

“Friendship”
1 Samuel 18:1-4
(Preached at Trinity, July 23, 2017)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. In the previous chapter, we witnessed the amazing death of the giant Goliath at the hand of the teenage boy, David. It was a powerful display of faith as David defended the honor of God before the army of Israel. It had a powerful effect upon all who witnessed it.
 - A. The Philistines lost all will to fight.
1 Samuel 17:51 NAU - "When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled."
We might note their complete lack of integrity. They totally forgot the pledge made by Goliath:
1 Samuel 17:8-9 NAU - "Choose a man for yourselves and let him come down to me. ⁹ "If he is able to fight with me and kill me, then we will become your servants; but if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall become our servants and serve us."
 - B. The army of Israel who for weeks stood terrified before Goliath rallied and went to war against the fleeing Philistines.
1 Samuel 17:52-53 NAU - "The men of Israel and Judah arose and shouted and pursued the Philistines as far as the valley, and to the gates of Ekron. And the slain Philistines lay along the way to Shaaraim, even to Gath and Ekron. ⁵³ The sons of Israel returned from chasing the Philistines and plundered their camps."
 - C. Saul stood in amazement at this ruddy youth who did what none of his mightiest soldiers dared to do.
1 Samuel 17:55 NAU - "Now when Saul saw David going out against the Philistine, he said to Abner the commander of the army, "Abner, whose son is this young man?"
1 Samuel 18:2 NAU - "Saul took him that day and did not let him return to his father's house."
2. But there was another individual profoundly affected by the actions of David. Jonathan, Saul's son. His heart became bound to David and he entered into covenant with David. This is amazing in several ways.
 - A. First of all, there was a great age difference between David and Jonathan. David was but a youth—probably in his mid-teens. Jonathan by this time would have been in his mid to late thirties.
 - B. Second, David was but a shepherd boy, the least in his father's house while Jonathan was a prince. Jonathan humbled himself before this youth.
1 Samuel 18:4 NAU - "Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David, with his armor, including his sword and his bow and his belt."

- C. It would have been natural for Jonathan to be jealous of David. After all, he probably already possessed recognition and respect for his own exploits as a valiant warrior. And now David was being recognized. As the days passed, David would rise as an obvious threat to the ascension of Jonathan to his father's throne, yet we never find a hint of jealousy.
3. The lasting friendship that was forged between these two men stands as a grand example of what it means to be a friend, especially masculine friendship that is so rare.
4. This evening I want us to explore the nature of friendship. What is a friend? The philosopher Aristotle had some interesting insight on friendship. He wrote in his work, *The Nicomachean Ethics* that there were basically three kinds of friendship:
- Friendship of utility – We might call these fair weather friends; friends who are there when they need something. It is a selfish friendship. It is based upon something brought into the relationship by the other person. Today we often refer to this as networking. You build up a list of friends that you might be able to use at a later date. But they are not true friends. Such friendships are shallow and easily dissolved. They only endure as long as they are seen as beneficial. It's like the friendship you have with your barber. You enjoy meeting together once a month. You know each other on a first name basis. All is great until you find a better price down the street. Too many Christians today treat church this way. Solomon described it well:
Proverbs 19:4 NAU - "Wealth adds many friends, But a poor man is separated from his friend."
Proverbs 19:6 NAU - "Many will seek the favor of a generous man, And every man is a friend to him who gives gifts."
 - Friendship of pleasure – We might call these friends of mutual interest. You might go fishing together or meet occasionally to play golf. It is also typical of the relationships of attraction where individuals are stirred by feelings of passion. Such relationships are fleeting and continually subject to change. As soon as the shared interest pleasure ends the friendship ends. This explains the sad end to many marriages.
 - Both the Friendships of Utility and the Friendships of Pleasure can dissolve quickly.
 - Friendship of virtue – this friendship is held together by a mutual respect. It is not a friendship that is motivated only by personal benefit or pleasure but simply because you value them as a person and friend. Aristotle calls this a friendship of virtue because it exists between people of virtue and goodness.
5. This is the kind of friendship that was forged between Jonathan and David. This is true friendship. Such friendships are rare. Most of us don't realize how badly we need each other.
Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 NAU - "Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. ¹⁰ For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up. ¹¹ Furthermore, if two lie down together they keep warm, but how can one be warm *alone*? ¹² And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him. A cord of three *strands* is not quickly torn apart."

6. True friendships take years to build.
 - a. We will have few true friends—those we can truly trust
Proverbs 18:24 NAU - "A man of *too many* friends *comes* to ruin, But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother."
 - b. My most treasured friends are the fruit of marriage and fatherhood.
7. Tonight, I want us to explore the subject of friendship as we are introduced to the friendship of Jonathan and David.
 - I. As Aristotle described, true friendship is a virtuous relationship
 - A. As we've seen, Jonathan was a remarkable man of faith and virtue
 1. The Bible doesn't bear record of his vices, only of his vibrant faith and love for God.
 2. He is portrayed as one who was faithful. His virtue gave Jonathan the qualities that are demanded in a friendship.
 3. Jonathan was a man of faith and love for God and he loved David because he shared these virtues.
 - B. Jonathan's heart was knit to David for who David was, not for what benefit he gain from him.
 1. Remember, Jonathan was more than twice David's age
 2. Rather than seeking some utility or benefit from David, Jonathan humbled himself before David and stripped off his royal robe.
1 Samuel 18:4 NAU - "Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David, with his armor, including his sword and his bow and his belt."
 3. Rather than building a friendship of selfishness and what he could get out of it Jonathan followed the qualities of true love:
1 Samuel 18:1 NAU - "Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as himself."
 - C. If our greatest interest is in ourselves it will be very difficult develop friendships – you'll continually be seeking someone to satisfy your needs and desires.
 1. In the selfish individualism of our day few people value true friendships. The relationships that most of us build are shallow. Few could even define what a friend is. It reminds me of the list of "friends" people amass on Facebook.
 2. A true friendship will only develop as we look outside ourselves to value other people. Selfishness seeks only friendships of utility or pleasure.
Philippians 2:3-4 NAU - "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; ⁴ do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others."
 3. When people complain that they lack friends what they often mean is they don't have someone who will benefit them. Or perhaps we can become so critical of others that we fail to see value in people as they are.

