**WHAT A FRIEND WE HAVE IN JESUS**

Sunday School Lesson 6

*Lessons from the Hymnbook*

John 15:13-15

11/13/2022

**Introduction:** During last week’s lesson, we turned from looking at declarative hymns to a directive hymn that we all know well – “Rescue the Perishing.” This hymn taught us of our need to reach the lost and perishing in this world. We were reminded that rescuing the perishing shows our compassion for the dying. It also keeps forgiveness out of our hands and in the hands of the Lord. When we rescue the perishing, we help to restore God’s creation. Lastly, we understand that when we rescue the perishing, we fulfill our responsibility as believers. During this week’s lesson, we are going to turn back to a declarative song about the friendship that we have with Jesus Christ. The hymn “What A Friend We Have in Jesus” was written by a man named Joseph Scriven in 1855. Like many other hymns that we sing, the song was originally written as a poem. Mr. Scriven intended to give the poem to his mother to comfort her while she was in Ireland, and he was in Canada. Joseph Scriven was a man who probably understood the need for the friendship and comfort of the Lord more than most. As a young man, he had his plans of a military career dashed by an illness that caused him to be unfit for service. On the day before his wedding day, he watched in helpless agony as his fiancé fell off of a horse while crossing a bridge and drowned to death. Several years later, he suffered tragedy again when his wife of a few months died of pneumonia that came as a result of her baptism. Scriven was considered an eccentric man who had few close friends in his life. Truly, he understood the need for friendship with Christ.

