
Holy Textures

Meeting Jesus in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.
Short, easy to use, faith-provoking insights.



John 15:9-17

So as we look around church on any given Sunday, we may see people that we know and like, know and don't like, or don't know at all. Whatever. Jesus is commanding us to regard each other as a friend, so that we might bear fruit, fruit that endures.

Year B

Easter 6

May 13, 2012

Read the passage at the bottom of this post: [John 15:9-17, The Message](#) or [John 15:9-17, The New Revised Standard Version \(NRSV\)](#).

Click [here](#) for an easy to print or email Adobe PDF version of this note.

Sermon by the [Rev. Dr. George Hermanson](#), "[Friendship](#)."

To my mind, verses 9-11 should be read with [last week's passage, John 15:1-8](#), since they continue elaborating on the relationship between Jesus and his disciples.

However, a dramatic shift takes place in verse 12.

Jesus shifts the focus to the relationship the disciples are to have with each other.

Jesus commands them to love one another as he has loved them.

Personal aside. Unlike John 13:34 where many translations put in a period to break it into two: "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I loved you, so also you should love one another" - I think it is crucial to keep "as I have loved you" as part of the commandment because this describes the quality of the love we are to have for one another. It also states more clearly that we are to love as we have been loved. That is, we are to begin with the love we have already received from Jesus. "Love one another" leaves it up to each person to decide what "love" is.

Jesus then removes any sense of honour status differences between himself and his followers: "You are my friends." Their relationship is no longer one of slaves who do what the master wants; or of clients seeking favours from a patron; or as disciples seeking teaching from a master.

They are friends - they are equals who have a solemn obligation to look out for each other's good - even to the point of laying down one's life (something one would normally only do to defend the honour of a blood relative.)

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And they are not just friends with Jesus. Jesus is commanding them to be friends with one another since that is how he loves them.

That we are commanded to be friends, and that Jesus stresses it is not we who chose him, but rather he who chose us, emphasizes that "friendship" is not "liking;" is not about feelings at all.

Whether we like one another or not, Jesus commands us to look out for each other's good - even to the point of giving our life.

But the point is not just that we should be friends. We are friends for a purpose. Jesus appoints his friends to bear fruit - fruit that lasts.

So as we look around church on any given Sunday, we may see people that we know and like, know and don't like, or don't know at all. Whatever. Jesus is commanding us to look out for each other's good, so that we might bear fruit, fruit that endures.

Are we committed to looking out for each other's good? If not, we'd better start working on that. If we have achieved that happy state - great - but let's not stop there. Are we also bearing fruit? Fruit that lasts? Then we are indeed abiding in Jesus and he in us.

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Historical background information in this post is drawn primarily from Social-Science Commentary on the Gospel of John, see link below, pages 233-236.

* [Link to Amazon.com Bibliography for Bruce Malina, Richard Rohrbaugh, et. al.](#), Social Science Commentary on ... The Synoptic Gospels; The Gospel of John; The Book of Acts; The Letters of Paul; The Book of Revelation; and others.

John 15:9-17 (NRSV)

⁹ As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

¹² "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³ No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵ I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. ¹⁶ You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will

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give you whatever you ask him in my name. ¹⁷ I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

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John 15:9-17 (The Message)

⁹ "I've loved you the way my Father has loved me. Make yourselves at home in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commands, you'll remain intimately at home in my love. That's what I've done—kept my Father's commands and made myself at home in his love.

¹¹ "I've told you these things for a purpose: that my joy might be your joy, and your joy wholly mature. ¹² This is my command: Love one another the way I loved you. ¹³ This is the very best way to love. Put your life on the line for your friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends when you do the things I command you. ¹⁵ I'm no longer calling you servants because servants don't understand what their master is thinking and planning. No, I've named you friends because I've let you in on everything I've heard from the Father.

¹⁶ "You didn't choose me, remember; I chose you, and put you in the world to bear fruit, fruit that won't spoil. As fruit bearers, whatever you ask the Father in relation to me, he gives you. ¹⁷ "But remember the root command: Love one another.

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