**6 Easter, May 10, 2015; Acts 10:44-48; Ps 98; 1 John 5:1-6; John 15:9-17; Rev Mary Trainor**

Jesus said, speaking to us, "***As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love***....***I have called you friend."***

The boy named Jimmy was very lonely. He spent his whole childhood inside a bubble in a room in his home. Jimmy, played by Jake Gyllenhaal, was the star of an old movie called "Bubble Boy." Jimmy was isolated into this bubble because he was born without immunity. In the movie was a mother who you would not ever want to have; she gave Christianity a bad name. One day, Jimmy saw a neighbor girl out his window, they made eye contact, and these teenagers became curious about each other. The neighbor girl snuck into the bubble boy's room that day and everyday thereafter, and they became the best of friends. In the movie, this sad isolated boy transformed into a caring fun young man, all because of his friendship with this neighbor girl. If we did not have friends, we would be miserable, alienated, lonely. Friendship is essentail.

Our true friends love us as we are, even when we are crabby. We can be honest with our friends: be truly authentic. Friends come through to help when we are in trouble. When we give a gift to a friend this fills us with joy; it feels so good to think about our friend's smiling face. We associate the word "friend" with: warmth, caring, comfortable, reliable, understanding, accepting, love. Social media has taken off because of the widespread recognition of the importance of friendships. Jesus said, " ***I have called you friend."*** In the terminology of Facebook, you could say this verse says that Jesus has "sent you a friend request." Thirteenth century theologian Thomas Aquinas said, **"there is nothing on this earth more to be prized than true friendship."** Muhammad Ali said, "[**Friendship... is not something you learn in school. But if you haven't learned the meaning of friendship, you really haven't learned anything.**](http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/m/muhammadal100736.html?src=t_friendship)**"** Bible teacher Chuck Swindoll said, " **I cannot even imagine where I would be today were it not for that handful of friends who have given me a heart full of joy**." Augustine said, "**Without friends no one would choose to live, though he had all other goods**." Jesus said, "***I have called you friend."***

Sam Rayburn was Speaker of the US House of Representatives longer than any other in our history: 17 years. One night, the daughter of a friend of his died. The next morning, Sam knocked at his friend's door and asked if he could do anything to help. The friend explained, through his grief, that everything had been taken care of. Sam then said, "**Well, have you had your coffee this morning?"**  The friend said, "**no**" and so Sam came in and quietly worked in the kitchen. After a while, the grieving friend came up to him and said, "**Mr. Speaker, I thought you were supposed to have breakfast at the White House this morning."** Rayburn responded, "**Well, I was, but I called the President and told him that I had a friend in trouble and I couldn't come."**  That is a true friend.

In today's Gospel, Jesus said, "***I have called you friends***.....***You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit....love one another***." When we think, in an earthly way, about the word "chosen" we think back to childhood: about being picked by to be on a sports team or to go a social event--being selected because of our knowledge, our skills, our abilities, our status. But this isn't it! In God's way of choosing, we are chosen by virtue of our baptism: as John put it in our Epistle, "***This is the one who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ.***" The waters of baptism are poured over us, and that water overflows with the new life of Jesus' love. We don't do anything to earn or deserve being chosen as our Savior's, the Son of God's, friends.

This word "***love***" is not said by Jesus lightly or tritely, it has a concrete and daily meaning. It is translated into becoming a valued member of this church family, into having a deep sense of belonging, after only a short time of coming here. It is translated into being welcomed, no matter what is going on in our lives. This love that Jesus has is sacrificial love. Jesus gave everything to us, His friends. That Jesus calls us friends is truly astounding! We are to add this identity to how we see ourselves. In fact, this identity as Jesus' friend defines how we approach everything and everyone in our lives. Jesus' friendship allows us to overcome self-centeredness and bitterness. Because of our friendship with Jesus, we are transformed. We emerge from our friendship with Him able to do things we never thought we could do, able to be better than we ever thought we could be, able to share of ourselves with others in amazing ways. God loved us first, and as we live into that love through Jesus Christ our Savior, we can't help but share that love. Sharing it is "***not burdensome,"***  as our Epistle reading from 1st John said today; it comes naturally as we live into being chosen by Jesus. Jesus said, " ***I have called you friend."***

Please open up your Supplemental Hymnals to #4, and there you will see: "What a Friend We Have in Jesus." This hymn was written in the late 1800s , by Joseph Scriven, who was born in Ireland but moved to Canada to find work. Scriven experienced much loss as an early adult, as he fell in love with two women who both died. He experienced great personal consolation from Jesus, his friend. He recognized his calling was to spend the rest of his life spreading the compassion and love of Jesus. He liked to write prayer poems, and he wrote the words to "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" to comfort his mother who was ill in Ireland (and he could not travel to comfort her -- so he mailed her these words, that express so clearly this friend relationship we have been offered by Jesus):  
What a Friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear!  
What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer!  
O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear,  
All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.  
  
Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere?  
We should never be discouraged; take it to the Lord in prayer.  
Can we find a friend so faithful who will all our sorrows share?  
Jesus knows our every weakness; take it to the Lord in prayer.  
  
Are we weak and heavy laden, cumbered with a load of care?  
Precious Savior, still our refuge, take it to the Lord in prayer.  
Do your friends despise, forsake you? Take it to the Lord in prayer!  
In His arms He'll take and shield you; you will find a solace there. Amen.

Jesus said, " ***I have called you friend.*** Amen.

