

August 12, 2018 "I will make it known to you for you are my friend"

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In our world, there are many gods that are worshipped. Foxes, frogs, or at times it is a person who lived in the past that are enshrined as god's. In some countries cows, elephants, and monkeys are considered god's. Humanity has created many god's in this way.

The people who created these god's asked questions like, "what would be the best shape?", or "what is a good color?" when making these gods. However, as time passes, the creation deteriorates from termites, and the colors fade away, and these gods must be repaired.

The God in the Bible does not need to be created or repaired by humans. It is God who created the heavens and the earth and everything in it, including us. It is God who governs and preserves various lives and we have no place in creating or repairing God. It is unthinkable for us to change or add anything to God.

In this way, we and God exist in completely different dimensions. Yet, Jesus, the son of God says something very surprising to us. Jesus calls us friend.

14 You are my friends if you do what I command. **15** I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. (John 15:14-15)

There is a movie I like called "Stand by Me" written by Stephen King. It is about four 12 year old boys who go on an overnight adventure starting from their rural town in Oregon. They walk along a railroad track in the forest, and they spend time singing, dancing, and at times telling each other stories.

As they continue in their journey, the boys begin to open to each other about the pain in their hearts. One boy's parents were only interested in his older brother's success in football. However, since his brother past away in an accident, he has been hurt by the realization that he does not bring joy to his parents. Another boy grew up being abused by his father. Another boy lived in a broken family and was poor. He shared in tears that because of his situation, he was accused by a teacher for stealing, and no one would believe him.

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One of these boys grows up to become an author. This author is the boy who was saddened by his parent's disinterest in him. But he had a talent for writing, and the boy who was not trusted by anyone said to him "You can write about us in the future". And that is exactly what he did, and in the last line of the book he wrote, "The two-day adventure in the summer of 1959. I never had any friends later on like the ones I had when I was twelve. Does anyone?"

After the adventure, the boys left town, and all lived their own lives. However, to the author, the friends he shared that adventure with were irreplaceable lifelong friends to him. No matter what kind of people they became, or what they went through after, they would remain friends. This was because they were opened up their hearts to each other in ways they never had. When we share things in our hearts, and when we are accepted, we gain an irreplaceable friend.

Jesus Christ calls us friend. Why? This is because he says, "I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you". (John 15:15)

Looking back in my life, and through my opportunities of meeting various people as a pastor, and seeing many people's lives, there is something that I have realized. That is the importance of my decisions.

Everyone makes decisions every day. The word "decision" may be exaggerating the situation, but we all made a decision about what shoe we would wear this morning.

Deciding what shoe to wear may not be a big deal, but the daily decisions we make move and change the course of our lives. We are who we are this morning because of the multitude of decisions we have made up to this point. We will continue to be led by the decisions that we make in our lives.

If our lives are led by our decisions, then what we wish from our hearts is that we are making the right, or best decisions. The question then, is how do we make the "best decisions"? When we think about these things, we find that our decisions are made by the information and knowledge we have at that point.

When we become ill, the first thing we do is search ways to be healed. We listen to advice from the doctor and make countless searches on the internet. From all the information we obtain, we choose the best as reference to decide what treatment to receive. When we look for a job, we look at the company's profile; the salary, the amount of time it takes to commute to work, the benefits, and we compare this information to make our decision. The information we have influences our decision, from things like what watch we choose to buy, to even who we marry.

In this way, the decisions we make require consideration of a lot of information. However, the problem arises when the decisions we make lead us into situations that we were not expecting or hoping for. This is not a rare occurrence, and the decisions we make often betray our expectations.

When we think about this reality, the important thing to highlight is the quality of the information we had to make our decision. Of course, it is most desirable to have information that is accurate and true.

The information we find is often provided by another person. Information may come from directly talking to someone or reading an article that a person wrote online.

Why do the decisions we make based on information we have lead us into unexpected situations? It may be that the information we had was fake. Perhaps we were only able to collect biased information because of our strong desire for a certain outcome.

Often times, the information we gather when making a decision is used only for that situation. For example, if we are preparing for marriage, we find out about that person to decide if they are the right person to be with. However, our information is not enough to see through the future, and we find out many things living under one roof.

If we believe in God, then isn't the best information, information provided by God? This information is not used to fulfill temporary wishes, but the information given to us by God leads us to live our best life from a much long-term perspective.

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I would like to replace what I called "information" to "God's word" from this point. Let's reflect on Jesus' words from this morning again.

"14 You are my friends if you do what I command. **15** I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you." (John 15:14-15)

Jesus said, "everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you". This information is clearly different from the things we hear from our peers, or research online. There are limitations to what people think and strategize, however Jesus says here that he has made known to us everything he received directly from God.

This means that the words of Jesus that we read from the Bible come directly from God, who, as our creator, fully knows the best way for us to live.

God's will for us is revealed to us through Jesus' words and actions. Not only so, but Jesus says that he will make everything he received from God known to us, and if you carry out these things you are my friend. If you are my friend, I will continue to make known to you what I have heard from my father.

