

John 15:15-16 (NIV)

15 I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. 16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.

The image of a servant is not such a bad image in our society today. Servants are generally well treated, compensated for their services, and even entrusted with great responsibility. Change the word to slave and a whole different connotation comes to light. Slavery does bring up a bad image. Slaves in this country were not always well treated, they were not paid for their labor, and they were not seen as equals with those they were serving.

The word that Jesus uses here in John 15 can be translated as either servant or slave. And when you use the word slave, I believe this portion of God's Word has a greater impact on us. We were slaves. We were slaves to sin. Every bad connotation that slavery carries with it applied to us! We were hopeless and helpless and unloved and doomed to eternal destruction. But then, Jesus called us out of our slavery.

Just the fact that Jesus would call us is amazing enough! But notice what he says, "I no longer call you slaves...Instead, I have called you friends...Friends! A friend is someone who you share things with as an equal. A friend is someone you trust with responsibility. A friend is someone you can count on! That's how Jesus views us! He calls us friends and has given everything in his Word and Sacraments. He has called us to friendship, a unity of heart, mind, and will. He's called us out of slavery and made us righteous. He's given us the appointment to go and bear fruit and to serve him not out of obligation, but rather out of thanksgiving.

The relationship that we have with Jesus is as close as the relationship he has with his Father. That's why we can ask the Father for anything in Jesus' name and according to his will and know that God will answer our prayer. We are his children because of Jesus. We are not slaves, but friends! We are willing servants who want nothing more than to carry out God's will and to serve him and everyone because of his gracious love for us! What a friend we have in Jesus!