

Commitment: Bound with Christ & Each Other 3

Committing Ourselves to the Lord & His Ways

(Preached 8/27/23)

Please turn to *Mark 12:28-31*

SO FAR...

- The word for God's Love most often used in the NT is "Agapeo" which means to commit/bind oneself to another...like marriage.
- Boaz loved Ruth this way, and Jesus loves us this way.
- Jesus has bound Himself to us heart, soul, mind, and strength. He gave up everything to forgive our sins and marry us.
- He's going to share His entire Kingdom with us, seat us on a throne in heavenly places, and has built an amazing city called the NJ for us to all live together in someday.
- No one loves us more and is more dedicated to us than He is.
- God gave us other wonderful forms of love like words of affirmation, thoughtful gift giving, etc.
- Yet commitment love is the foundation upon which all the forms are built upon!
- Our relationship with both God and each other must be built upon this rock and if it is, it will stand.
- Christians fall away from relationship with Jesus when said relationship is built on the other forms of love.
- The good things He says about us in the Bible build us up. The gifts he gives are amazing.
- But sometimes these words aren't enough and the gifts ebb and flow...then what? People suddenly "stop believing" and end up deconstructing their faith because their foundation was built on sand.
- The same thing applies to marriage and other human relationships. When the other forms of love are lacking and one or more of them were the foundation, then everything crumbles.
- Our relationship with Jesus and the people in our lives need the foundation of commitment.
- Our hearts will open up to both Christ and the people in our lives when we meditate on their commitment to us as opposed to how they're neglecting us of the other forms of love.
- With every investment comes risk, and people who aren't invested aren't taking any.
- We read the story of Hosea and Gomer, Hosea representing God and Gomer repping Israel.
- Gomer left Hosea and ran off with other men and their "raisin cakes."
- Yet these other lovers had nothing invested in her. Egypt had nothing invested in Israel.

- An adulterer—whether its another god, desire, goal, or person—can entice us with kind words, affirming our talents & character, and give us thoughtful gifts...but they aren't invested in us. They have no risk.
- The people in our lives who are invested in us are taking a risk.

We've talked of our commitment to Christ, now let's talk of our commitment to Him.

Please remember: **we're playing the role of His wife.**

DAD & BARB MARRIED. In September 1977 my father and stepmother Barb were married, and I hated it. I was 9 years old and saw her as an interloper who was going to take my dad away from me. One day not too long after, I was with them when they got into a fight and I remember Barb shouting: *"when I married you I married YOU and not your kids!"*

SHE CARED. About an hour later, Barb sat me down and said *"I'm sorry about what I said earlier and I want you to know that I do care about you."*

SHE PROVED IT. FOR THE NEXT 44 YEARS BARB WAS THERE

FOR ME. As a kid she remembered and brought me to all my doctor, dentist, optometrist, orthodontist, Boy Scout, and other appointments. She cooked my meals, did my laundry, bandaged up wounds, and a lot more. In the last month of her life when she was very weak and sick, she asked me to bring her firewood and tried getting off the couch to help me! I insisted she stay where she was.

Listen to me closely, because I'm comparing my stepmother to us: the Church. **I'm comparing her marriage to Dad with ours to Jesus.**

Barb was her own person before her and dad married. She had a college degree, clerked for a lawyer full time, and had her own place. When her and dad got married, everything changed for her. Her old life was completely crucified, died, and was buried.

She left her job, her home, and any goals she might have made or had, and also gave up her last name when her and Dad got married. (Did you know the Book of Revelation states we get a new name at the 2nd coming? Christ writes His own Name on us, AND we get another that's private between Him and us.)

On the day Dad & Barb were bound together as one flesh, husband and wife, she gave up everything...but gained a lot more.

- She was living in a trailer on Victory Highway when she was single, and then moved up to dad's home at GH Lake when she was married.
- She left her clerking job and became Dad's full time business partner.
- She had to submit to his authority, but he shared everything with her—his money, property, possessions...and made her the heir of everything he owned.
- She was always just as involved as he was.
- She would work full time in the business, but still took care of her home and her step kids.

This transition was not easy for her, at all. It's no small thing to have your own place & job, calling your own shots, and suddenly be thrust into something that was created ahead of your existence. It was hard for her to suddenly be married to someone who expected to be obeyed and believe me: that was dad!

This transition didn't just take place in the first year or 5 years of their marriage, **but went on for her entire life up until the day dad died.**

And so it is with us and Christ.

JESUS EXISTED AND HAD EVERYTHING PLANNED OUT before we were ever born, much less received Him as our Lord, Savior, and Husband.

By the time you and I came along...

- His Kingdom was already in place in Heaven and He'd already gone to the Cross, rose from the dead, and ascended to His Father.
- The plan for when He's coming back and bringing His Kingdom with Him was already there before we ever knew Who He was.
- His Church was already created, including His plan for the various roles of the people in it.

So when we finally accepted His marriage proposal, **we were thrust into something far bigger than us** and the transition isn't easy, and lasts our entire lives.

