



To Love as Jesus Loves

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September 26, 2008*

John 15:15b "...but I have called you friends.." says Jesus to his disciples in these verses from John.

It is such a privilege to be called "friend" - with Jesus and with one another. In the Gospel of John there is often a correlation, in the use of the word "friend" to both the joy of this friendship, and with the expectation to love as Jesus loves. Frederick Buechner, in *Listening to Your Life* talks about friendship: "Basically your friends are not your friends for any particular reason. They are your friends for no particular reason. The job you do, the family you have, the way you vote, the major achievements and blunders of your life, your religious convictions or lack of them, are all somehow set off to one side when the two of you get together. If you are old friends, you know all those things about each other and a lot more besides, but they are beside the point. Even if you talk about them, they are beside the point. Stripped, humanly speaking, to the bare essentials, you are yourselves the point. The usual distinctions of older-younger, richer-poorer, smarter-dumber, male-female even cease to matter. You meet with a clean slate every time, and you meet on equal terms. Anything may come of it or nothing may. That doesn't matter either. Only the meeting matters." With the love of Jesus, every day we start with a clean slate. Jesus knows our inmost selves - even those parts we like to keep hidden from others, and in spite of that wipes our slate clean - every day. Jesus knows us just as we are and accepts us the way the truest of all friends does, calls us "friend" with unconditional love toward us. What joy it is, and what an honor and privilege it is, to continue serving this congregation, now into my fourteenth year, and to call you friends.

Thank you for the gift we share..the gift of the friendship of Jesus and of one another.