

*John 15:9-17*  
*"True Friendship"*  
*Sixth Sunday of Easter*

*May 6, 2018*  
*First Lutheran Church, Glencoe, Minn.*  
*Pastor Peter Adelsen*

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen!

Alleluia! Christ is Risen! {He is Risen, indeed! Alleluia!}

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

*[Intro]*

You've got a friend in me. You've got a friend in me.  
You've got troubles, we'll I've got 'em too.  
There isn't anything I wouldn't do for you.  
We stick together and see it through.  
You've got a friend in me. You've got a friend in me.<sup>1</sup>

Those are some of the lyrics of the title song from "Toy Story".

As you may be aware, this children's movie is all about the friendship bond between a boy and his toys and the toys, themselves.

- What a joy it is to have friendships.
- Friends stick together no matter what.
- Friends tell each other what is on their minds.
- Friends tell each other when we make mistakes.
- Friends share secrets with each other.
- Friends defend each other.

But, the ultimate friend is one who lays down his life for you.

*[No Greater Love]*

Jesus said, ***"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends"*** (John 15:12-13).

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<sup>1</sup> Randy Newman, "You've Got a Friend in Me" from Toy Story, 1995.

You see, everyone who abides in Jesus – who follows His commands and instructions – is His friend.

As Jesus said, ***“Abide in my love. 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”*** (John 15:9b-10).

We became friends of Jesus when He laid down His life for us as he was nailed to that wooden cross. You see, Christ’s death is the highest expression of love.

Through Christ’s death and resurrection, He brought us to Him. He brought us to God the Father.

In response to Christ’s love in making us justified with God the Father, we follow Christ’s commands and instructions, because of His love.

Now, this obedience is not what makes us friends with Jesus. This is not about good works, since everything good has already been accomplished through Jesus. This obedience is what characterizes you as His friend.

### ***[Friendships]***

For us today, when we think of friends, we may think that the friendship goes both ways. Like, I’ll help you and you’ll help me.

Well, this isn’t how it goes with Jesus. Friends of Jesus cannot turn around and say that Jesus will be their friend only if Jesus approves of all that they do.

And, there are those who would claim that Jesus would approve of how they live, even if it is forbidden by God’s Word – they think, “I don’t have a problem with this, so Jesus must be ok with it.”

They think of themselves as making the decision for God. As if, God needs any help.

Despite our weakness to sin, Jesus still loves His creation. But, He is not happy when His name is invoked for approval of sin – approval of saying I’m right and you’re wrong, God.

True friends of Jesus are obedient to Him and to His Word.

We are obedient to Jesus by reading and proclaiming His Word for **“reproof, for correction, for improvement”** in our lives (2 Timothy 3:16). The Bible was written by God so **“that by patience and by the encouragement of Scripture we might have hope”** (Romans 15:4).

You see, Scripture gives us teaching for no other purpose than to point us to Jesus, to admonish us to repent, to encourage godliness, to strengthen our faith and assure us of our salvation.<sup>2</sup>

Through God’s Word, we know that we are conquerors over sin, death and the power of the devil, because of Jesus’ death and resurrection from the grave.

### ***[Born of God]***

We became Christ’s friends when we were **“born of God”** and we continue to be Christ’s friends **“when we love God and obey his commandments”** (1 John 5:1a, 2).

We were born of God when Jesus chose us when we were baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit with the water and the Word.

We continue to be Christ’s friends through our study of God’s Word. You see, each time we are in the Word, God reminds us of His friendship with us.

We continue to be Christ’s friends when we worship Him each week, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, at the Divine Service.

Through the Holy Spirit’s work in bringing us to faith, we became fellow conquerors because of Christ’s eternal victory. **“For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith”** (1 John 5:4).

Sola Fide: Faith Alone. You see, by grace through faith, we are saved through Jesus.

Our faith in Jesus is the “dividing line” between us and the sinful world.

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<sup>2</sup> Kolb-Wengert, “The Book of Concord: Formula of Concord (Solid Declaration)”, 643.

We have hope.

The world only has despair.

The sinful world wants everyone to obey their own sinful desires. This is Satan's doing. He does not want us to be content with what we have and how we live. Nothing is ever good enough.

Now – for us Christians – Jesus says we are His friends when we obey his instructions. And in obeying His instructions – which are not a burden – He freely gives us all that we need: forgiveness of sins, salvation and life everlasting.

In response to Christ's friendship with us, we ***“go and bear fruit”*** (John 15:16) in our words and actions to spread the good news of Christ. In bearing fruit, we are pruned by God the Father through His Word to bear more fruit and are kept in the one true faith.

Now, you can choose to not be Christ's friend by not following His commands. But, this only brings loneliness as you cut yourself from the vine of Christ.

And, even if you do choose to go away from Christ and His promises, He is there waiting for you with open arms offering forgiveness when you repent of your sins. This is true friendship!

Only through faith alone in Christ alone, the victory is ours!

Martin Luther once wrote, “Victory must happen through faith in Christ. For what could this fragile Vessel accomplish against Satan, the god of the world? But the true God is greater! He always triumphs in us through Christ... To be born of God is to believe in Jesus Christ. He who believes in Christ is now a warrior. For we are still engaged in the battle itself and are about to be victorious. God has placed us in the midst of wolves, in the kingdom of the devil. As weapons, He has given us His Word and Spirit, and He tells us to do battle and to conduct ourselves as bold warriors under Him Himself as our Prince while He Himself looks on and is also victorious.” (AE 30:311)

***[Jesus Chose You!]***

We are victorious over sin, death and the devil – not because of anything that we have personally accomplished.

We are victorious because God chose us. Christ – who came by water and blood – chose you and me!

Now, none of us here today are here because we chose to be here. We are here because God called us here. God invited us here today to partake of His blessings.

As Jesus said, ***“You did not choose me, but I (Jesus) chose you.”*** (John 15:16)

Since Jesus chose you and me to be His friends, we can now pray directly to God the Father through Jesus to ask Him for all our needs of body and soul.

Since we are His friends, Christ personally forgives you of all your sins when you ask for forgiveness.

Since we are His friends, Christ strengthens our weak faith in His Holy Supper.

Jesus accomplished everything for us, so that we would understand love and thus love one another. This is true friendship!

We are truly blessed to have a friend who will never leave us nor forsake us. This friend is named Jesus.

You’ve got a friend in Jesus. We’ve got troubles with sin, but Jesus has died and rose for you. And there isn’t anything Jesus would do for you – you who abide in Him. Amen.

The peace of God which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

✠ SOLI DEO GLORIA ✠