

YOU ARE MY FRIENDS

John 15:11-27

Key Verse: 15:14

"You are my friends if you do what I command."

If we review the upper room dialogue so far, we learn that Jesus has one main point; that is, to love God and love one another (Jn 13:34-35). We also must be recognized as his disciples by obeying his new command: "Love one another." At that time, the disciples of Jesus were nameless and fameless. But they inherited faith from our Lord Jesus Christ. As a result, they were able to influence the people of all generations with the message of salvation. America is definitely God's chosen country, because there are so many parents who name their children after Jesus' disciples. In the last study, we learned that when we have a vine and branch relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ, we are able to bear much fruit. However, living in this hard world, it is not easy for anyone to have a love relationship with God. But when we have a love relationship with God, we can bear much fruit, and we can be his disciples. In today's message, Jesus mainly talks about friendship between himself and his disciples, especially friendship among men. Let's think about how we can be a friend of Jesus and how men can successfully make friends with other men.

First, joy (11). Look at verse 11. "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete." Many people think that if we become Jesus' disciples, we must bear double crosses and we have no fun at all. There are many young men who want to commit themselves to our Lord Jesus Christ. But they are afraid of committing themselves to him because of their trembling fear of losing all their worldly fun and pleasure. Jesus knows our agony of losing worldly fun and pleasure and said in verse 11, "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete." Ordinary people think that there is no joy or fun in Christ. But this verse tells us that there is joy that is complete in our Lord Jesus Christ. Where is complete joy in this world? We must know the deep meaning of the joy which our Lord Jesus Christ mentioned here. When we contrast worldly joy and spiritual joy, we can understand that complete joy is real joy. In the world, when people say "joy," they think of physical pleasure. Worldly pleasure is to please our mind and body. It is very temporal and costly. Moreover, it is liable to degenerate one's moral standard from a human level to an animal level. Worldly joy is very temporal. There is a father who is a high-ranking judge. His only son had a car accident and was laid in a hospital emergency room with his whole body bloodied. But his son saw his father through the bandage hole and said, "I am sorry, Daddy." Then his father's joy was unutterable, for he was convinced that his son's brain was not damaged. The boy's joy was also great, because he had a strong desire to please his father. But the joy of both was gone when he was completely healed. Worldly joy is also relative. There was a couple who loved each other like Romeo and Juliet. But the husband found his wife's domineering character, which oftentimes made her husband speechless. Then, their joy of being a couple gradually diminished until they divorced. Fame and wealth and political power...these things seem to make many people joyful. But

these worldly pleasures make people all the more anxious rather than joyful. In this world there is no complete joy. Instead of having complete joy, people are full of provoking and envying and discord and jealousy and fits of rage and orgies and self-righteousness. Therefore, those who do not have the joy of Jesus cannot have true joy. There is a boy who finished his study at Harvard University. So he must be happy, because entering Harvard was his life goal when he was in high school. But now he doesn't even remember that he graduated from Harvard University. We must know that joy is different from fun and pleasure. Joy doesn't belong to the physical body; joy belongs to one's soul.

Joy--in Greek, "chara" (), stems from grace--"charis" (). Joy comes from God, not from human effort. God gives us joy in our souls through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. God gives us joy through the work of the Holy Spirit in our souls. Galatians 5:22-23a says, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control." When we read the Psalms, we find that they are full of human agonies and prayer. But even though the psalmists were in distress or hardship, their souls rejoiced. Psalm 21:6 says, "Surely you have granted him eternal blessings and made him glad with the joy of your presence." This psalmist overflowed with joy when God was with him. Psalm 43:4 says, "Then will I go to the altar of God, to God, my joy and my delight. I will praise you with the harp, O God, my God." According to this psalmist, joy was dwelling in his soul when he was with God at the altar of prayer. Psalm 65:13 says, "The meadows are covered with flocks and the valleys are mantled with grain; they shout for joy and sing." The psalmist was full of joy when he saw the mystery of nature that God had made. Psalm 119:111 says, "Your statutes are my heritage forever; they are the joy of my heart." The psalmist was joyful when the words of life were dwelling in his soul. We need joy. Without joy, life is too unhappy. Therefore, we must know that joy dwells in our souls when we have the fear of God. We can experience complete joy every day by obeying his new command, "Love one another."

