Best Friends: Trust

Sept. 25th, 2022 Scripture reading: John 12:44-50

Today we come to the end of our “best friends” series. We have explored quite a few different facets of our relationship with Jesus. Overall I have hoped to communicate that having Jesus as a best friend brings many rewards and blessings to our lives. But, more importantly, this friendship is a two-way street. Jesus asks us to act in certain ways, he makes demands of us just as we do of him. We want Jesus to be a loyal friend to us, well, he expects us to be loyal as well. We want Him to support us in our hopes and dreams, but in the end, we are the ones who need to bow before his plans. We are okay with Jesus giving up his life for our sake…but what would he expect in return? Let’s review John 15:9-17 one more time and take note about what Jesus expects from us in return. READ

 **SLIDE 2-4:** 9 “As the Father loved me, I too Have loved you. Remain in my love.  10 If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I kept my Father’s commandments and remain in his love. 11 I have said these things to you so that my joy will be in you and your joy will be complete. 12 This is my commandment: love each other just as I have loved you. 13 No one has greater love than to give up one’s life for one’s friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command you. 15 I don’t call you servants any longer, because servants don’t know what their master is doing. Instead, I call you friends, because everything I heard from my Father I have made known to you. 16 You didn’t choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you could go and produce fruit and so that your fruit could last. As a result, whatever you ask the Father in my name, he will give you. 17 I give you these commandments so that you can love each other.”

Like any earthly relationship, the better the friendship, the more invested the friends. As friendships grow, the people involved become more and more intertwined. My problems become your problems, my joy your joys.

**SLIDE 5: Friends share life together**

Friends share life together. And as we share life together, over time we develop the building blocks of our future…trust. Trust is simply defined as the firm belief in the reliability of someone or something. As we get to know another person, we develop trust in who they are, or we come to see that we cannot trust them. Our experience becomes our guide. For any relationship we have, we can go back into the history vault, take a scan over the events and conversations and encounters we have had with that person and we make a decision: Yes, I can trust this person, or no, I need to be on my guard.

 One of the most well-known and well-loved friendships in the history of television can be found in a little town called Mayberry.

**SLIDE 6: Sheriff and Barney**

There Sheriff Andy Taylor and his deputy, officer Barney Fife keep the peace and enforce the law. Andy’s style is very relational and easy going. When a situation arises, he starts with the person and get around to the law. Barney is quite the opposite. He knows the rules inside and out, and he will let you know when they have been broken. Barney is very black and white…the law is the law and people just need to recognize that. In one episode, Sheriff Andy needs to leave town for the day to be in court somewhere else. Barney is put in charge…watch what happens. WATCH

**SLIDE 7: VIDEO 1**

**SLIDE 8: Sheriff and Barney**

 “It’s just eight measly little old hours…” This statement brings some comfort to Andy as obviously has some hesitancy when it comes to handing over the reigns into the “good right hand of Barney Fife” as it was so eloquently put. But overall Andy trusts Barney to get the job done. He knows that Barney is knowledgeable about the law, he knows Barney has a good heart and proper motives, he is not some inexperienced whippersnapper. So Andy concludes with his hand on Barney’s shoulder, “I got all the confidence in the world in you.” And he departs. Barney revels for a bit in his new-found role. He sits in the big chair so to speak enjoying his temporary promotion.

**SLIDE 9: Matthew 28:18**

Isn’t there a correlation with our own experience? Jesus, our best friend, the One who is in charge of it all, departs. He leaves the situation, the mission itself, in our hands. Matthew 28:18 puts it this way, “I’ve received all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations…” We are to baptize them, and to teach them. Then, the last words of Matthew’s gospel, “Look, I myself will be with you every day until the end of this present age.” In Luke’s version Jesus mentions that the disciples will be furnished with heavenly power. Remember, as we have been saying all throughout this series, we are disciples of Jesus. We are his followers. We have been deputized. Jesus has departed the confines of this physical world. He has left us in charge, he has left us a job to do. He has entrusted us with this mission. Are we capable? No. Are we worthy? No. Do we know what we are doing? Not really. But are we faithful? By God’s grace, the answer can be yes. Andy Taylor leaves Barney Fife in change with the power of the law behind him. Jesus has left us in charge with the power of the Holy Spirit behind us. He trusts us…though thankfully not enough to leave us totally on our own. In fact, the work that we perform for the sake of the gospel we perform as co-laborers with God. If we go back to our John passage, we hear the words of our best friend Jesus expressing the love of his Father, the he has embodied and that he offers to each of us. And we have talked quite a bit about the nature of this love…it is not just a nice smile or a warm hug.

**SLIDE 10: This love is sacrificial…it is victorious…it is transformative.**

This love is sacrificial…it is victorious…it is transformative. And when we accept the love that Jesus offers, we are commissioned and called to love others in the same way. Now we become a channel of the Father’s, just as Jesus was and is. He has left this earth, trusting us with the mission, but also promising to be with us every step of the way. Co-laboring with us…again a two-way street, a relationship based on trust that involves 100% of both parties. It is all God but he also requires our all as well.

