

Betrothed of God

by Erlo Stegen

God wants to get engaged to us, and we must respond to His proposal with faithfulness and commitment.

Duration: 1:00:01

Scripture: Hosea 2:19, Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Betrothed"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher tells a story about a judge who is about to sentence a man to death. The judge asks the man if there is anything he can say to save himself from being hanged, but the man remains silent. The preacher then reflects on how people are quick to gather for hunting trips, parties, and dancing, but not for hearing the word of God. He encourages the audience to prioritize reading the Bible and learning from it. The preacher also highlights the love and interest that God has for humanity, despite our shortcomings, and emphasizes the importance of accepting Jesus Christ as our savior.

Transcript

Once again, Lord, we thank you for the opportunities you give us. You don't want us to die in darkness. The gospel helps us and teaches us and gives us counsel that you make something out of us.

So help us, Lord. Amen. We'll read from Hosea chapter 2. Verse 20, I will betroth you to me in righteousness and justice, in lovingkindness and mercy.

Verse 20, I will betroth you to me in faithfulness and you shall know the Lord. In Zulu, it says, I will betroth you that you will be mine and be my wife. In other words, I will get engaged to you so that you will be my wife, will become my wife.

In the time of the prophets, an engagement wasn't just a minor affair where you just say okay, well, we'll promise each other that we'll get married to each other one day. Now, you saw what happened here earlier on, the couple standing in front here, the young man handing over the ring, promising her his faithfulness and vice versa. This young man comes all the way from Joburg to get engaged to this Mapanga girl down here.

And so also God comes down from heaven, he chooses you from among many girls and he says I want to get engaged to you. I will betroth you to me, that you will be mine. You've got to, you can make a note of that.

I will be betrothed to you. I will get engaged to you. Now make a note of that and then ask yourself, have you got engaged to the Lord Jesus yet? That's no small thing.

That's no small thing. that God should take note of me, a mere man, just a human being, like a flower, here today, tomorrow it withers and dies. But here, God the Almighty, the creator of heaven and earth, he says to me, he says I want to get engaged to you, that you will be mine.

You will be mine. You are finally mine. from the father when he returned home.

Just imagine God, who is almighty, creator of heaven and earth, above everything else. He created the animals, the fishes, everything that breathes and lives. He is the creator of it all.

But just imagine that He, being as great as He is, that He should be interested in us, in me, who is absolutely nothing. Shouldn't that move us? Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ was born in a manger, who grew up, he healed the sick, he calmed the storm, and he died on the cross. On the third day he was raised, he ascended to the Father, sits at his right hand, and was given all power in heaven and on earth. He is interested in us, he wants to get engaged to us.

Anyone who refuses such an offer is the greatest fool there is. If God proposes to you, and you say no to him, what a fool you are. F-O-O-L.

Even if you're not an English speaking person, you should understand what a fool is. And that's what you are. If God comes to you in his greatness, almighty, creator of heaven and earth, he played and died for you, sitting at the right hand of the Father, saying, look, I want to get engaged to you.

And you say no. One wonders how people can be so bewitched that people can turn down such an offer. Remember, everyone on earth should be a Christian.

It's like a young girl who goes into the world and the first loose man that comes across her path, he smokes, he drinks, he lives a loose life, and she doesn't even really know who he is. But off she goes with him. One doesn't understand how someone can do a thing like that.

Many of you know about true love waits, and that true love does wait, but know the first girl that comes across your path, you fall, you're infatuated with her, you run after her, but that which is true and which is good, that you despise. Just these days I had a bit of a chance to take a bit of a break, and I read some books, and I thought, wow, people who don't have a lot to do, they're privileged, and I don't understand how people can say, but we are lonely, we're all on our own, why, what an opportunity to read some good books. One of the books I read was about David Livingston, who learned to speak the language, he started preaching the gospel, he was there in Central Africa, and the chief of that tribe got converted.

This chief had been a very hard man, and had killed people for almost no reason whatsoever. You probably know how the old chiefs used to do it. And people like Shaka and Dingon, when the king still ruled here, if they wanted someone to live, he'd live, if they wanted him to die, he'd have to die.

And so this king came along and he said to David Livingston, he said, I want to become a Christian. He said, I've never seen a white man like you, you're a white man that's different to all the other white men, because you treat us like your brothers, and he said, I want to serve your God. And he got his whole nation together, he said to his people, come, let's hear the word of God.

But then the people didn't want to, many had excuses. Eventually, it was just a small group, mostly of the royal family. And then the chief spoke to Livingston, and he said, Mfundis, minister, pastor.

He said, if I tell my people that we're going out on a hunting trip, he says, then everybody, the last man turns up, and they all come with their dogs. It's a huge event, because we're going out to hunt. And he said, if I tell my people that we're going to have a huge party, a feast, and we're going to have some beer available, everyone turns up.

And if we have a get-together to sing and to dance, then everyone turns up, even the young people come. We'll have a huge crowd. But if I invite them to come and hear the word of God, hardly anyone turns up.

