



Royal Oak
VICTORY CHURCH

July 23, 2017 ~ Kelly Archuleta Love Does Part 3

Good morning everyone.

As we continue our summer series called Love Does, my thanks to you Cooper for reading us the chapter entitled Wedding Cake.

Now, in the story we just heard Mr. Bob Goff mentions a now famous cake boy, who comes through for Mr. Goff and his soon to be wife (Sweet Marie) with a bargain priced 4-story wedding cake. And to recap, the cake boy doesn't navigate the parking lot very well, and ends up dumping the cake all over the asphalt.

Now this part of the story all by itself would be an amazing wedding story but it gets even more interesting at least from my perspective as instead of dialling up the local Dairy Queen and sending someone to go grab a few ice cream cakes in a pinch Bob and the famous cake boy pick up the cake, right off of the ground, the young guy runs back to the bakery to get lots and lots more icing and they just lather that cake right up and proceed to serve it to all of their closest friends and family!

Can you imagine the conversations in the parking lot after that wedding? "Dude, did you have any rocks in your wedding cake?" "Yeah, I pulled three rocks out of my cake. How many did you have?"

Now, aside from the hilarious conversations in the parking lot after the wedding there is a principle in this story for us to consider.

And as we do that, I am going to assume that at least some of you folks are like me in that you have at least one or two material possessions that you really care about and would NOT want to see get ruined, stained, broken, wrecked, or anything like that.

For you it might be a nice new vehicle that you don't want your kids to make a mess in, or that you don't want to get scratched. It could be some fine china that

has been handed down from previous generations in your family. It could be some other family heirloom like a painting, or some family photos, or some really valuable jewellery. It could be a new jacket or a dress. It could even be your lawn and landscaping like Pastor's Sheldon's sermon from a couple weeks ago (don't mess with his lawn).

Right, it could be any number of things depending on what you value.

Well for me, one of those special possessions is a shoe.

And I have taken a picture of some of my favourite shoes.

And I do realize that this is going to go super nerdy right now, but all of these particular shoes have a special name and I would like to introduce them to you just for fun.

Going from left to right you have the first shoe which is the original Human Race shoe, the 2nd shoe is the Yeezy Version 2 Zebra, then you have the very special Red October, the gray colored shoe is Jordan Pinnacle 11, the camouflage one is called the Adidas Bape NMD, and the last one is a custom gold Air Jordan 4.

Now, I know you are probably thinking, "what is wrong with this guy" and in fact I don't blame you for thinking those thoughts (sometimes I wonder that myself.)

But all of this is to point out that these are all shoes that I rarely ever wear because I don't want them to get wrecked, dirty, or stained, or wet, or stepped on, etc.

Now in contrast to those shoes of mine, this old sneaker right here, this is the shoe that gets stuff done around our house. I have painted almost my entire house (inside and out) in this shoe. I have re-landscaped the whole back yard in this shoe, I mow the lawn in this shoe, I have stained our fence in this shoe, I go jogging in this shoe. *And secretly, I am pretty sure, that this is my wife's favourite pair of my shoes, because they actually do some work.*

And you know what, it is broken down, it is dirty, it is rather old, and yet it gets used all the time in my life.

Now there is a line in our book chapter that has really resonated with me, which makes a similar point and it is this:

Broken things, like broken people get used more.

And the good news of the gospel is also along these lines. There is an invitation, for all who believe that Jesus is who He said He is, to participate in the amazing work of God just as we are, imperfect, broken, incomplete, a work in progress.

Now before we jump into God's invitations for us, there is a warning for all of us that is pretty clear throughout the pages of the Bible and that is this.

God opposes the proud - James 4:6, 1 Pet. 5:5, Prov. 3:34

You can look through the pages of the Bible at any number of prideful people in it. Satan, Pharaoh, Ahab and Jezebel and not one of them has a desirable destination at the end of their lives.

1 Peter 5 puts it this way: *All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.*"

God actively opposes the proud. Let that sink in a little bit.

Now the Biblical opposite of pride is humility and if we use the image of God trying to create a beautiful garden of humility inside each of us then pride is like a weed, a thistle, a thorn in that garden.