So Jesus departs, he ascends into the clouds. The disciples stand looking up into the sky. They are imperfect, they are bumbling, they are prone messing things up. They are a cadre of Barneys and yet, they have faith. That is to say, they trust in Jesus, they believe in his power and his promises, and like Barney, they expect the Shariff to return. They want to make him proud, to stand before Jesus as good and faithful servants, who have done everything they can to introduce people to their best friend. Jesus trusts us with that mission…he expects our trust in return.

So Barney is in charge for the day. You might be able to guess how it all turns out. WATCH

**SLIDE 11: CLIP 2**

**SLIDE 12: Sheriff and Barney**

Barney seems mighty proud of his performance. He upheld the law and cracked down on all offenses. We expected Andy’s approval and accolades for a job well done. But take a look at this still photo (Picture of Andy and Barney at door). Barney is as smug as can be. He is not interested in the people of Mayberry. He is more concerned about his own effectiveness as an officer of the law. Andy on the other hand is surprised to see so many people locked up! He knows full well some mistakes have been made here. But did Barney break Andy’s trust? Was law and order maintained? In one sense, it was. Barney followed the letter of the law and cracked down and any infraction. But when Andy returns, he lets the prisoners go free. See the townspeople of Mayberry trust their sheriff. They know that his priority of getting to know them and showing interest in their lives and their needs. There is a relationship there that leads to trust. And I think that’s what Barney is missing. He sees people through the eyes of the law. His job really is to point to the Sheriff. His job is to point out the one who can be trusted. Look to the one who in charge. He will sort this all out when he returns. As Christians, we don’t encourage people to put their trust in us, or in our abilities or in our goodness. We point to the one who is trustworthy, the One in whom we have placed our trust.

 It should come as no surprise that we fail our Lord and Savior, the ultimate Sheriff, Jesus Christ. We don’t quite live up to the mission. It’s easy for us to begin to trust ourselves with the job. It’s easy to get caught up in the rules. But Jesus is merciful. He is willing to forgive our missteps. He is willing to restore trust.

**SLIDE 13: John 12:46**

 I want to switch gears for a moment and talk about light, because that is our job isn’t it? We are bringers of light. We carry the light of his love into the darkness of this world. A few chapters earlier, in John 12:46 Jesus says very plainly, “I have come as a light into the world so that everyone who believes in me won’t live in darkness.” We are not all that acquainted with darkness. We enjoy the convenience of street lights and night lights. Most of us carry a flashlight build right into the phone in our pocket. We have these tools and precautious as part of our everyday culture because we understand the innate danger of pitch darkness. But the idea of pitch darkness is vastly different from actually experiencing darkness.

 A.W. Tozer wrote that we are all born into unbelief. He says that “unbelief, not disobedience, was the first sin…behind the act of disobedience was the sin of unbelief.” Unbelief, is the prelude to our acts of disobedience. Jesus is the light of the world! Do we trust in that light? Because we are born in unbelief, we do not naturally comprehend the light. Our default state is spiritual darkness. But, Jesus says, he comes as light into this darkness. And we don’t have to live in the dark any longer, but there is a crucial qualifier here…our belief. Faith is the switch that turns on the light! And what is faith…I actually looked it up:

**SLIDE 14: Faith is complete trust.**

Faith is complete trust. Have you ever opened the door into a dark room? It’s no big deal. You might have to feel around on the wall for a second, but sure enough, your hand will come across a plastic plate and there you find the light switch. One small flick and the room is illuminated as usual. No questions arise…we have absolute faith that the light switch will indeed turn on the light. But what if you were to flick the switch with no results? The dark just persists. Has that ever happened to you? Immediately, we know something is wrong. Somehow, some connection is severed somewhere. Just as a room cannot have light unless it is properly wired, so the human heart cannot have faith unless it is properly connected to it’s source…Jesus Christ. He says that everyone who believes in him, or trusts him, will not live in darkness. What a wonderful promise for those stumbling around blindly stepping of Legos with bare feet and their hands extended in front of them.

 Trust brings with it an initial risk. We have to take a step in faith, not knowing where our foot will land. It is as though the light switch for the dark room is just out of reach. We need to take a step get there. Our relationship with Jesus is a bit like that. He comes as the Roaring Lion and He asks us to trust him but we wonder if he is safe. As C.S. Lewis says in the *Chronicles of Narinia,*  “He is not safe, but he is good.” He is worthy of our trust, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, we are worthy of his. We can feel the weight of his hand on our shoulder and hear him say, “I got all the confidence in the world in you.”

**SLIDE 15: let us not put aside the mission!**

 So let us not put aside the mission! Let us humbly serve to the best of our ability trusting that Jesus will return to set right all our mistakes. Do we trust Jesus enough to introduce him to others? Do we trust Jesus enough to live out his great commission? I want to encourage you all to continue praying for that one person you know who does not trust in Jesus. Entrust them to Jesus. Lift them up into his loving care. Ask for the impossible, that their hearts might be changed, that they would turn to Jesus. Trust him with the answers to such prayers. Know that they are precious in his sight. That our good Sheriff and best friend Jesus Christ wants to know each and every person as he sets all the prisoners free.

Amen.