

THURSDAY 27 October 2022 "Best Friends?"

(1 John 3:23, 24)

Good morning to you my "Walking with Jesus" friends,

May I begin with a question for all of us? *Who is your best friend and what criteria does he or she meet to be blessed by you with that gift of 'best friendship'?* **Is it possible Jesus would like you and me to consider HIM our 'best friend'?** What would that mean for how you and I live our lives day by day? How might that affect our peace of mind and contentment of heart? What about our priorities in life and how we handle disappointments or conflicts?

We're continuing our journey with the apostle John. You may recall in the account of the earthly life of Jesus which John wrote, John 5 times did not refer to himself by his name John, but rather by this remarkable phrase: **"the disciple Jesus loved."** (John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7; 21:20) Each of these was a particularly poignant moment in John's life, and I think we can safely assume these five experiences with Jesus had profound impact on John for the remainder of his life. His writings, including this first little letter, reflect the amazing reality that Jesus had become John's best friend! John has picked up his writing stylus and his parchments again, and he is concluding his third chapter: **"Dear friends...this is God's command: to believe in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ and to love one another as He commanded us."** (1 John 3:23)

We must pause a moment and absorb the significance of this brief yet powerful statement. *If it is God's supreme command that we believe in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, what do you understand is the significance of that name?* You perhaps remember the apostle Paul wrote this to the Christians in Philippi: **"God exalted Jesus to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of JESUS every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father."** (Philippians 2:10,11)

Do you see that Almighty God the Father gave God the Son that name Jesus?! Why? Well, when the angel Gabriel came to young Mary in the town of Nazareth to explain to her that she was chosen by God to be the earthy woman by which God's Son would take on humanity and come to live on earth for a while, Gabriel told Mary both what she should name the child and why. Dr. Luke wrote it down for us: **"You will give birth to a son, and you are to give Him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give Him the throne of his father David and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; His kingdom will never end."** (Luke 1:31-33) Do you see it my friends? *The name Jesus would be significant because Jesus would be great, would reign on the throne of David over the people of Israel, forever!*

An angel also appeared to Joseph, you may recall, and explained this miraculous incarnation to him and also explained what name the child should be given and why: ***"Do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit of God. She will give birth to a son and you are to give Him the name Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins."*** (Matt. 1:20,21) Do you see that the name Jesus means Savior, Deliverer and this Jesus would be worthy of that name because He would save people from their sins?! By the way friends, this role of Savior of the human race is something no one else can do, no matter their official title or their wealth or their power... only Jesus, the Son of God, can save us from our sins! *Ok, so now we know WHY the name JESUS, when applied to the Son of God, is superior to every other name ever spoken.*

But John used two names and so did Paul... **Jesus CHRIST**. What does **"Christ"** mean? **"Christ"** means **"Messiah"** or **"Anointed One"** or **"Holy One of Israel"**. *God gave Jesus this name so the Jewish people would have no doubt that this was the promised, long awaited **"Messiah"** that Israel had been watching for.* So that tells me that John wants us to understand that an important command from God is that we believe the Son of God is Jesus, the Savior of the world, and He is also **"Messiah"** for the Jewish people! And that by trusting Jesus' death is sufficient to pay for our sin, then God will honor our trust by forgiving our sin and adopting us into His family, Jew and Gentile! *And John also wants us to understand an outflow of the salvation we experience as we believe in Jesus is a supernatural love we will have for one another, a Jesus style love, a self-sacrificing love!*

John continued his writing: ***"Those who obey God's commands live in Him and He in them. And this is how we know that He lives in us: We know it by the Holy Spirit He gave us."*** (1 John 3:24) You remember friends, that *the phrase 'live in Him and He in them' is talking about a dynamic, strong, alive, personal relationship between you and Jesus.*

It's like the living relationship between a grapevine & branches which produces wonderful grapes. Jesus described that and John recorded it for us in John 15. Do you live in that type of God designed relationship with Jesus? Is Jesus not only your Savior and your friend but does Jesus give you life and breath and everything that makes you who you are every day? In fact, do you see John's final statement in chapter 3? ***"And this is how we know that Jesus lives in us: We know it by the Holy Spirit, He gave us."***

Please remember my friends that John's purpose for writing this first little letter is to respond to a wave of great doubt running among the Christians in the first century. Most of them had come to faith in Jesus Christ AFTER His resurrection and ascension back to heaven. They had never seen Jesus or heard Him speak. They had heard of Jesus from John or Paul or others, some of whom also had never met Jesus personally. So many were naturally doubting the authenticity of their life saving relationship with Jesus.

Over and over John has given us tangible evidences that are seen in the life of a genuine Christian and here is one more: The Holy Spirit of God alive in those who are authentically born again by God as they trust in Jesus.

So once again we pause to ask a simple question: **Is John describing me?** *Do I believe Jesus Christ is who Almighty God declared Him to be? Do I bow in honor and adoration before Jesus Christ in submission and deep gratitude for all that name means in my life?* Am I living in obedience to what God has commanded and am I confident the Holy Spirit is alive and powerfully guiding my life. If YES to all that, then like John I am deeply loved by Jesus, and He invited me to live in a best friend relationship with Jesus!

Now think about that! *What could that mean for you if you really embraced its powerful truth and nurtured your relationship with Jesus as a best friend?* To help us understand the global implications of this here's a powerful, familiar worship song produced by two Russian followers of Jesus!

Today's Scripture is 1 John 3:23, 24.