II. A true friend is trustworthy

A. A friend will come to your defense

1. As Saul became increasingly jealous of David Jonathan continually came to his defense
2. Jonathan always seemed to be there when David was in need. He was a wonderful source of strength and encouragement

1 Samuel 23:15-17 NAU - "Now David became aware that Saul had come out to seek his life while David was in the wilderness of Ziph at Horesh. ¹⁶ And Jonathan, Saul's son, arose and went to David at Horesh, and encouraged him in God. ¹⁷ Thus he said to him, "Do not be afraid, because the hand of Saul my father will not find you, and you will be king over Israel and I will be next to you; and Saul my father knows that also."

B. Friendship demands that we look outside ourselves to the needs of our friend

1. Your friend knows that you will be there for him. The modern day saying would be, "I've got your back."
2. There are few sorrows as deep as the betrayal of a friend. This is one of the things that makes divorce so bitter.

Psalms 41:9 NAU - "Even my close friend in whom I trusted, Who ate my bread, Has lifted up his heel against me."

- a. History has revealed innumerable examples of such treachery
- b. David would later be betrayed by his son Absalom and his own counselor Ahithophel betrayed him
- c. In John's Gospel Jesus quoted **Psalms 41** as a fulfillment of the betrayal of Judas.
- d. We all know the famous words "*Et tu Brute?*" spoken by Julius Caesar to his good friend Brutus.
- e. The true friend will be faithful to the end
3. We should speak in defense of our friends. We should be there when they have need. We should be willing to sacrifice ourselves for them.
4. We need to be loyal to our friend. This is what it means to be trustworthy.
5. We need to speak words of comfort to him. There is no greater comforting word than the Word of God.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was imprisoned and ultimately executed for standing against Adolf Hitler in Nazi Germany. He wrote: "The Christian needs another Christian who speaks God's Word to him. He needs him again and again when becomes uncertain and discouraged, for by himself he cannot help himself without belying the truth. He needs his brother man as a bearer and proclaimer of the divine word of salvation."¹

¹ Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. (1954). *Life Together*. New York: Harper and Row Publishers, page 23.

III. A true friend shares in your joys and sorrows

A. Jonathan truly entered into the life of David

1. He truly rejoiced in David's victory over Goliath
2. He also truly wept over his father's determination to kill David
1 Samuel 20:31-34 NAU - "For as long as the son of Jesse lives on the earth, neither you nor your kingdom will be established. Therefore now, send and bring him to me, for he must surely die."
³² But Jonathan answered Saul his father and said to him, "Why should he be put to death? What has he done?" ³³ Then Saul hurled his spear at him to strike him down; so Jonathan knew that his father had decided to put David to death. ³⁴ Then Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger, and did not eat food on the second day of the new moon, for he was grieved over David because his father had dishonored him."
3. When Jonathan brought David word of Saul's determination they wept together
1 Samuel 20:41-42 NAU - "David rose from the south side and fell on his face to the ground, and bowed three times. And they kissed each other and wept together, but David *wept* the more. ⁴² Jonathan said to David, "Go in safety, inasmuch as we have sworn to each other in the name of the LORD, saying, 'The LORD will be between me and you, and between my descendants and your descendants forever.'" Then he rose and departed, while Jonathan went into the city."
4. David's love for Jonathan was equally intense. We can see this at Jonathan's death
2 Samuel 1:11-12 NAU - "Then David took hold of his clothes and tore them, and so also *did* all the men who *were* with him. ¹² They mourned and wept and fasted until evening for Saul and his son Jonathan and for the people of the LORD and the house of Israel, because they had fallen by the sword."
2 Samuel 1:26 NAU - "I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; You have been very pleasant to me. Your love to me was more wonderful Than the love of women."

B. Our love towards our friends must cause us to enter into their life

1. We must learn the grace of empathy – of entering into their pain; of sharing in their feelings; to rejoice in their success without the least bit of jealousy.
2. With our friends, we must learn to become so intimately connected that when they grieve it is as if a dagger has pierced our own heart.

Conclusion:

1. By now, you've surely come to understand just how rare friendships are.
2. Friendships can ultimately be kindled by God's grace.
3. In case there are some of you or most of you lamenting on your failures at being a good friend or in sorrow that you actually possess true friends, as Christians we must never forget our greatest friend. While we must never fall into the chasm of over familiarity that will swallow us up in a sinful neglect of holy reverence, we must also never forget the sweet, wonderful relationship we have with our Savior. He allows Himself to be called our Friend.

John 15:13-15 NAU - "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. ¹⁴ "You are My friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵ "No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you."