Joy also comes when we live for the glory of God. The early Christians were happy for the time being when they accepted Jesus as the Savior of the world and loved one another. But fiery persecution came soon from Jewish people, because Christians accepted people other than Jews as the same brethren in Jesus. In addition, by the Jewish conspiracy, Roman authorities began to persecute Christians for not worshipping the Roman Emperor. At the time when they thought that they would be happy in Jesus, persecution started. They had to give up their homes. They had to separate from their relatives and even from their own family members. They had to run for their lives to Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, all over the world of the time (1Pe 1:1). But Peter was not sorry for them at all. He encouraged them, saying that persecution would refine them like pure gold. 1 Peter 1:7 says, "These have come so that your faith--of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire--may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed." He also said in 1 Peter 4:13,14, "But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you." The young Christians were helpless and fearful when the persecutions were severe.

But Peter, who had the joy of God in his soul, said, "Rejoice to participate in the sufferings of Jesus Christ!" Our Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross to save us from our sins. And he was raised again on the third day by the power of God. Thus he became the Savior of the world. There were not many Christians, yet they were determined to conquer the world with the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. But those who hated God were all over the world. They persecuted Christians simply because Christians lived a holy life. Humanly speaking, the top shepherd Peter's agony could have been great. But in truth, it was not. He encouraged the early Christians to rejoice to participate in the remaining sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ.

True joy does not come from enjoying the physical body; it comes from God. We must have complete joy, as our Lord Jesus Christ mentioned in verse 11. Let's read verse 11 one more time. "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete." Do you have joy in your soul? If not, please love God and love one another and also live for the glory of God. Then God will give you joy as the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Don't try to manufacture joy with your smart mind. Come to Jesus and obey his new command, "Love one another." The result is not that you lose your freedom; rather, you really enjoy true freedom and true joy.

Second, Jesus made his disciples his friends (12-15). We must pray that God would raise many friends among young men so that this nation may become strong, regenerate its high moral standard and a deep sense of mission, and produce men of noble character and integrity in this generation. In view of history, where there was friendship between a man and a man, there was always a world-history-changing event. For example, by Melancton's help Martin Luther could translate the Bible from the original language into German, and Luther's Bible became standard German. Without Zwingli, there could not have been Calvin. Calvin was a saintly scholar. He was also a man of asceticism. Therefore, he could not govern the city of Geneva. But Zwingli served him so that everything could be done according to Calvin's direction. UBF history is very short. It is only 36 years old. But there are several men friends among men in UBF, such as Dr. John Jun and Dr. Joseph Chung, Dr. James Suh and Dr. Samuel Choi and Shepherd Mark Yang. God used them very preciously for the last 36 years in changing the history of Korea from a dependent country to a missionary-sending country.

We cannot forget the friendship between Jonathan and David. King Saul became jealous after hearing the women's singing, "Saul has slain his thousands and David his tens of thousands" (1Sa 18:7). Because of this David became a political criminal. Jonathan was very sorry. So he made an oath with David that he would protect him. Later, King Saul discovered that his son Jonathan had sided with David; so he hurled his spear and Jonathan almost lost his life. After this, David was a political refugee wandering here and there. But all kinds of needy people gathered around him. The number was over 600. When David could not even take care of himself, many needy people came to him for help. Once David was in deep distress after running for his life with his followers for quite a long time. Then Jonathan visited him at Horesh and comforted him, "You will be king of Israel, and I will be next to you. Don't be distressed, and take heart." Jonathan renewed his

