

Married to Jesus 4-19-01

This year the most profound thing I see that the Lord has been showing us is that we are engaged to Jesus Christ. We have seen how much of what Christ said had the wording that would be used during an engagement. The father and prospective groom come to the Father or guardian of the bride. In our case, since we were servants of sin, the Father God went with Jesus (the prospective groom) to our master Satan and asked the bride price for us. (Genesis 34:12; Exodus 22:16-17) The price agreed upon represented to the Father and groom what a great value He places on us and that price was the blood of the Son.

Once agreed upon the Son brought us the cup of covenant that represented His life blood. Jesus used this picture at the Last Supper. He offered us His life if we would in turn give Him ours. That is marriage – not a 50-50 arrangement but 100 – 100. He gives himself entirely for us and expects the same in return. The Apostle Paul reminds us of this fact that the wife belongs to the husband and the husband belongs to the wife. Once we have promised ourselves to each other the Father and groom go to prepare a place for her in the Father's house. When the Father determines it is completed, the friends of the groom assemble to make a journey to the bride's home. Meanwhile the bride has been patiently waiting. It could have taken months or even years. The story of Samson illustrates the expectation the groom has that the bride will wait as long as is necessary. Jesus used this picture in the parable of the wise and foolish virgins. We are to be waiting for the day of His return – our longing towards Him and none other.

Once the groom and friends arrive the marriage is consummated and there is a great feast lasting 7 days. The marriage feast of the Lamb will take place some day in the future after He comes to receive us to Himself. The more we look at this picture the more it seems to be the dominant theme of the New Testament. We should not be surprised, for it is a major theme in the Old Testament.

Remember God made man in his own image. Genesis 2:18 (NIV)¹⁸ The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." If we are made in the image of God what does that say about God? Certainly God needs no helper, nevertheless it is good for Him to have a suitable helper. That is why He is creating His pure and spotless bride through the redemptive work of His Son.

Just as the side of Adam was pierced to create Eve so the side of Christ was pierced to create His bride. Just as the bride was to leave her Mother and Father and be one with her husband, so we are to leave the world to which we belonged and be united with Christ.

Jeremiah 2:2 (NIV)² "Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem: "'I remember the devotion of your youth, how as a bride you loved me and followed me through the desert, through a land not sown.'"

It is the entire theme of the Song of Songs and Hosea.

In our Type and Shadow study we saw how Jacob was a type of Christ and Leah a type of Israel and Rachael a type of the church. I think the story of David and Abigail is also a type of Jesus and His bride. We were once married to Nabal, a surely and mean husband. She saw judgement was coming and sought peace with David. Her husband was stricken and now she belonged to David – a shadow of Christ to come.

Isaiah 54:5-8 (NIV)⁵ For your Maker is your husband-- the LORD Almighty is his name-- the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; he is called the God of all the earth.⁶ The LORD will call you back as if you were a wife deserted and distressed in spirit-- a wife who married young, only to be rejected," says your God. ⁷ "For a brief moment I abandoned you, but with deep compassion I will bring you back.⁸ In a surge of anger I hid my face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness I will have compassion on you," says the LORD your Redeemer.

Isaiah 62:5b ...as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you.

Jeremiah 3:14 (NIV)¹⁴ "Return, faithless people," declares the LORD, "for I am your husband.

Hosea 2:19,20 (NIV)I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion.²⁰ I will betroth you in faithfulness, and you will acknowledge the LORD.

So we see marriage has always been a picture for us to understand the desire of the Son toward us. And the Apostle Paul tells us in Ephesians 5 that marriage is picture of Christ and the Church. Most of us have heard this or even considered it, but this morning I'd like us to exam what that means to our daily lives and attitudes.

That Ephesians 5 passage tells us of the basic need of man and woman. The woman needs love and so Paul writes that the husbands should love their wives **as** Christ loved the church and gave himself for her. Ephesians 5:25-27 (NIV)²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her²⁶ to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word,²⁷ and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

A godly husband should desire to see his wife radiant, beautiful, without stain – in other words totally surrendered to Jesus Christ. Anything we do to help them in that regard will please our heavenly husband. Christ as our heavenly husband is our example as to how to treat our wives. He provides, demonstrates love, speaks words of love, encourages and guides us faithfully. His heart is set on us.

But then what is our part as the wife- in a word, submission. Ephesians 5:22-24 (NIV)²² Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord.²³ For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.²⁴ Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

Also to bring Him glory. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (RSV)¹⁹ "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own;²⁰ you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body." Bought with a price, the bride price, so we are to glorify God – bring glory to the one we are joined to.

