

Can you imagine anyone going through life without any friends? Such a man is likely to have a very short life. This is no joke. It's true. "Frodo wouldn't have got far without Sam." This applies not only to the Quest, but also to life itself. We don't "get anywhere" in life without people who love and care for us. This is the same as saying that we can't live without friendship.

But what has friendship to do with Tolkien's trilogy, *The Lord of the Rings*? Much – perhaps everything! Get ready to see what an amazing and perhaps little-tapped power we have in friendship!

The importance of this topic to Tolkien is evident from the title of the first volume: *The Fellowship of the Ring*. "Fellowship" is another word for friendship.

It is a greater power than wisdom. Gandalf knows this, and that is why he picks Merry and Pippin at the Council of Elrond. "It is true that if these Hobbits understood the danger they would not dare to go. But . . . I think, Elrond, that in this matter it would be well to trust rather to their friendship than to great wisdom" (LOTR, p.269).

That is why Gandalf is so happy to hear that Sam went with Frodo into Mordor after the Fellowship broke up at Amon Hen: a mini-fellowship, at least, might work, but a lone individual would not.¹

The friendship of Samwise and Frodo reaches its summit on Mount Doom *after the Ring is undone* "at the end of all things." The "mini-fellowship" of Sam and Frodo has achieved the Quest and now *both* Sam and Frodo finally and completely forgive Gollum. For Sam has made it possible for Frodo to arrive at the Crack of Doom, but it was at Frodo's bidding that Samwise is finally able to completely forgive Gollum. Thus, "the pity of Bilbo [does] rule the fate of many," as Gandalf had foretold!

"Your poor hand!" he said. "And I have nothing to bind it with, or comfort it. I would have spared him a whole hand of mine rather. But he's gone now beyond recall, gone forever."

"Yes," said Frodo. "But do you remember Gandalf's words: *Even Gollum may have something yet to do?* But for him, Sam, I could not have destroyed the Ring. The Quest would have been in vain, even at the bitter end. So let us forgive him! For the Quest is achieved, and now all is over. I am glad you are here with me. Here at the end of all things, Sam."²

¹ Peter J. Kreeft, *The Philosophy of Tolkien* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005) 209.

² J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Return of the King* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1994) 241.