friendship with David. They hugged each other and wept. But David wept more. And they parted (1Sa 23:15-18). This might be the best example of friendship between a man and a man. Israel was pressed hard by the Philistines. Saul died. Jonathan and his younger brother also died. Then David cried endlessly like a little boy who lost his mother. He said in 2 Samuel 1:26, "I grieve for you, Jonathan my brother; you were very dear to me. Your love for me was wonderful, more wonderful than that of women." David's love for Jonathan was more than for any woman. Here when David mourned Jonathan's death, saying, "Your love for me was wonderful, more wonderful than that of women," he really meant it. He loved Jonathan more than any woman in the world.

Look at verses 12-13. "My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends." When we read verses 12 and 13, we learn that Jesus once again gave his disciples a new command: "Love each other." When we read this passage several times, we can understand why Jesus is saying the same thing, "Love each other," again and again, beginning from chapter 13 to this point. We think his disciples were really fatigued listening to Jesus' new commandment, "Love one another." But the fact was, Jesus knew that still they did not love one another. When we read the four gospels, there is no record that his chosen twelve disciples love one another. As we know well, St. Peter was a man with a great learning mind. When Jesus told him to put out into deep water and let down the nets for a catch, he obeyed. Thus he was chosen as the top disciple of Jesus. We can say he had a great learning mind, so he became the best teacher who ever lived in history. But there was one thing he did not learn from Jesus: to love one another. He thought he was the top disciple and future Prime Minister when Jesus would establish the earthly Messianic kingdom. As we know well, John and James were very intellectual and looked very noble. But they were introverted people. They did not love Peter. They hoped Peter would die even by accident so that they could occupy the top position. When we examine the other disciples, they were all the same, not loving one another. This is the reason Jesus repeated the new command, "Love one another," so many times, until they fainted in fatigue. But they had to learn how to love one another, in order to understand the meaning of Jesus' death and resurrection and the world salvation plan of God.

The twelve disciples were familiar with the culture of the time. They thought of Jesus as their master and teacher. They thought of themselves as Jesus' students and servants. Since they were students of Jesus Christ, they should have known the heart of Jesus. But they did not. So Jesus said in verses 14-15, "You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I have learned from my Father I have made known to you." These verses have deep meaning in them. From the beginning, Jesus wanted to make his disciples friends, not servants. In other words, Jesus wanted to make them his friends so that they might know God's business, that is, his world salvation purpose. Jesus wanted to make them friends so that they might somehow come to know that Jesus is God, and that even though he is the Son of God, he would die on the cross for the sin of the world and rise again on the third day. In the last part of verse 15, there is the phrase, "the master's business." In other words, Jesus really wanted his disciples to know God's will for

Jesus, as well as for them. This was not easy, because the disciples of Jesus were all ordinary people, and they had their own dream world and they were all their own kind of characters. But Jesus did his best in making friends with them. Finally, Jesus won them as friends. As a result, it was possible to conquer the whole world with the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Third, I chose you to bear much fruit (16-17). Look at verse 16. "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit--fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name." Many people think that they chose God. They also think that at any time they cease to like God, they can abandon God. These days the number of ungodly people increases day by day. When they are distressed in their souls, they call on God's name according to their needs. But when they can maintain their normal life, they forget about God. Many obnoxious people think that coming to a church is doing a favor to God. This is not a small tragedy. Harvard University was built for the purpose of teaching the Bible. But at the 1997 graduation ceremony they invited a Muslim priest and a Christian pastor and let them both pray. At first, God chose Harvard University as his institution. Their school life of prayer and Bible reading were very strict and regular. But this school, which used to be a good influence to this nation, became relativistic. So they chose a Christian pastor and a Muslim priest to pray at the same time for the graduation ceremony. The power of money seems to be very powerful in so many places in this country. Among many mistakes, the idea that "I chose God" is the greatest mistake a man can make.

