

JESUS IS AN INTERCEDING FRIEND
THIRD WEDNESDAY IN LENT

ROM 31:34
FEB 24, 2016

³⁴ Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

It's now what you know but who you know.

Despite all the modern communication tools
networking is still the best way to get a job,
get the best deal, promote what you have to offer,
and even keep informed.

Last week we considered how Jesus is a protecting friend.

One of the important ways friends stick up for each other
is not anything physical but just speaking up.

If someone is talking bad about you,
what would you want a friend to say?

If there is a good opportunity to get in on,
what would you want your friend to say?

If something dangerous or beneficial is happening,
what would you want your friend to tell you?

Elected representatives, ambassadors, lawyers,
all are intercessors, people whose job it is
to speak for others in their interest.

We also expect our friends to be intercessors.

FRIENDS SPEAK UP TO HELP OTHERS
WE FAIL TO SPEAK OUT ABOUT JESUS
JESUS SPEAKS TO DEFEND AND FORGIVE US

FRIENDS SPEAK UP TO HELP OTHERS

For example, John's gospel tells us...

Simon Peter followed Jesus and so did another disciple. Since that
disciple was known to the high priest, he entered with Jesus into the
court of the high priest, but Peter stood outside at the door. So the
other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke
to the servant girl who kept watch at the door, and brought Peter in.

In Gospel of John, unnamed disciple is usually John himself.

Who knows how he knew the High Priest
or at least the servant at the door.

Maybe he had delivered some of his fish to there once.

It is said that there are only a few steps of connection
that separate each of us from everyone else in the world.

Everyone knows somebody who knows somebody...
This one who also knows Peter and knows he wants in too,
so he intercedes, he speaks for him to the doorkeeper
and brings him in.

Peter has benefited from introductions before.

John tells us that two disciples of John the Baptist
were the first to follow Jesus. One may have been John.
The other, Andrew, Peter's brother, was the one
who went to get Peter and introduce him to Jesus.

This is how almost everyone gets into the church.
Someone they know invited them.

Who knows how many people we know,
or people who know people we know
are still standing outside still waiting for us to speak up,
even to speak to someone who may speak to someone.

But even after we are inside, we still need friends
who take the initiative to speak to us or for us.

We are not told what this unnamed friend did next.
Did he hang around or soon leave?

Was he awkward there too, like Peter?

Or did he just chat with other friends and blend in?

It could have been better for Peter if he had stayed at his side.
Maybe he could have whispered some good advice
to Peter about how to handle hard questions.

Maybe he could have spoken up for Peter,
especially when he was confronted by one
who was not just a friend but a relative
of the one whose ear he cut off.

Meanwhile, Peter himself is failing to speak up for a friend,
even when asked, failing to admit he even knows Jesus.
maybe because he himself feels so all alone.

This may also be a reason that...

WE FAIL TO SPEAK OUT ABOUT JESUS

¹⁹ The high priest then questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching. ²⁰ Jesus answered him, "I have spoken openly to the world. I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret. ²¹ Why do you ask me? Ask those who heard me what I said to them; they know what I said."

Jesus is being confronted by false witnesses
who may or may not have actually heard him.
Our world today also is full of people who think they know
something about Jesus but may have it all wrong.
They may be like Moslems who know about Jesus
from the Koran written by Mohammed,
one of whose wives came from a family
which belonged to a group of early Christian heretics.
What people know may be twisted by being
second or third hand, from someone whose
grandmother used to go to church,
from TV shows or songs that include something
about Jesus written by a Hollywood writer.
Which may be why many people claim every religion,
including Christianity is basically the same,
just different ways of saying be a good person.
But Jesus says those accusing him had opportunity
to know what he said first hand.
There are no hidden secrets to Christianity
as some mystery writers might imagine.
He suggests the best way to know what he says
both then and now, is to ask his disciples, his friends,
which would include us.
So how is that working for him?
Not so well right then, as his disciples deny knowing him.
What about today? We too may be leaving
the talking about Jesus to those who don't know him
because of fear or indifference
or because we don't think Jesus is right when he says,
"they know what I said," because we are not sure we do.
This is why it is such good news that in spite of this,
we have a friend like Jesus.

JESUS SPEAKS TO DEFEND AND FORGIVE US

³⁴ Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

An intercessor is a go-between, like those in Syrian peace talks who go back and forth between one group and another because those who are supposed to be negotiating won't even sit in same room with each other.

Our sins have separated us from God
because they cause us to turn our back on him.
But as Paul writes to Timothy, there is one mediator
between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.
Jesus became man, the word became flesh,
to speak to us as God's ambassador
to bring an end to hostilities caused by our sin.
As it was only by someone speaking for him
that Peter got into the house of the high priest,
it is only by Jesus personal invitation
that we can come into the household of God.
Jesus is our true friend who doesn't just get us into
situations where we are in over our head
but who stays with us, guiding us with his word
which the Holy Spirit put into the mouths
of those inspired to write the Bible.
The same Spirit speaks in our hearts,
helping us to know how to pray
when we don't know what to say to others
or to God either.
But most of all, Jesus himself constantly intercedes
for us at the right hand of God.
asking for the good things we don't know to ask,
personally endorsing our prayers prayed in his name,
which are answered only for his sake,
especially praying for us, "Father forgive them."
When we are on trial in a courtroom more just
than that of the High Priest
He does not hesitate to speak up for us.
He is our advocate, our defense attorney,
who defends us when we dare not speak
because we can only incriminate ourselves.
It helps to have friends in high places,
and we have the best of friends
in the highest place of all.

FRIENDS SPEAK UP TO HELP OTHERS

as Jesus friends, we need to speak to others about him.

WE FAIL TO SPEAK OUT ABOUT JESUS

and are intimidated & drowned out by false witnesses

but JESUS SPEAKS TO DEFEND AND FORGIVE US

His words bring us to God and all God's blessings to us.