Do you see how clearly a godly marriage is a picture of our relationship with Christ? Or we could say a right relationship with Christ is the model for the perfect marriage. Submission is how we become the faithful wife we are purchased to be. Submission comes from realizing how great the love is that has been lavished upon us and yielding to that love. Submission glorifies God.

I want to be a suitable helper, as Eve was created to be for Adam. Don't you? How can I advance His causes? What would He have me do to be an asset to His Kingdom today? My desire is just to please Him by being that suitable helper, and so I ask each day, "Lord, what would you have me do today? How can I be that suitable helper today? He may ask me to do something that costs me a great deal of time and energy, but the more it costs the more I rejoice that I can give of myself to Him for He gave entirely of Himself to me.

We are to be faithful. Considering the mean and surely master Nabal we once served, and now the great price paid for us – the blood of Christ, we should be continually astounded that Jesus could love us so. What a contrast to our former master who only abused us! And so daily in my life, my actions are constrained by that display of love. I only want to please Him – I want to be worthy of that love – and yet He alone has made me worthy. And so that love grips my heart and mind with desire to do whatever would please Him. I call Him Lord out of love and deep respect for what He has done, not out of obligation, but because His love has birthed love in my heart. We love Him because He first loved us. And that is what He expects, for us to love Him with ALL our heart, soul, mind and strength.

Faithful – I often think how the one thing He will commend us on when we see Him face to face is faithfulness. That word is used in regards to consistency to do what we are asked, but it is also a relational word. A wife being faithful to her husband means she has not desired another. I know Jesus is faithful to us – His bride, but that means we must keep all our desire toward Him. In the Law when a betrothed woman was unfaithful she was to be stoned. That is how serious God saw unfaithfulness in a marriage covenant relationship. Yet in Hosea we see the great love of God that will take us back even when we have been unfaithful. Such love should cause us to desire to be faithful to Him as He is to us.

Several times the New Testament refers to greed as idolatry. To so intensely desire things other than the Lord can be unfaithfulness. When we think that in them we will somehow find satisfaction, we are in effect saying the love of Christ is not enough, somewhere there is something more satisfying. That is spiritual adultery - unfaithfulness. All sin presents itself this way to us – the fruit in the garden is the first example and the type of all sin. There claims to be satisfaction here outside of God. All sin is this same deception and spiritual adultery. We tend to think in a way that would

rate some sins as more serious than others – but they are all a snubbing of the love of God and our marriage agreement. We are all in the same boat here – guilty – and yet like Hosea with Gomer– God woos us back to himself. We realize what we thought was of value was just husks – emptiness. The promise it held out to us was empty and unfulfilling. It was God’s love that told us to stay away from it.

So why do we readily turn from such a great love? How can we be unfaithful when He is so faithful? Why are we willing to be deceived? I think part of the answer is that the love of Christ is so great that we lose ourselves in Him. In Song of Songs the friends could not recognize the young bride as she leaned against her lover. They could only tell who He was. Sin says you can be fulfilled in something and not have to sacrifice, or lose yourself. My old nature loves that idea. The new man abhors it as a lie! If I will be faithful to Jesus who loves me so, it means I will walk in the Spirit, letting His life, in me, empower me. That is the only way I can be faithful.

As our husband, we know He is our Provider. He will supply all my needs in Himself. What a place of confident assurance! Imagine the wife whose husband is very wealthy and loves her a great deal. Our situation is infinitely better. If He was anything less than all sufficient I should worry about his ability to provide. Even the thought that He cannot provide is sin! And so the Scriptures tell us to not worry about tomorrow, about our daily bread, physical or spiritual. What calm assurance we, the bride, should have!

This relationship also means that if I am realizing how great His love is I will be waiting expectantly for his coming to consummate the marriage and bring me to His Father’s house. My expectation reflects my desire toward Him. You see it so clearly in the early Church. In Jesus parable in Matthew 25, the wise virgins kept their lamp wicks trimmed and extra oil on hand in the event that He showed up at night. If you think about when a bridegroom would come you would expect daytime hours. After all a feast would soon begin. But just in case it is at night, they have made preparations. Is that how expectant you are? Is everything in your life in order so that if He was to appear this moment you would be totally ready? That is the way of the wise and expectant virgin.

David wrote in the Psalms, Psalms 27:4 (KJV)⁴ One *thing* have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple.
Psalms 73:25 (KJV)²⁵ Whom have I in heaven *but thee?* and *there is* none upon earth *that* I desire beside thee.

That is a marriage relationship. That is a faithful heart. Our response to his great love for us should be nothing less than that. In the Song of Songs there are friends that admire the king and then there is the one who loves the king, whose every desire is toward the king. Which are you? We are engaged – let us live as faithful expectant virgins prepared for his return, so excited about the One who loves us that all our desire is toward Him! Are your eyes on the Eastern sky?