

22.08.21 Dronfield Baptist Church

Spot one – (quotes/ characteristics of friends;) This day I wanted us to begin to mull over Jesus is my friend. C.S. Lewis wrote 'To the ancients, Friendship seemed the happiest and most fully human of all loves, the crown of life and the school of virtue. The modern world, in comparison ignore sit.' - written last century, is it true, is it still true, does it ring bells. What do we look for in a friend? In a moment pause the preacher, find some paper and pen and write down what you want a friend, what kind of person will make a good friend? Go ahead and pause me.

Loyal, trustworthy, hold my hand, laugh with, go on adventures with, share my deepest secrets. (picture). Friends can change as the years go by, school, college work, church.

Charles Spurgeon wrote 'When thou hast found such a man, and proved the sincerity of his friendship: when he has been faithful... to thee. Grapple him to thyself with hooks of steel and never let him go,' read again. Is that what we desire from a friend or to be a friend.

YBA/BMS – this year our Baptist Assembly UK was online and every year we welcome newly accredited ministers to the fold. This year each association did a video and I was really proud of YBA because their's was the only one that showed the regional ministers actually meeting with these newly accredited ministers; this show of friendship of the institution. Do go and explore it on the BU website scroll down the first page for Baptist assembly. <https://www.baptist.org.uk/Groups/361976/Yorkshire.aspx>

Also, I wanted to mention that on the Sunday there was a service to join in with which had more attendees than physically. BMS centred and there was an appeal- for getting vaccines to remote places, making sure they were at the right temperature. Friendship between nations. Can you guess how much was raised? - £200,000

Reading 3 John (the whole epistle)

Spot two – expectations of friendship – This short epistle feels more like an e-mail than a letter, John writing to Gaius. The three letters, firstly to general churches, then to a more specific church and now to an elder/leader. Let's look at the framework here John greets 4 -8 recognising his generosity and who it is for. Those gifts to the BMS, those who give here for the mission for God, the hospitality above and beyond. Who is a Gaius today? This is friendship sometimes to the unknown but to people who share a common cause/faith. Warning against dangerous company or dangerous theology/heresy– does not a friend do that?

Encouragement- a friend who wants the best for you, to see you safe from harm and here to safe for eternity.

Good company – not the warning but enlarging the good ones -not perfect

Hugh Black: 'We have few friendships, because we are not willing to pay the price of friendship... The secret of friendship is just the secret of all spiritual blessing. The way to get is to give.

We may have expectations of those we seek to be friends with, but in order for that to happen we must give friendship as well. Gaius gave. It may like in the parable of the Sower fall on stony ground, but we try.

Spot three – friendship today – We have briefly looked at friendship but how do act as Christian friends in the world today/ We go to the model of who Jesus is, Jesus is my friend - John 15:14,

not my mate, not my pal, not my BF, but my friend. There is a reflection in the O.T. and patriarchs being called friend of God.

There is a conventional aspect to this friendship we are offered from Jesus, the Son of God part of the Trinity. In this friendship what are our expectations of Jesus and what does Jesus expect from us. As we all friendships there is a need to cultivate, to be proactive, to find common ground. To listen, to speak, to love, - to want to please, to praise, to warn, to guide.

As we realise and live the friendship with Jesus so that effects our other friendships, makes us more vulnerable – but the love that comes from friendship is rewarding.

Of course, Jesus was also called the friend of sinners – BMS giving - and that comes from the developed friendship with Jesus.

Some of us became friend with Jesus in the last century, some more recently, lets renew that friendship, invest in that friendship. Love that friendship, share that friendship

A moment of quiet as we started the service – whisper to your soul Jesu is my friend and allow that to sink in.

For further thought:

1. Which ingredient of friendship is most rare in friendships today? Why do you think that is the case?
2. What is the most sacrificial thing a friend has done for you? What is the most sacrificial thing you have done for a friend?
3. Charles Spurgeon wrote that it is the solemn duty of Christians to bear witness to the faithfulness of God's friendship. How has God shown himself to be a faithful Friend to you over the past months or years?