A humble and contrite heart can be a vessel of peace, and grace, and goodness. It can be a vessel of God's sacrificial-agape love, while a prideful and arrogant heart is intent on disrupting those environments, it disrupts those characteristics. Pride steals the water in the garden, it steals the sunlight, and it tries to steal the all the space it can in whatever garden it grows.

And a prideful, ambitious, and arrogant heart will only look to honor and glorify itself, not others, not the community.

A prideful heart does not look to honor the church, it does not look to honor the family, and it certainly does not look to honor God. This type of proud life, the characteristics of it, the behaviours of it, and its motives are in contrast to who God is and in contrast to who God designed us to be. And living in pride and vanity will place us in a very scary and dangerous place with God... In opposition to him.

And none of us want to be in that place.

Now one of the truly remarkable characteristics of God and of his good news is that even though we all make mistakes, and struggle throughout our entire lives (from the nursery to the retirement home.) He never says I am done with you, He never says I quit on you, He never stops loving us, and He never stops inviting us to join Him in bringing about his kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

And that is where we are going to spend the rest of our time this morning, looking at 3 specific invitations of God for us. These are truths and also examples and reminders to us, that God is willing and able to use us in ways that are beyond anything we could ever imagine...

1. **God uses those who feel inadequate** (Moses, Jeremiah, Peter)

Inadequacy is defined very simply as this: lacking the quantity or the quality that is required.

There are numerous examples in the Bible of people who felt this way at some point in their lives. Moses, Abraham, Gideon, King David, Jeremiah, the apostle Peter and I could go on.

And no doubt there are people in our community here today that have felt this way and even some who probably feel this way today as if you are lacking something or as if you are missing the mark.

There is an awesome conversation in Jeremiah chapter 1 where we get to read about how God views a young Jeremiah and his contribution to our faith history vs. how Jeremiah views himself.

Jeremiah 1:4-9: The word of the Lord came to me, saying, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."

And here is Jeremiah's response to these words from God:

"Alas, Sovereign Lord," I said, "I do not know how to speak; I am too young." But the Lord said to me, "Do not say, 'I am too young.' You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you," declares the Lord.

Isn't that amazing!

Jeremiah doesn't believe in himself, he doesn't think he can do what God is asking him to do, he feels both inadequate and unqualified. And yet God surrounds those doubts with the truth about who he is as chosen, as loved, as set apart, and as appointed to carry out God's specific purposes in his generation.

And then if that were not enough God encourages him and promises him that he would be with him and would rescue him along every step of the journey.

And friends let's not make the excuse or fail to trust and believe, that God doesn't feel the same way about us because we were also purposefully and tenderly created just like Jeremiah. God loves us inexplicably. And even though we may feel inadequate, too old, or too young, too broken, too hurt, too weak, or whatever other negativity we may be feeling. None of these inadequate thoughts or feelings has ever limited God.

In fact, I believe from the various examples in the Bible that God likes the challenge of taking the least of us and the least in all of us and using those things to bring about His glory and His honor! God can and does use those who feel inadequate.

Now the 2nd invitation this morning picks up right where our inadequacies are left behind.

2. God can use ANY of us...

Now similarly to what we read already in Jeremiah chapter 1, the Bible is sprinkled with examples and stories of how God used people when they didn't think they could be used, when they were afraid to do what was asked of them, when they thought, O Lord there must be someone out there who is more qualified than I am to do this (please can you go ask them! And if they are too busy then please go ask Pastor Dave. He will do anything you ask!)

Well you know what, making something out of nothing is God's specialty. Just think about the creation of the world.

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, and darkness was over the surface of the deep."

“The earth was formless and empty”

Now what do we have to remind us of his ability to create and provide:

- There are intergalactic solar systems that are expansive beyond my comprehension
- There is the blazing hot sun, which is more than 15 million degrees Celsius and the earth is so perfectly placed in our solar system so that we don't freeze to death or burn to a crisp.
- There are the vast and deep oceans of the world, which have more than 350 quintillion gallons of water in them. Now how many of us could even write down the number 350 quintillion on a piece of paper and get it right?
- There are mountain ranges, deserts, rivers, lakes, swamps, jungles and so much more. All of these came from our Creator who started with “formless and empty.”

