Daily Devotion #133

True Friendship

*Proverbs 18:24 – “There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.”*

Growing up in a small Methodist church, I often heard the old hymn, “Others”. I never liked the tune, but the song leader loved it, so we sang it often. However, I really loved the lyrics. It starts with these words. “*Lord, help me live from day to day, in such a self-forgetful way, That even when I kneel to pray, My prayer shall be for others.*” The third verse is just as meaningful. “*Let ‘self’ be crucified and slain, and buried deep: and all in vain may efforts be to rise again, except to live for others*.”

The meaning of that song strikes a chord with me. Pun intended. It strikes me because our sinful souls desire a “me first” attitude. There is no one more important to me, than me, on this earth. At least that’s what my sin tells me. And sin is a great motivator. Sin motivates every living soul to look out for itself and put others second.

Thankfully, Jesus showed us another plan, God’s plan. His plan is to always put others first over our selfish desires. And that is His will for each of us because that is the way He lived His life on earth. Everything He did while here was for the glory of His Father and for the good of others. To understand that profound truth is to understand what the writer of the proverb is teaching.

On this earth, in this life, there are many people who become friends. Mostly however, those people are better described as acquaintances. An acquaintance is a person who shows a certain amount of care and concern for someone else, but when it comes to the times of real need, that person will often have other priorities, mainly what they what to do instead of coming to someone’s aid.

But there are also people in this life who understand the need to care for others. As my dad is in his last days on this earth, I can honestly say that he has been a person who showed himself to be a true friend, not only to me, even as my father, but to many others. In fact, I have had several conversations these past few days about my dad and how his concern has always been for others. But as wonderful as he has been, he is still corrupted with sin and is not perfect when it comes to serving others and being a true friend. But not so with Jesus. The writer of the proverbs elevates Jesus to His rightful character. When others, who call themselves friends, are not able or don’t want to stick close to us in our times of need, Jesus always does.

A brother or sister is the closest relationship to a person that there can be, other than a parent. They are the ones we live our early lives with and those people who often know us best. And many people have had siblings who they cherish because of their closeness. So, using the same depth of understanding, the proverb speaks of the incomparable closeness that Jesus has to His people.

When life is at its worst and we need a true friend, Jesus is there. When life is at its best and we want someone to enjoy it with us, Jesus is there. When others reject us or make us feel less that a human, Jesus is there, loving and consoling and encouraging us. When others want to comfort us in our times of great sorrow or need but have no ability to truly know our minds and hearts in the moment, Jesus does. When all hope seems lost and there is no way to turn and get the help we need, Jesus is there.

Why would He be with us even more closely than a brother or sister? Because He loves us. Because He has the ability to meet every need we have. Because He is able to be and do everything someone else cannot. Because He is sin-less. Beloved, be thankful today that you have a true friend in this life. His name is Jesus. He will always be there for you.