

3/29/09

THE PRAYER OF THE DAY Almighty God, You are Almighty and eternal, but in the willing sacrifice of Your Son, Jesus, You show us the depths of Your love. Help us to know and receive Your love, Your forgiveness, Your saving, Your friendship as we trust in Jesus for our eternal welfare. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and our Savior.

THE OLD TESTAMENT LESSON Jeremiah 31:31-34 *God promises a new relationship, a new covenant, based on His forgiveness.)*

31 "The time is coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. 32 It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them," declares the LORD. 33 "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. 34 No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the LORD. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."

THE EPISTLE LESSON Hebrews 5:1-10 *(Jesus shows Himself to be the true High Priest.)*

1 Every high priest is selected from among men and is appointed to represent them in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. 2 He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness. 3 This is why he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins, as well as for the sins of the people. 4 No one takes this honor upon himself; he must be called by God, just as Aaron was. 5 So Christ also did not take upon himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father." 6 And he says in another place, "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek." 7 During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. 8 Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered 9 and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him 10 and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.

THE GOSPEL LESSON Mark 10:32-45 *(Jesus shares the measure of all greatness, and shows the depth of His love in His willing sacrifice.)*

32 They were on their way up to Jerusalem, with Jesus leading the way, and the disciples were astonished, while those who followed were afraid. Again he took the Twelve aside and told them what was going to happen to him. 33 "We are going up to Jerusalem," he said, "and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles, 34 who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise." 35 Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. "Teacher," they said, "we want you to do for us whatever we ask." 36 "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked. 37 They replied, "Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory." 38 "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said. "Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?" 39 "We can," they answered. Jesus said to them, "You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, 40 but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared." 41 When the ten heard about this, they

became indignant with James and John. 42 Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. 43 Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 44 and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. 45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

INTRO - Jackie Robinson was the first black to play major league baseball. Breaking baseball's color barrier, he faced jeering crowds in every stadium. While playing one day in his home stadium in Brooklyn, he committed an error. The fans began to ridicule him. He stood at second base, humiliated, while the fans jeered. Then, shortstop Pee Wee Reese came over and stood next to him. He put his arm around Jackie Robinson and faced the crowd. The fans grew quiet. Robinson later said that arm around his shoulder saved his career.

When times are difficult it helps to have a friend, someone who will be there with you and for you. In fact, it is a great honor to be a friend to another.

I. Scripture recognizes the need for friends.

A. Please look with me at two verses that talk about friendship.

1. Ecclesiastes 4:8-12 says, **8 There was a man all alone; he had neither son nor brother. There was no end to his toil, yet his eyes were not content with his wealth. "For whom am I toiling," he asked, "and why am I depriving myself of enjoyment?" This too is meaningless-- a miserable business! 9 Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: 10 If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!**

In other words, on our own life is difficult. But a friend can help us when we fall, and when we face the struggles of life.

B. We all face struggles in life.

1. In our congregation we have people who are ill, people who have lost loved ones, people who have lost jobs, and people who are going through personal crises.

2. In these times, it helps to have someone to count on.

II. However, there are times that a friend may not really be a friend, or one who is a friend can let us down.

Ignacy Jan Paderewski was a Polish pianist, composer, diplomat, politician, and the third Prime Minister of Poland. Paderewski was to leave his native Poland to play his first recital in London, he asked an influential compatriot to give him a letter of introduction to a leading figure in Britain's musical world, who might be of assistance should anything go amiss. The letter was handed to him in a sealed envelope. He hoped that everything would proceed smoothly and he would not have to use it. He did not; his debut was a success and no snags developed. Some years later, while going through his papers, he came upon the letter and opened it. It read: "This will introduce Jan Paderewski, who plays the piano, for which he demonstrates no conspicuous talent."

A. Perhaps we see that in our Gospel lesson for today. James and John went to Jesus with out the other disciples knowing it and asked, **"Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory."**

1. It is obvious from this story James and John figured if they asked first, they got first dibs, so to speak. If they took it for themselves others could

not get this special position in God's kingdom.

2. There is a certain selfishness in their actions. They were thinking of themselves, and do you see how it angered the others.

3. And, these men really were friends. They walked and talked and lived together with Jesus for 3 years.

B. We all need friends. We are all called to be friends.

1. But, we know what it is to be let down.

2. And we have all failed at times and let our friends down.

III. Please consider one other Bible verse with me. Proverbs 18:24 also talks about the value of friendship. **24 A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.** There may be one friend on whom we can count.

In the Berlin Olympics in 1936 Jesse Owens seemed sure to win the long jump. The year before he had jumped 26 feet, 8 1/4 inches -- a record that would stand for 25 years. As he walked to the long-jump pit, however, Owens saw a tall, blue eyed, blond German taking practice jumps in the 26-foot range. Owens felt nervous. He was acutely aware of the Nazis' desire to prove "Aryan superiority," especially over blacks. At this point, the tall German introduced himself as Luz Long. "You should be able to qualify with your eyes closed!" he said to Owens, referring to his two jumps. For the next few moments the black son of a sharecropper and the white model of Nazi manhood chatted. Then Long made a suggestion. Since the qualifying distance was only 23 feet, 5 1/2 inches, why not make a mark several inches before the takeoff board and jump from there, just to play it safe? Owens did and qualified easily. In the finals Owens set an Olympic record and earned the second of four golds. The first person to congratulate him was Luz Long -- in full view of Adolf Hitler. Owens never again saw Long, who was killed in World War II. "You could melt down all the medals and cups I have," Owens later wrote, "and they wouldn't be a plating on the 24-carat friendship I felt for Luz Long."

Long actually put himself in danger by befriending Owens. That is real friendship.

A. Into this world where people hurt one another, and friends disappoint one another Jesus came from heaven.

1. Jesus is the Son of God, who did not have to come to earth. But He did come to help and save you and I as we face the trials of life, trials we have sometimes brought on ourselves.

2. Here is what Jesus says, starting in verse 42 of today's lesson. **You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. 43 Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 44 and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. 45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."**

3. The point is that Jesus knew this would happen, and he still came. That's a real friend.

B. And Jesus love and sacrifice and friendship blesses our lives, eternally.

1. He gave up heaven, he gave up his life, he suffered and died, and rose, so we can live.

2. When we believe and trust the love of Jesus, God gives us forgiveness, and peace and joy in this life, and gives eternal life in heaven.

4. Others, even friends, may selfishly put themselves first, Jesus came to serve us.

C. Some of you are here today with friends. Thank you for coming with your friends. And thank you to those who brought friends.

1. But, none of us in a perfect friend, look at the disciples.

2. So today, we are all being introduced again to our best friend, the one who came even knowing it meant he would die.

3. **45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to**

serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

CONCLUSION Something happened in our neighborhood this Christmas. One neighbor brought cookies. It was a generous giving gesture that led to another bringing a bottle of wine. Then the next brought more goodies. Then everybody got in the act. You see how love creates more love? My prayer is that the love and friendship of Jesus may spread, that others may know Jesus, that we may all love one another in a more genuine way. Amen.