

The Transformation Series: Who Are You Married To??

Selected Text, Preached at Harambee Church by Pastor Mike Gunn on October 14th, 2007

"The same thing that will make you laugh, will make you cry!"

Lyfe Jennings

"If I am married to Christ, the core of my present life is not personal happiness, but spiritual purity."

Tripp/Lane (59)

Intro

Last week we looked at two truths we need to understand before we move on. The first one is that transformation doesn't come from changing your circumstances and behaviors; it comes from a change of the heart. To this Tripp writes, *"The bible confronts us with the hard to accept reality; the change most needed in our lives isn't change in our situations and relationships, but in us. The thing God is most intent on rescuing us from is ourselves."* Secondly, that God is using your circumstances and relationships to work His transformation in your life (**Philippians 1:5**) *"No matter what you face today, you can be encouraged that God's good work is continuing in your life."* We need to see our lives as being transformed by God through our circumstances so that we could share eternal life with Him! It is this eternal perspective that helps us understand our lives in the midst of chaos.

Today we want to explore the benefits from being "Married" to Christ. God doesn't just call us to do something, or even to a plan. He calls us to Himself! The imagery of God as our groom is used throughout the bible for God's relationship to His people. This imagery is clearly seen in Ephesians 5:22ff and Revelation 19:7-10. Jesus is our groom; and we (The Church) are His bride¹ that has been made holy by His righteousness. I think that this metaphor is often used by God to reflect the love He has for His people, and the intimate relationship He desires with His church. This is the relationship He had with Adam and Eve in the garden.

5 Gospel perspectives

1. Our sin is worse than we can imagine, but God's grace is greater than our sin!
2. God is concerned about transformation at the heart level, not the behavior level.
3. We should benefit from our relationship with Christ here and now, and in eternity.
4. God calls us to grow and change.
5. Our Christian life is a lifestyle of Repentance and Faith

From the Head...

What is the goal of our faith? Well we know that the goal of Paul's instruction is love (**1 Timothy 1:5**), which should give us a clue to God's goal for us. Also we see that our goal is the *"Prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus"* (**Philippians 3:14**). Things like bible study, prayer, and mission are needed in our process, but they are not the goal. A loving relationship with God is. All of the other things do not change us, our relationship with God does. They may be the "Means" but they can never be made as the "End" in our faith. Today we will look at 3 passages that help us to understand the practical importance of our relationship to Christ.

Personal growth and change takes place in our lives at the heart level when it rests on our relationship with Christ. Change takes place when I embrace the person and work of Christ in the context of my struggles

We Are Called to a Pure Devotion to Christ (2 Corinthians 11:1-13)

Here we have a perfect metaphor for what God desires to have with us. He desires nothing more than a spouse desires for himself or herself. God demands our passion for Him. His jealousy is often seen as a flaw in His own character. Does God have needs? Does He need our love to be whole? Open theists and other have alluded to the fact that God is in partnership with us, and actually needs us to be whole. This is simply not true. God seeks our praise because He, and He alone is praiseworthy! If we are people that are created to worship, we will be measured and shaped by what we worship. God is simply calling us to His banqueting table to feast on Him, the "Bread of Life," and the only sustenance that will ultimately please us and give our lives meaning. It is *"Good to praise the Lord"* (**Psalms 54:6; 106:1; 147:1**). Every other thing that we choose to place our affections on will cause us tears. Paul's words are the words of a loving Father, reminding us of God's "Godly jealousy," which is so different than a jealousy fueled by need, pride and self-centeredness. It is important to understand that the difference of this devotion and that of other faiths (Especially Bhakti Hinduism; Hare Krishna, etc.), is that it does not entail an escape from the world, but an embracing of it, in love with someone else. It is

¹ Bride here is singular not plural (Brides). The reason for this is that God's church is unified as one in Christ. It also emphasizes that we are many yet one. God loves us personally and corporately!

then that we can be fueled for mission, and serve out of abundance and not out of need. Our devotion to Christ, will allow us to enjoy the fruit of our labor, and the blessings that we have in this world without being attached to it! When we are free from our desire to get the world's goods (Love, significance, money, acceptance), then we can serve it out of love for our spouse (Christ) and not out of need. **Two things** need to be understood about this relationship. **First**, there is an already/not yet reality to this relationship. We are currently in the "Betrothal" period, which to the Jewish mind would have been as the same thing as being married, while we await our groom, and the "Wedding feast of the Lamb" (**Revelations 19:7-10**). We are currently in the preparation for what is to come. God is shaping us into the spouse He wants us to be (See **Matthew 25:1-13**). Secondly, we cannot forget that Christ is the Prize, not the means to another end. That means that religious devotion, sacrifice, giving, doctrinal knowledge (Though important) without loving Christ as our central focus produces nothing! So what benefits are ours in Christ?

Who Are We Marrying? (Colossians 1:15-24)

If we are going to love Christ, it is important that we know who we are loving. This passage gives a glimpse into who Jesus is.

1. He is God
2. He is preeminent
3. He is the creator of "All things"
4. He is the center of the universe
5. He is eternal
6. He sustains all things
7. He is the head of His bride (The Church)
8. He is the first-born from the dead
9. He is supreme
10. He is the fullness of God
11. He reconciles all things

What Is Ours As A Result of Our Marriage to Christ? (Colossians 1:21-23; 2:1-15)

In every marriage the couple brings both their strengths and weaknesses to the table. Our marriage is akin to the pauper marrying the richest person in the world. We bring nothing in to the relationship, and we are blessed by it.

What We Bring to Christ

1. Sin and alienation (**Colossians 1:21-23**)
2. Foolishness and blindness (**Colossians 2:1-5**)
3. Enslavement and weakness (**Colossians 2:9-15**)

What Christ Brings to Us

1. Power to Live (**Colossians 1:5**)
2. Justification (**Colossians 1:22**)
3. Wisdom and Knowledge (**Colossians 2:3**)

Now this can be quite intimidating. We have a spouse who is stronger, smarter, way more beautiful, and everyone knows it. We can either wallow in our ugliness, with all of the guilt and shame that will accompany that, or we can, as Paul calls us to do, walk daily with Christ so that He can change us (**Colossians 2:6-7**). We can carry the burden of guilt and shame and spend our lives blaming others, or we can accept the forgiveness of our Lord, and enjoy the benefits of freedom and grace for the rest of our lives. This change is not the result of anything other than a real relationship with Jesus Christ, our God and King!

...to the Heart

What other lovers are you lusting after? How have these other lovers given you meaning, significance and purpose in your life? How have they enslaved you? What perceived assets do you think you have brought to your marriage to Christ? **2 Peter 3:9** reminds us that many of us live defeated Christian lives because we have forgotten who we are in Christ. How does our union in Christ shape the way we live in the midst of our jobs, families, suffering and successes?

Books for further study: Most of this material is taken from "How People Change" and "Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands" by Paul Tripp and Tim Lane

Next Weeks Verses: Ephesians 4:4-6; 3:14-21; Titus 2:11-14; 1 Corinthians 12:12

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