picture putting forth the possibility of true friendship.

Illustration:

It's not the only such in the Bible. Think of Jesus' disciples. Among the twelve were two as different as they could be. Matthew had been a tax collector, seen as a traitorous sympathizer with the occupying army. Simon was a Zealot, a member of the resistance movement. And yet there they were. Great as their differences were, those were no match for their bond in Jesus.

Application:

It's worth thinking about. For sometimes Christians hesitate to take the possibility of true friendship seriously. We say, "We have nothing in common. The divide is too great." Civilian and military. Single and married. Liberal and conservative. Black, brown, yellow, and white.

Think with me. We connect most deeply on the things most essential to us. So, where is that barrier for you? What does that tell you? What is your identity? It needs to be the gospel.

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II. THE PRINCIPLES OF TRUE FRIENDSHIP

Which takes us to the second point, the principles of true friendship. What would this look like? What shape would it take? ([READ 1 Samuel 18:1-5](#)) Four simple observations.

A) Souls Knit Together

1. A stirring image

First, these are souls knit together. A stirring image of two men bound tight at the deepest level.

2. The strongest bond

Making the strongest bond - kindred spirits committed to the same cause, grounded in the same reality of the living God and His love for His people. Comrades in arms jealous for God's honor.

B) Love for the Other

1. The great commandments

With that, an intense love for one another. The greatest command is to love God with all we are. And the second is to love our neighbor as ourselves. It's explicitly mentioned twice in this text.

2. Practically applied

And it is shown in the gifts Jonathan offers to David. These were not just valuable. They were meaningful. Jonathan is renouncing his claim to the throne, publicly declaring loyalty to David.

C) Unconditionality Expressed

1. Nature unknown

So we have souls knit together, love one for the other, and then the unconditionality of a covenant. We don't really know its nature. We don't know exactly how or where it was made.

2. But meaning clear

But, as a covenant, its meaning is clear. This was not a contract of reciprocal duties. This was a commitment one to another without condition, promises from each party no matter the cost.

D) Vulnerability Covered

1. The threat against David

With this fourth thing worth noting - vulnerability covered. David would face a real and present danger - the burning rage of Jonathan's father, King Saul, and the might of his pursuing army.

2. The protection of Jonathan

David was vulnerable, exposed. But he would have the protection of Jonathan (**READ 1 Samuel 19:1-3**). Jonathan saw David's need and was determined to help him and watch David's back.

In this we see all the most basic principles of true friendship.

Application:

A moment ago, I raised a question as to if all this was real. So let's say it is. Is it actually necessary? Again, think with me. Be honest. Your heart, somewhere deep within, resonates with this. Every one of us longs to have a friend like this, to know such a bond with another.

Why? We were made for it. We were made for it - just as for food and air. Which tells us that such relationships are vital and necessary. To the degree we have this, we will flourish and grow. It doesn't matter if you acknowledge this. It doesn't change your wiring and design.

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III. THE POWER FOR TRUE FRIENDSHIP

Which brings me to this last and vital point, the power of true friendship. How is this possible? How was it these men could have had such a bond? For that matter, how can we? With the coming of *the King*, the arrival of *the Anointed One*, the stage is set for true friendship.

A) Jesus' Ministry

Some things about Jesus' earthly ministry are worth noting at this point.

1. His teaching

Consider His teaching. His disciples were called to follow Him - not in isolated pockets but as one. They were then sent forth not as rugged individuals but two-by-two in partnership together.

2. His example

So there is Jesus' teaching. And His example. At crucial points in His ministry, when He could, Jesus wanted to have His three closest friends with Him - Peter, James, and John. Think of it.

B) Jesus' Work

Jesus' ministry points us in this direction. But even more so His work. In two ways.

1. Finished

First, the finished work of the cross and the empty tomb. He lived the life we should have lived and died the death we deserved to die. And nothing can be added or taken away from that.

2. Ongoing

That finished work is good news. But so too is His ongoing work. His Spirit takes that news and presses it into our hearts, changing us from the inside out, making us more like Him, willing and able as His friends - a wondrous thing to consider - to then be friends with one another.

That's the power of true friendship, what makes it possible. It's the gospel.

Application:

I've raised questions as to if this was real and if it was necessary. Is it possible? Yes, absolutely. More so with the follower of Christ than anyone else. I don't mean non-Christians can't taste of this and have good friends. Not at all. But the gospel has deep transformative effects, making us into people who have nothing to prove, no reason to hide, and no need to hold back. That creates pathways for true friendship, deep bonds that couldn't be there otherwise.

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CONCLUSION:

Heed and pursue. Heed and pursue. Earlier, I mentioned the Winter Games. I want you to imagine the award ceremonies. What do you see? Three athletes, standing on those columns, medals hanging from their necks, smiles upon their faces. That's what you see. But that's not all that's there. That's the tip of the iceberg. Below the surface of those waters are weeks, months, and years of dedication, hard work, discipline, disappointment, sacrifice, failure, and persistence. And then the passing of a test of nerve at one crucial moment. That win didn't just happen.

It's something like that in the pursuit of friendship. It has to be intentional. Meaning it has to be a priority. This is not going to happen on its own. It has to be immersed in prayer. It's not going to happen by our own striving. And we have to be patient. It's not going to happen all at once. This pursuit of friendship is not something just to talk about. We have to pursue it.

God has provided this gift of true friendship. We may never have known or seen anything like this before. But His promises are true. Ours is but to heed His Word and pursue it.

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