

## Friendship: Jesus' Friends

*Props: fishing net for Peter; picture of gold coins for Matthew; picture of twins for Thomas; fishing net for James & John to hold together.*

Our Value for this half term is *Friendship*.

Today we're going to be thinking about the people Jesus chose to be his best friends.

Let's think about that. Close your eyes, just for a minute, while we think.

Can you picture the stars twinkling in the night sky? So many of them, so many miles away.

Now picture the ocean waves, crashing on the shore and sparkling in the sunlight.

Picture the highest mountain you've ever seen, with snow glistening on the very top of it.

Picture an elephant ... a peacock ... a whale.

You can open your eyes now. And I'd like to ask you a question. Don't put up your hands. It's just for you to think about.

If you were the God of all creation - the God who made all of those things - the stars and the seas and the mountains and all of life itself - and you came to earth - and you could choose from

*anyone* in the whole world to be your best friends, then who would you pick?

Don't answer yet. I need some volunteers to help us to think about our answer. Can I have 5 people to help me?

[*Give out the props.*]

Here are 5 of the 12 people Jesus chose to be his closest friends. I'm going to tell you a bit about them, and then ask you to vote on whether *you* would have chosen them to be your friends.

This is PETER. Peter was a fisherman. He promised that he'd always be there for Jesus. But when Jesus got into trouble, Peter kept on telling people that he'd never even met Jesus, and they certainly weren't friends.

Put your hand up if you'd like Peter to be your friend.

This is MATTHEW. Matthew was a tax collector. All he cared about was making money and getting rich, and he didn't care who he cheated on the way.

Put your hand up if you'd like Matthew to be your friend.

This is THOMAS. Thomas was a twin. He wasn't really sure that Jesus was who he was claiming to be, and he got pretty cross with the others when they tried to convince him.

Put your hand up if you'd like Thomas to be your friend.

This is JAMES and this is JOHN. They were brothers, and like Peter they were fishermen. They knew that Jesus was who he said he was, and they wanted to be as important as him. They went to

him secretly and asked if he'd make them more important than all the other friends. Oh yes, and when he needed them to pray for him, they fell asleep instead.

Put your hand up if you'd like James and John to be your friends.

Yet these *are* some of the people Jesus chose to be his best friends.

At their last meal together before he died, he took some bread and broke it into pieces so that they could all share it.

And he said to them:

Whenever you break bread and share it together, remember this. Remember that I died for you. I know all about the mistakes you make. Every person in the whole world gets things wrong, again and again. But I'm going to die on the cross so that nobody has to be punished for all those mistakes. Because God loves you, and he wants you to be his friends.

And then Jesus took a cup of wine and passed it around for everyone to share.

And he said to them:

Whenever you share wine together, remember that there's a new deal now, between you and God - because my death is not going to be the end of the story. I'm going to come back to life again. And your mistakes aren't the end of the story, either. Whenever you mess up, all you need to do is say sorry to God and mean it, and you can start again. You can always be friends with him, because of what I'm going to do for you.

You see, when Jesus looked at his friends, he didn't just see their mistakes. He saw all that God had made them to be - all that they would be, if only they could break free from their mistakes.

This is PETER. He said sorry to Jesus for letting him down. He told thousands of people the good news about Jesus, he was brave enough to change his mind when he realised he'd got some things wrong, and he helped to get people together to make the very first church.

Put your hand up if you'd like Peter to be your friend.

This is MATTHEW. He gave up all his money and power, and left behind everything in his old life to follow Jesus. He wanted everyone to know the good news about Jesus, so he wrote a book about him, and you can still find it in the Bible today.

Put your hand up if you'd like Matthew to be your friend.

This is THOMAS. When he saw that Jesus really was alive again, his faith became so strong that he travelled all over the world telling people the good news. He got as far as South India, and started the Christian church there. He'd learnt that it's ok to ask questions - and we can always trust Jesus for the answers.

Put your hand up if you'd like Thomas to be your friend.

This is JAMES and this is JOHN. They're brothers. James loved Jesus so much that he was even willing to die rather than stop telling people all about him. And John, like Matthew, wrote a book about Jesus that we can still read in the Bible today.

Put your hand up if you'd like James and John to be your friends.

We all make mistakes. God knows that we think and say and do things that we shouldn't. But he sent Jesus to die on the cross so that when we say sorry we can have a fresh start. Just as Jesus rose from the dead to new life, so we can start a new life with God every day - because when we say sorry he doesn't see our mistakes any more. He sees all the wonderful things that he's made us to think and say and do, and he helps us to be the wonderful people he made us to be.

I have one more question for you:

What do you think that Jesus taught us about how we should treat our friends, if they make mistakes?

Does anyone have any questions for me before we pray?

Let us pray.

Father God,

we thank you for sending Jesus to die for us.

Please help us to remember to say sorry when we get things wrong,

to trust you to help us to start again,

and to help us to forgive other people when they make mistakes.

We ask in Jesus' name.

Amen.