

Purpose in Friendship

△ Prov 27:1-10, Mark 8:31-33

Intro

Topic is our purpose in Friendship

LICC - London Institute of Contemporary Christianity

But today we start with a story

The Visit: p231 from a World of Stories

Mark 8:31-33

This is a well known story.

Last week I preached about this reading in Sandwich

Pivot Point

This reading comes in a Pivot Point in the gospel of Mark

Until now Mark was about identifying who Jesus is

Stories about healing, deliverance and teaching

Of people trying to understand who he is

The Climax is in the preceding passage:

△ Mark 8:29

Jesus: Who do you say that I am?

Peter: You are the Messiah

It has taken Mark until this point to make clear to us, the readers, that Jesus is the Messiah, The Christ

Jesus Mission statement

The Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

^ Mark 8:31

Peter's perception

But Peter does not hear the last.

He hears suffering, rejection and death

This is not the Messiah, surely!

Peter likes the outcome, but he does not like the path towards the outcome

And he rebukes Jesus

Jesus then rebukes Peter

As it is Satan who tempts Jesus through Peter

As then Satan will have won

To abandon his mission

Therefore the strong words: Get behind me Satan!

Know your place, do not hinder what I have to do

Jesus and Peter friends

But the LICC material highlights a different aspect of this conversation

It asks what is so special about their relationship that both could rebuke each other

As Rabbi - Disciple relationship it may

be quite normal that the Rabbi rebukes those he teaches

But for the Disciple to rebuke the Rabbi

That is quite special

Peter was comfortable doing this, because he regraded Jesus as his friend

in addition to Rabbi

Jesus also was not worried that Peter would leave either

Because he know that at the basis of their relationship

There is friendship

And it is a friendship that can weather disagreements or conflicts

Differences of opinion

Criticism

Emotions

Just like in the story of Joanna's friend

Proverbs 27:1-10

The reading of Proverbs are illustrations of the benefits of friendship

But also that friends can and should be truthful to each other

Even if sometimes the truth is uncomfortable

The verses come into pairs, and each one has something to say of

each other

1-2 Do not boast of self, but accept others praise

27 Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring.

² Let someone else praise you, and not your own mouth; an outsider, and not your own lips.

These verses are linked by the same Hebrew the word 'halal', which is translated as boast and praise

Although these are obvious it is not common practice

We do like to boast about ourselves

And with almost certainty of the future

On the other hand in churches we do not often encourage or praise others

For what they contribute

As they may become conceited

But this pair of sayings takes it for granted that people have got good things to say about each other

3-4 Who can stand this behaviour

³ Stone is heavy and sand a burden, but a fool's provocation is heavier than both.

⁴ Anger is cruel and fury overwhelming, but who can stand before jealousy?

These verses are linked by every increasing emotions

Provocation: Heavy -> Anger: Cruel ->
Fury: Overwhelming ->
Jealousy: Cannot bear

These are negative emotions and they weigh on people

So it is best not to long keep these up

As although they do not weigh anything, they are heavier to bear than sand or stone

5-6 Paradoxes

⁵ Better is open rebuke
than hidden love.

⁶ Wounds from a friend can be trusted,
but an enemy multiplies kisses.

These are two combined paradoxes

On tough love that is sometimes required in faithful relationships

These verses are linked by love

the root of friend is 'aheb', which is also love

It highlights that those we love we may need to address honestly

Even if it is uncomfortable

Like Jesus and Peter rebuked each other

With the risk that we get it sometimes wrong - like Peter

But at least we are talking about it

Then hide this issue away under the guise of love

7-8 Unbalanced relationships

⁷ One who is full loathes honey from the comb,
but to the hungry even what is bitter tastes sweet.

⁸ Like a bird that flees its nest
is anyone who flees from home.

On first sight vs 7 seems unrelated to the theme of relationships / friendships

but taking v7-8 together they may be mean

The satisfied husband is content and does not wander like an errant bird from nest to nest

Applicable for marriage, but what about friendship?

Sometimes we do see unbalanced friendships, where the one is giving and the other is taking

Now there are times when we are in difficulties, we need the others help

But it is quite difficult to maintain a friendship, when the other one does not benefit from the relation as much as we do?

And who can blame them is the friendship then withers?

So we need to ensure that we have the right balance over time between giving and taking

⁹ Perfume and incense bring joy to the heart,
and the pleasantness of a friend
springs from their heartfelt advice.

¹⁰ Do not forsake your friend or a friend of
your family,
and do not go to your relative's house
when disaster strikes you—
better a neighbor nearby than a relative
far away.

This is two pairs

The first pair (v9-10a) are brought
together by the word friend

Highlighting how good it is to have a friend

pleasant

Heartfelt advise

But also that we should work on our
relationship with friends.

It is easy to abandon friends when life gets
busy

The second pair (v10b) compares
friendship with family

And that it is better to have friends with
neighbours than with family

As they are closer by

And also their motivation comes from
friendship rather than obligation

Also noting that sometimes relations with
family is not always good

Purpose of Friendship

Very good advice

But what is our purpose within friendship

Well a friend relationship is an image of the Kingdom of God

The mutual help that we can give each other

The giving of advice and constructive criticism

Where with family or spouses may not always be able to give this kind of support

But what about being friends who are non-Christians

It would be good if we can have friends that are non-Christians

We can show them by the way that we live, who Christ is for us

And in a friendship there is more willingness to engage on our faith

Practical Demonstration of the 6Ms

Forgotten these?

Model godly character

Makes good work

Ministers grace and love

Moulds culture

Mouthpiece of truth and justice

Messenger of the Gospel

All of these come to play in our friendships

As when we share of ourselves and our faith

It will demonstrate these aspects of our life

Model godly character

We would hope that one of the reasons that we are friends with a person is of their character, but also of ours. And we can model to our friends both the strengths and the vulnerability of our faith

As we demonstrate our dependence on God

Makes good work

Perhaps less applicable?

But a lot of friendship are build around a shared activity, hobby, craft or sport

We have an opportunity to demonstrate that we want to make the best of these activities

To give glory to God

Ministers grace and love

This is an aspect of friendship that should be natural

We want to be loving and kind to our friends

Love may be a in English not so appropriate

But the agape love in Greek is the friendship love

Moulds culture

In our friendships we can also demonstrate what culture we inhabit because of being Christian

The activities we fiend important: church etc

But also those we avoid: gambling, drugs, excessive alcohol

Or how we relate to our friends

Or what words we use to speak of God and of others!

Mouthpiece of Truth and Justice

In friendship we can highlight if we feel that is an truth or justice issue

In our friends live

In our friends attitude or relationships

And also be challenged by our friends on our relationship to truth and justice

I thought you are a Christian: why do you do this, or do not address the other?

Messenger of the Gospel

If they are our friends than they will want to hear why we are Christians

But also they will see the differences in the all the other 5Ms and hopefully

That we practice what we preach

Because then our message will have the power of the Holy Spirit.

So our final purpose of our relationship with friends is that they also get to know Christ

Because as you love them

we do not want them to perish do we?

Amen