Dear brothers and sisters, what is the difference between our everyday conversations, and God's words to us? The biggest difference is that our words are subjective and short-sighted. Our words do not reflect the future, and therefore, become ineffective or untrue over time. Our regrets and failed plans prove this.

If the decisions we make from now reflect God's word, then would we not be led before God, and be led to make the best decisions?

So then, let us share and read God's words. This passage is from B.C. 750, when God spoke through the prophet Isaiah like this,

"Come, all you who are thirsty,
come to the waters;
and you who have no money,
come, buy and eat!

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Come, buy wine and milk
without money and without cost.
2 Why spend money on what is not bread,
and your labor on what does not satisfy?
(Isaiah 55:1-2)

These words are clearly from a perspective that is not of us. We may be blinded to our actions, but from an outer point of view, we spend money on things that do not nourish us, and labor for things that will never satisfy. And because we are within this cycle, we become subjective and shortsighted, and lose sight of ourselves. However, God from his perspective, questions our lifestyle and says this.

Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good,
and you will delight in the richest of fare.
3 Give ear and come to me;
listen, that you may live.
I will make an everlasting covenant with you,
my faithful love promised to David.
4 See, I have made him a witness to the peoples,
a ruler and commander of the peoples.
(Isaiah 55:2-4)

God is saying, you are to receive what I am giving to you. Then you will delight in the richest, and truly live. Then he says this.

6 Seek the LORD while he may be found;
call on him while he is near.
7 Let the wicked forsake their ways
and the unrighteous their thoughts.
Let them turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on them,
and to our God, for he will freely pardon.

Meet Jesus now, while you can. Now is the time. Call unto him as friend and receive the word of life that I have made known to him. Turn back to God. No matter what you have done in your life, God will graciously forgive you. He will give mercy. Then, God says these famous words in the next part.

8 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways,"
declares the LORD.

9 "As the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Your thoughts are not the same as my thoughts. You drink and drink, yet your thirst is never quenched. Do not choose that life. My ways are higher, and I have made my ways known to Jesus. So in your life, listen to these words and obey me. He goes on,

10 As the rain and the snow
come down from heaven,
and do not return to it
without watering the earth
and making it bud and flourish,
so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater,

11 so is my word that goes out from my mouth:
It will not return to me empty,
but will accomplish what I desire
and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

12 You will go out in joy
and be led forth in peace;
the mountains and hills
will burst into song before you,
and all the trees of the field
will clap their hands.

13 Instead of the thornbush will grow the juniper,
and instead of briars the myrtle will grow.

This will be for the LORD's renown,
for an everlasting sign,
that will endure forever."

I have made this world under my rule, and I am still in control today. The heavens give rain to the earth, and from the earth a seed yields fruit, and

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becomes food for you. What I give to you from the heavens does not end in vain.

In the same way, the words I speak to you are not the same as the words you speak, and my words never end in vain. My words give joy and peace. Instead of the thorn bush, the juniper, and instead of briers, the myrtle will grow. This will be for a sign that will endure forever. My child, listen to the words I have made known to Jesus. Choose the word of life, and choose the way of life.

Dear brothers and sisters, it would be a great loss for us if we do not make the words from God our cornerstone in our daily decisions.

Jesus also said this, **4** "I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. **5** But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after your body has been killed, has authority to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him. (Luke 12:4-5)

Here Jesus talks about things that are not spoken among us. That is of course, because his ways are higher than our ways, and God's thoughts than ours. Life and death are of great interest to us, especially death is our biggest fear. However, Jesus talks about death from God's perspective. He says, do not fear the one who can kill the body can do no more after.

Instead, fear the one who, after your body has been killed, has the authority to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him.

In our life, we will face big decisions that have to do with these things. These words from Jesus will probably have a big effect in your decision.

We fear many things. Our world tells us what to fear. Our heartbeat becomes faster and faster, and out of fear we hasten our decisions.

However, the creator of the heavens and the earth tells us, "do not fear!". Who we should really fear is the one who has authority beyond our lives here. Whether we live in fear of the things we should not, and let that determine our decisions, or we know who to truly fear, and let that determine our decisions, and thus the course of our lives, that decision is up to us.

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Is there a greater decision than choosing to keep in mind the words of God the creator of this world, and of the natural laws, to make our decisions?

When we walk with Jesus as our friend, we can find and know things that we should not be able to know. We find peace and comfort in times of intense sorrow.

What we truly need is not infinite information. The words Jesus heard from God the father, and the words Jesus spoke to us, that is what we need.

Jesus who calls us friend, knows us more than anyone else. Jesus, who has heard from God, speaks to us withholding nothing. If his words are reflected in our decisions, our lives will surely be different from what it has been.

Let us ensure an intimate relationship with God. Let us look to God as we live our daily lives. Because if we do, we will be surprised to see the amazing appearance and involvement of God in our lives. If you have not yet accepted God as a friend yet, let's take a step forward. Even today God invites us to live our lives through his words.

Let us pray.

Translated by Kou Okura