First we gave up everything. Our old lives, our names, whatever we believed before, how we lived before, our goals, hopes, dreams, and desires...all of that was crucified with Christ and died. We were born again in His likeness and now married to Him.

Second, He's in charge and we must submit to His authority.

Jesus is an Alpha Male: He expects to be obeyed.

- He's moved us into His house, we've taken on His Name, and now He expects us to work the Family business.
- He has "kids" who existed before we came along and He expects us to help take care of them.
- He has other family—brothers and sisters—and He expects us to get along with them.
- He has a plan and He expects us to go with it.
- He expects our loyalty and fidelity to be to Him first, then our Christians brothers and sisters second.

As a matter of fact, He said these two things were the two greatest commandments:

[Mar 12:28-31 ESV] 28 And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, "Which commandment is the most important of all?" 29 Jesus answered, "The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 30 And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' 31 The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

JEALOUS. A common thing is that, when someone gets married, blood family can feel a little jealous. They're used to having the newly married person all to themselves. They feel that the new spouse has taken away their family member and now she spends all her time with HIM (her husband). Now she's different, she's away more, thinks different, lives different, and acts different. They may even roll their eyes at how devoted she is to Him and they may not approve of the new husband or the marriage.

When they or old friends try to get her to do the same things they all used to, say all the same things, and live that lifestyle, **she doesn't want to...she has a completely different life now**. If they all used to go out drinking and she doesn't want to anymore, now she's a "goody two-shoes." If they used to talk a certain way and she doesn't want to talk that way, she might be called "holier than thou." Sometimes it causes separation and even persecution.

When she attempts to talk about her new husband and all the things she's doing with him and learning, some might accuse her of trying to **"shove it down their throats."** Others may have a far more hostile reaction, especially if she suggests that their own way of life could be different too which challenges status quo. Or when she says her husband is willing to help them too, the same might be the result.

The people in her old life lost the person they knew. They saw her run off with her new husband and here's what really bugs them: **she committed herself to Him.**

SHE BOUND HERSELF TO HIM IN EVERY WAY POSSIBLE WHICH SEVERED HER FROM HER OLD LIFE.

The house at GH Lake is remote because that's the way Dad always liked it. When Barb moved there, it was a lot harder for her family to just stop in and see her.

Dad was quite demanding! He turned over ALL the paperwork and checkbook to her for both Christmas Trees and real estate and I can tell you right now, that's a full-time job. What's more is that during the busier seasons she was also expected to come work in the field and during all seasons she was fully responsible for the upkeep of the home and kids! Therefore when old friends and family wanted to do this or that, Barb didn't have the time or energy because she was completely devoted to the "kingdom" that she was now a joint-heir of. She was committed to Dad and his vision of improvement and expansion.

Going back to the 2 greatest commandments: just as Jesus has bound Himself to us, **we are to bind ourselves completely to Him:** heart, mind, soul and with all our strength. Even though I used the word "bind", it's the word Jesus used: "love."

- Our love for Christ goes beyond worshipping Him and giving Him thanks.
- Our love for Jesus is more than reading His Word and believing it.
- Our love for our Savior is more than boldly proclaiming His name and going to church.

All the above things are good and part of the house that's built after we're Saved. First and foremost, we commit to Him just as He committed to us. We pick up our crosses and follow Him. We devote ourselves to Him including our time, words, goals, priorities, and labor.

- His plans become ours.
- His goals are now ours.
- His sayings are what comes from our mouths.
- We believe what He believes.
- And we work the family business with Him.
- We leave our old lives behind.

In the midst of all his problems, Job said:

[Job 5:8-9 ESV] 8 "As for me, I would seek God, and to God would I commit my cause, 9 who does great things and unsearchable, marvelous things without number:

Look at the revelations with *Psalm 37*:

[Psa 37:5-6 ESV] 5 Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him, and he will act. 6 He will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday.

Just as a good husband takes care of the wife who has bound herself to him, so will Jesus to us!

[Pro 16:3 ESV] 3 Commit your work to the LORD, and your plans will be established.

[Rom 12:1-2 ESV] 1 I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. 2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

The altar represents the place where the old dies, and the new is born.

Paul is telling the Roman church to present themselves as sacrifices on the altar of the Lord. To put aside the old life and be born again. Then verse 2 kicks in: we are transformed to look more like Christ.

After Dad passed away, Barb carried on. Not just with life, **but with carrying out the plan and mission he started over 4 decades before.**

Her priority was to enact the Trust/Will that both of them had created. To be a good steward of her inheritance and make sure things went where the Trust dictated.

SHE FELT ALONE AND SAID SHE MISSED DAD. Having been together 44 years in marriage it wasn't easy. But she did it. And then she went home to be with Jesus and her husband.

And so it is with us. Jesus ascended to Heaven nearly 2000 years ago, but He didn't leave us alone. He gave us His Spirit. And thus we must continue the work that He started. We must be good stewards of the inheritance Christ left us and carry out His will. We must occupy until He returns...or we're called home to our final rest.