On the other hand, when one has a clear sense of God's choosing him, he can change world history. As we know well, St. Paul was a politically ambitious man. By destroying the early church of Christ, he wanted to be recognized by the Jewish authorities. But on the way to Damascus, the Risen Christ chose him as his instrument. When the Risen Christ chose him, he called him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" At that time, people knew of Paul's persecuting the early Christians. They were all afraid of him. The Risen Christ said to Ananias in Acts 9:15-16, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name." Here we see that our Lord Jesus Christ chose Paul one-sidedly, forgave all his sins, and at the same time gave him mission to evangelize the Gentiles and the Gentile world, including the Roman Empire.

As a Christian, it is important to know that we did not choose God, but that God chose us and set us apart to bear much fruit. God's choosing is not limited to St. Paul only. Our Lord Jesus Christ chose each of us, as he chose St. Paul. When Paul was chosen, he realized that God chose him as a shepherd for the Gentiles. Because of his calling, he traveled throughout the contemporary world three times, taking many risks upon his life. Finally he came to Rome as an ambassador in chains and taught the Bible to prison guards. If we are not serious about God's choosing us, we have not much meaning except to eat three meals a day. But when we have a clear sense of God's choosing us and the mission to bear much fruit, we know the meaning of our lives, we know what our mission is, and we know how to live in this world.

Fourth, the world and the disciples (18-21). Look at verse 18. "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first." Why does the world hate his disciples? Because they are the children of the light. There is a story about a young servant of God. At the beginning of his ministry, he was so poor that he rented only one studio apartment. But due to inflation, the studio rental price went up and he had to go to a cheaper studio. In this way, he moved 16 times in six years to a cheaper studio. His family of five all slept in a studio apartment. Once he found a spacious and comparatively cheap studio room. So he was very happy. But the owner of the house also owned a motel where there were many prostitutes. The owner's wife came to know after two months that these tenants were Christians. Then the owner made up many lies that the servant of God stole many pieces of furniture from his motel, and then unconditionally ordered him to evacuate the studio room, insulting him and pushing his chest. The servant of God didn't know what was going on. Anyway, he could not fight because he was a servant of God. He evacuated the house and moved to a cheaper studio. Later the servant of God came to know that the motel owner was running a prostitute business. He hated Christians unconditionally and threw them out.

There was a beautiful lady from a rich family. Her father was the head of the judges of the supreme court. He was a greedy man. There was a rumor that he possessed 70 houses. When his eldest daughter began to believe in Jesus Christ, he became like a mental patient out of his hatred toward her. He beat his eldest daughter almost to death. Her whole body was blackened by the marks of a whip. The father had loved his eldest daughter so much. But when he heard that she believed in Jesus, he felt that all his acts of vice were revealed to the world. But his eldest daughter kept her faith and fought the good fight. There was a girl medical student whose father was the number two man in the national bank. He threatened the servant of God on the phone many times in order to stop his daughter's believing in Jesus. He really hated God's servants. But he died at the age of 51. He loved the world so much. But he could not live long enough. We must accept the fact that the world hates us unconditionally because of their sins.

Fifth, they are guilty of sins (22-27). Read verse 22. "If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. Now, however, they have no excuse for their sins." According to this verse, the Jews heard the message of Jesus Christ. But they never repented of their sins. They firmly remained in sin. So Jesus said they would be guilty of sin. They hated Jesus because they hated God. Jesus showed them many miraculous signs through which they could believe, but they didn't believe; so they are guilty of sins (24). Sometimes we wonder why the people of the world hate us. That's not our problem; that's their own problem of sin (25). But Jesus promised his disciples that whenever we are hated or mistreated, he will send the Counselor, the Spirit of truth, and help us.

Today Jesus taught his disciples that their joy would be complete. May the Holy Spirit dwell in you so that you may have complete joy in your soul. I pray that you may try your best to make friends with Jesus so that you may bear much fruit.