1. **WE HAVE A FRIEND IN JESUS WHO WANTS TO BEAR OUR BURDENS FOR US.**
2. **Our friend, Jesus Christ, took all of our sins and their accompanying grief upon Him on the cross of Calvary (Isaiah 53:3-4; 1 Peter 2:24; Matthew 8:17; Ezekiel 4:4-6; Proverbs 14:20).** Friends ought to be willing to help each other out with their burdens. Yet, the Bible teaches that mankind is more inclined to make friendships that are beneficial to them. Hopefully, we all have close friends who would be willing to bear some of our heavier burdens with us, and even more so, it ought to be our hope and desire to be that kind of friend for someone else. Even with our best effort, though, we cannot bear for our friends what Christ has borne for us. He willingly took upon Himself all of our sins and our griefs and sorrows. He did not do this because He was inconvenienced or pressured into doing it. He did it for us because He loves us. It’s difficult to bear things for a friend that you know they have brought upon themselves. Consider how Christ bears our sins, even though we deserve to bear them on our own. Moreover, He bears our sins, even though those sins are a direct offense against Him. Along with that, He bears the grief and sorrow that comes because of our sins. Despite His own grief and sorrow over our sins, He took our own suffering upon Him.
3. **Our friend, Jesus Christ, has opened the door for us to bring all of our prayers before the Father (Philippians 4:6-7; Romans 8:27; John 14:6; 1 Timothy 2:5; ).** It certainly is a great privilege to be able to take everything to the Father in prayer. This was made possible by our Mediator, Jesus Christ. He provides us the way unto the Father. He gives us access to the throne of God. He vouches on our behalf before the Father. Again, when we consider earthly friendships, how many people would be willing to stake their own standing to help you gain access to some good thing? Also, how many friends would share access to such a good thing with you and run the risk of you messing that up? Christ has put His own good name upon us and interceded on our behalf before the Father. Would you vouch for a friend that you know is going to fail you and come up short time and time again? That’s what Christ has done for us. He mediates for us despite us.
4. **Our friend, Jesus Christ, is not to be blamed when we lack peace and carry needless pain with us (John 14:27; 15:15; 16:33; Romans 8:22; 15:13; 2 Corinthians 13:11; Revelation 21:4).** We cannot blame the Lord Jesus for our lack of peace. He desires to give us peace. He does not just give us any peace. He gives us His peace. He has left it with us. He has shown us the way of peace. He frequently instructs us in His Word to live in peace. As our friend, He cares very much for our condition. He knows how important it is for us to find peace. When we do not go to Him and seek our His peace, we are choosing to carry around needless pain. This can happen in friendships. Oftentimes, pride keeps us from finding peace. We would rather carry some heavy emotional/physical/spiritual load than go to one of our friends and ask them for help. How silly to be too prideful to ask for the help needed for peace and then get bitter at our friend!
5. **WE HAVE A FRIEND IN JESUS WHO WANTS TO ENCOURAGE US THROUGH OUR TRIALS.**
6. **Our friend, Jesus Christ, desires for us to never stay in discouragement (Numbers 21:4; 32:7-9; Deuteronomy 1:21-28; Colossians 3:21; 1 Samuel 30:6).** When the children of Israel were set to journey to the Promised Land, they had those who discouraged them in the way. The Lord was very displeased with all those who had discouraged the people. The Lord, as our friend, does not want us to stay in our discouragement. He wants for us to find encouragement and strength in Him. We likely have all met people and even have friends who seem to be more interested in discouraging us than encouraging us. Why would we want a friend who always discourages us? What if I told you that there was a friend who always wanted to be an encouragement to you? He always wants to help you and exhort you through His Word. Perhaps, some of us are more interested in friends who discourage us because it allows us to stay in our misery and failure. It gives us an excuse to be bitter and frustrated at life. Christ wants to encourage you.
7. **Our friend, Jesus Christ, is faithful to be there for us through all of the sorrows and trials of life (Hebrews 13:5; Revelation 19:11; 2 Thessalonians 3:3; 1 Thessalonians 5:24).** We often talk about loyalty when it comes to our friends, but the Biblical word we ought to be looking for is faithful. Loyalty reflects one who shows constant support for another. Yet, we should not always be shown support. When we are doing the wrong thing, the last thing we need is a friend who supports us in our wrongdoing. Faithfulness speaks to steadfastness. It is one who is dedicated and dependable. It is someone that we can trust to be there for us whether we need a word of encouragement or a faithful wound from that friend. There is no friend so faithful as the Lord Jesus. He is there to give us what we need whenever we go to Him and ask. He sees us through all of our sorrows and trials that come about in this life. He is there with us on the mountain, and He is there with us in the valley. He will never leave us, and He will never forsake us.
8. **Our friend, Jesus Christ, is able to help us because He knows every single thing about us (Psalm 139; John 10:14-15; 1 Corinthians 8:3; Jeremiah 12:3; 1 Samuel 16:7).** The Lord Jesus is a friend who knows everything about you. While you might have some close friends who know you well, there is no friend with more knowledge about you than Jesus Christ. He is able to help us through all of our trials because He knows every single one of our weaknesses. When it comes to weaknesses, we typically try to hide those from even those who are closest to us. We cannot hide anything from the Lord. We know that He searches the heart. He sees what we are feeling, thinking, and doing. Jesus is a friend who is never surprised when we bring something to Him and seek out His help. He knows our problems before we know our own problems. He knows our trials before we know our own trials.
9. **WE HAVE A FRIEND IN JESUS WHO WILL STAND UP FOR US WHEN NO ONE ELSE WILL.**
10. **Our friend, Jesus Christ, is a refuge for all those who are heavy laden and cumbered with a load of care (Matthew 11:28; Psalm 46:1-11; 62:7-8; 91:1-9).** In our first observation, we already looked at how the Lord wants to take all of our burdens upon Himself. In addition to this, He calls for all those who labour and are heavy laden to come unto Him. When you are heavy laden, it simply means that you are loaded down. The context seems to speak to being loaded down as you work. Certainly, we have all been there. Who is there to help us out when we get overworked in this life? What friend do you have that isn’t exhausted from their own work and willing to come and take some of your work for a little while. For all the work that the Lord does, He never grows tired of the labor. He calls all of His friends to come and toss their load upon Him and find rest. Too often, we rely upon ourselves instead of giving the work to the Lord and enjoying His rest.
11. **Our friend, Jesus Christ, will continue to be our friend even when we are despised and forsaken by others (Psalm 22:6; 51:17; Isaiah 53:3; Luke 10:16; Hebrews 13:5; Jeremiah 19:4).** The Lord knows what it is like to be despised of men. He also knows what it is like to be forsaken by all. The Lord has not chosen you as a friend because you are popular among men. In fact, we are warned that men will despise us because they despise Jesus Christ. The writer of this song knew what it was like to be despised and forsaken of men. His testimony is that of one who lived his life doing things for other people. He had very little to his own name, and most people found him to be a bit unusual. The world will always find the Christian to be unusual. Perhaps, you are feeling distraught today because you have been despised and forsaken by others. Take solace and comfort in knowing that you have at least one friend who will not forsake you. He does not despise you. He loves you with an everlasting love!