God can, and God does use people who are inadequate, people just like us.

- God used Moses when he thought he couldn't speak well enough to perform miraculous signs and wonders and to save God's people in ways so amazing and mind blowing that Hollywood is still trying to make an accurate movie, which captures the essence of what happened in his day.
- God used Abraham when he was too old and to think that he became the father of our faith and the father of Issac at more than 100 years old.
- God used Jeremiah when he was too young to be a prophet to the nations.
- God used Joseph when he was a slave and in jail and gave him an amazing ability to interpret dreams, which ended up saving God's people from Egypt.
- God used David to slay a 9 foot tall warrior giant with a sling shot and one small smooth stone to save his people from the Philistines.
- And I just love this story of Jonah, in that God used Jonah to save the nation of Assyria (whom Jonah hated) and get this, Jonah even tried to go in the opposite direction of God's calling and God turned him around and used him anyway!
- And last but certainly not least, God used a donkey. He used Balaam's donkey to make sure that his people received a blessing rather than a curse.

Now come on somebody, if God can use a dirty old donkey he can certainly use you and me.

Which brings us to our last invitation, which is in line with the theme of Love Does; that Love Moves, that Love is in Action, and that Love keeps trying everyday and that is:

3. God uses those who say YES to him

God will not make us serve Him, he will not make us love other people, he will not make us be generous, or make us share our time, talent and resources, and he will not make us forgive others when they have wronged us.

But the all-powerful, all-wonderful, all creative God of the universe invites little old you and me to join him in bringing his kingdom to earth as it is in heaven.

His mercies are new every morning for each of us and great is his loving kindness and his faithfulness toward us. And his invitation for us is to say YES to him, to Follow Him and His leading. To pick up his cross, while laying down our own pride, our own agenda, and our possessions.

In closing, there is a scene in the book of John (chapter 21) where Jesus is meeting with his disciples. And in this meeting his goal is to restore and forgive the apostle Peter who had denied him 3 times only days earlier before his crucifixion and then subsequent resurrection from the dead.

And in restoring Peter, Jesus asks him the same question, 3 times, and that question was: Peter, Do you love me? ROVC, do you love me?

Peter emphatically had the same response every time Jesus asked him that question, Jesus you know that I love you!

Well then Peter, Jesus said “Feed my Sheep.” And then Jesus went on to paint this picture of how Peter’s life would look as one who would embrace all that LOVE DOES.

In John 21:18 Jesus says to him:

Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go.”

Now these were words that foreshadowed the rest of Peter's life and even his death. Peter's service to Jesus from that day forward was to everyday, stretch out his hands and allow himself to be led by the words of Jesus, to be led by the Holy Spirit no matter the circumstance.

Peter had denied that he even knew Jesus, and for that he was deeply ashamed and embarrassed. But, it did not keep him from trying to follow Jesus every day. It did not keep him from saying 'YES Jesus' even though he was terribly wrong. It did not keep him from saying, 'Jesus, you know that I love you'.

And in coming back to where we began this morning with this statement:

Broken things, like broken people get used a lot more.

And as we look to embrace the challenge of doing love; and not simply talking about it; it has been on my heart that we as a church community might all take the challenge of honouring God this week in our relationships. And the challenge I would invite each of you to join me in would be to make a concerted effort to repair or restore a strained or difficult relationship in your life. And if you think about it, it probably won't take you very long to think of someone or something that could use a touch of God's grace.

And whether that would involve us sending a simple text message of encouragement, or an apology, or perhaps a thank you note, as led by the Spirit to do so, it might involve a phone call, or a coffee date, or planned lunch together.

Whatever the avenue of communication is, it is my prayer that God would lead each of us by the hand, as we stretch them out to him to be an encouragement and blessing to someone specific this week.

Jesus is the hope of our world, and he invites us to be his hands and feet.

Let's close in prayer.