

Wednesday, April 15, 2020

Letter to Parents - Jesus Calls Me Friend

Greetings, Everyone.

Last Sunday we celebrated Easter, the resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. A few days before He was to be crucified for your sins and mine, He spent time with some of His closest friends on earth, His disciples. (Someone who loves Jesus, follows His teachings, and helps other people follow His teachings.)

Jesus talked a lot about love with them. He wanted them to recognize real love. He called them friends. He tells them, "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends." (John 15:13) What could He be talking about? The disciples saw Him turn water into wine. They were there when He made the lame walk and opened blind eyes. They witnessed Him walk on water, calm boisterous winds, and stop raging seas. They had seen Him eat with sinners, forgive sins, go out of His way to recognize societal outcasts, those who were shunned, hated, and looked down on. He has been laying down His life since they knew Him.

Jesus knew the time had come for Him to be crucified so He wanted to prepare them. He knew they would not immediately understand His words. Little did they know, they were about to experience exactly what He spoke about. He was about to literally experience what it means to lay down one's life for his friends, and the disciples would witness it. Sometimes, words cannot adequately express the depth of the complexities of a situation. He was just like His Father, loving with all, giving His all.

Thank God Jesus laid down His life for us, His friends. We can lay down our lives for Him by loving others as He does. Paul further explains in Ephesians 4:1-3, "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." After all, this is what friends who value their relationships do. We are called friends. Jesus calls us friends.

Most of us want friends and cherish the friendships we have. It is a very little thing for us to prefer our friends before ourselves, to wait an extra five minutes, to let them have the last word, to hold our tongues, to choose the restaurant destination, etc. because we value the friendship. Even when we don't agree on everything and sometimes have opinionated discussions about issues, we yield. We have a valued, mutual friendship, and the friendly debates hopefully balance out over time.

Note, if someone is not a friend, the scripture above in Ephesians should dictate our behavior, as well. This is the most minute of sacrifices because we represent Jesus. He died for us. We live for Him. Friendship is not measured by how many likes, hearts, and emojis we receive on social media platforms, or by how many followers we may have on Instagram, Snapchat, or Twitter. True friendship, as with any relationship, involves dying to self and living for Christ.

Abundant blessings,

Pastor Vanessa

Vanessa B. Willis
Children's Ministry Pastor
Bethel Temple Church
1705 Todds Lane
Hampton, VA 23666
757.869.5837, x309