

Friendship with God: 19th October 2025
Genesis 3: 1-12. Rev 3:14-22. John 14: 15-24

This is the second week in our series on Friendship with God and this week we are looking at the theme of Making God at Home.

First of all isn't it just remarkable that God wants to make his home with us, yet that is exactly what Jesus says in our Gospel reading. Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.

When someone says make yourself at home what do they mean? It's a way of saying feel comfortable, kick your shoes off, it's a way of saying I trust you. Because, of course a house and a home are very different things. A house is bricks and mortar, four walls and a roof. A home is so much more, it's shaped by love and memories, photos on the walls, shared meals, an expression of our personalities.

How do we treat our friends so that they feel at home when they come to see us. Give them a nice meal if they are just visiting and making sure they get the uncracked plates, clean sheets and towels if they are staying over. You don't want them to feel they are an imposition, rather that they are really welcome.

When we were baptised the Holy Spirit was given to us and lives in us. The real question is whether the Holy Spirit within us is living in a house or a home? Surely we want the Holy Spirit to feel as comfortable in the way that, hopefully, our friends feel when they come to see us.

So what are we doing to make the Holy Spirit feel at home? Are we living the way God wants us to live? Are we praying regularly, reading God's word regularly, chatting to God regularly, allowing God to transform us into the people he made us to be? When we do these things – and of course we will slip up from time to time however hard we try, not least because life just sometimes gets in the way – then we are making the Holy Spirit feel at home and enabling the Holy Spirit to move more freely in our hearts.

The difference between making a friend feel at home and making God feel at home, is that friends tend to leave after a few days, whereas God wants to be a permanent lodger, which is a very different kettle of fish. Are we ready to

have a permanent lodger in our home? The nearest most of us get to that is our spouse or partner.

In last week's Gospel reading Jesus tells his disciples that he no longer calls them servants but rather they are his friends. The thing about servants is that they are always living in someone else's home. Their obedience is based on their need for board and lodging and some sort of income.

Being obedient to Jesus as a friend is a different thing altogether. We obey him, or at least try to obey him as best we can, not out of fear of getting into trouble if we don't, but out of love. And the more we love Jesus the more we want to obey him because that's the way to a greater intimacy with him, a greater friendship. The Greek word John uses is one that describes a really close friendship, the sort of friendship reserved for the best man at your wedding.

Talking of close friendships, our Genesis reading shows a great example. Adam and Eve were really close friends with God, chatting away in the Garden of Eden. Religion didn't get in the way, rules didn't get in the way – until they broke the one rule. And that really destroyed the friendship between God and human beings until Jesus tore down the temple veil on the cross – with the one clear exception of Moses.

As Nick was saying last week, Moses is described in Exodus as God's friend and they would meet regularly in the Tent of Meeting. For the purposes of their relationship the Tent of Meeting was Moses' home into which God was invited and was where they chatted.

How often do we chat with God rather than just talk at God – either giving thanks and praise or offering up a long list of prayer requests. That's not really how a friendship works is it? A friendship involves two-way conversations, not a one-way monologue.

And it's clear from the prophets such as Hosea and Micah that God is more interested in a close and direct relationship with us than he is in sacrifices and church services dare I say it.

In the opening chapter of Isaiah, God says he has had enough of multiple sacrifices, burnt offerings, evil assemblies, incense, appointed feasts and festivals. He doesn't even want to listen to the Israelites' prayers.

Why? Because their hearts are in the wrong place, they're not interested in what God is interested in, in other words they're not interested in justice and mercy, in taking care of the widows and orphans. Stop doing wrong, he says, learn to do right.

God's gripe? That the words were meaningless without some sort of action to give them meaning. Their hearts were not a place where God could feel at home. Yet in the next verse God says do the right things their sins will be as white as snow.

It's important to God that we are his friends. In Exodus 34:14 God tells the Israelites not to worship other gods, gods such as money, success or popularity, because he is a jealous god. He wants us for himself, and doesn't want us chasing after things that are ephemeral and don't last.

In our Revelation reading God spells out his huge eagerness to be our friend. Here I am, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him and he with me.

It is amazing isn't it that not only does God want us to be friends with him, but that he is also really keen to be friends with us, especially as he knows all our faults and failings better than we do. As Rick Warren the recently-retired American megachurch pastor says, when it comes down to it, God created humankind for mutual friendship. So if we miss out on that, we are missing out on the very thing we were put on earth for.

So the question is how do we become friends with God? We can't earn his friendship because it's a gift in the first place. But we can cultivate it. How? By spending time with God in various different ways and getting to know God.

Just coming to church for an hour on a Sunday and forgetting about God the rest of the time doesn't create a friendship. We spend time and effort cultivating human friendships and we need to do the same with God so that he wants to make his home in our hearts.

So reading the Bible, praying, chatting to God on a regular basis, preferably daily, and above all allowing his friendship to shape the way we live our lives, to mirror God's preference for the have-nots in our actions as well as in our words, is the way to ensure that God actively wants to kick his shoes off as it

were, because he knows that we genuinely want him as a friend and to be his friend.

It is then that God will show up in ways we can't miss, that we will know the peace that passes all understanding, that we know that God will keep his promise in Jeremiah 31 that he will never leave us or forsake us – because after all we are friends and close friends never leave each other in the lurch.

I have mentioned a few ways to get to know God better so that we can become friends. It's not something we can do in our spare time, we have to invest time and effort just as we have to invest time and effort when we want to become friends with other people.

Friendship doesn't just happen. As Rick Warren says we become friends with God when we want to become friends with God. We are as close to God, or indeed as distant from God, as we choose to be. Are we prepared to make the effort so that God feels so at home in our hearts that he is able, metaphorically speaking, to kick off his shoes and return our friendship?