He says, how is it possible? For beer they come, for dancing they come, for hunting, but when we say we're going to read the Bible to listen to God's word, they don't arrive. And he said, what shall we do? And he said, you know, he said to Livingston, he says, you know, in the past, before I became a Christian, if I used to send out an order to the people and they wouldn't follow and they wouldn't listen, I'd get together all my headmen and I'd get those people and I'd say to the headmen, these people don't listen to what I say. And they would all come with their whips and they'd give everyone who wasn't listening to the king a good thrashing.

And he said, well, I wonder whether that would perhaps be the solution to this problem. Everybody would, every headman would come with a shambuck. That's the skin, made of skin of the hippopotamus.

And where they didn't have them, they would take a rhinoceros skin. And if you get a thrashing with that, you'll feel it. It will go right through the skin and you'll feel it beneath the skin.

And he said, should we, all these people, all these people, should we thresh them with the skin of a hippo? And he says, no, you can't do that. That's their free choice. Livingston said, that's their free choice.

If they choose to go to hell, well, that's where they'll go. And the punishment there will be far worse than that shambuck that they would have got. That will be worse than a thousand shambucks.

But that's what they deserve. If they trample underfoot the love of God, the son of God, and the grace he's showing them and his word, that's what they deserve. When the young man proposed to the lady, he didn't come with a shambuck, with a whip.

No. He said, look, this is what I feel. You pray about it as well.

And ask God to show you and see whether you feel God leading you in the same direction. Because in this matter, no one decides for you. Not your father, your mother, brother or sister.

No one. You've got to know before God. And Livingston encouraged that king and said, you just be faithful.

You and your wife, your family. You go through with the Lord. And so that's what they did.

And it didn't take long. And one after the other, the other people started joining them. And they said, now we recognize that this is the eternal way.

This is the right way. Now, what, how do you respond to the Lord's proposal when he comes to you and he says, I want to get engaged to you. I propose to you.

I choose you. And he is the Lord of Lords. He wants you to be engaged to him.

Now, what do you, how do you respond to that? Now, when you get converted, that is like putting on that ring. Even if you come from the pigsty, you put on that ring. A new garment.

That you become a new son. You don't live the old life anymore. You now live a new life.

Now, when you come to the Lord, he doesn't take you home immediately to heaven. Some people still have to live some time here on earth. Now, Now, be faithful in this time that the Lord has given you.

You've got converted. You've now got this time. You may think it's going to be long.

Maybe it'll be short. Or you may think it's going to be short and it'll be long. But whatever it is, be faithful to the Lord and pray and ask him that he will keep you faithful.

These days, we had someone here from overseas. I asked him, I said, well, how are things going? How's it going at work? He said, He said, it's going extremely well. The Lord is very good to us.

He said, look, when I was still young, I made a decision. I said, I don't want to have anything to do with God. My I grew up in a Christian family and I even went to Sunday school.

But he said, my parents, they were lukewarm Christians. And then they also said, well, look, you've got to decide because God wants everything or he wants nothing. All right.

And then he said, well, is that what God says? Well, then I will say the same. If I must choose, then I'll take everything the world offers and I want nothing to do with God. Some of you may know him.

His name is Hartmut. And he says he went. He says, I went into the world good and solid.

I went and took all the world had to offer. He says, and eventually I got married. And he says, well, it was interesting.

I loved this girl. But in spite of the fact that I loved her, she just dropped me and went off with another man. And he said that left a huge gap in my heart.

He couldn't pray because he had turned his back on God. And then he thought, well, let me go and look for another girl. He looked for her and found her and got married again.

But she was like a madman. All right. See, he had decided he doesn't want anything to do with God.

He doesn't want God. So God also left him over to his own thing. And remember, after all, he had looked for this wife and she would end up being what he was anyway.

If you don't want Jesus, if you don't want God, all right. If you don't want God, you'll get those who are like you are. And a child was born.

But the relationship among them was like that of a cat and a dog. And she got divorced. He says it was like hell for me.

If you don't accept the ring the Lord offers you, that heavenly ring, then you'll accept the devil's ring. And that's going to be very tough for you. But he says.

But he says the day he heard the gospel, he said, and he realized that he had sinned. He said, Lord, forgive me. I have sinned against you.

I want to turn back to you. But that was after his first wife. That was after his first wife, whom he says he loved very much.

After she had left him, gone off with another man. And that is tough for a man. If you love your wife and she leaves you, goes off with other men, then it's better for the man whose wife dies.

And at least he knows that she is gone. And if she was a Christian, she's with the Lord in a far better place. Far better than the one who just loses his wife because she runs away.

I lost my wife. She's with the Lord. And I can continue with what I'm doing and serving the Lord and preaching.

And I have nothing holding me up. But you feel sorry for those people who lose their wives because she goes off with another man. That's a slap in the face for a man who loves his wife and she goes off with another man.

I would rather lose ten wives due to death, as a result of death, than having to go through that which he had to go through. Losing his first wife in that way, getting married, getting divorced again. It's not worth serving the devil.

But he said, since I've met the Lord, my life has taken on a different meaning. It's so different. He says, yes, and sometimes I can spend a weekend with my little daughter.

But he says, I've got one aim now, and that is to be faithful to my Lord. I asked him where he was working now. He said, now I've got a new job.

I'm working for a very big company, a wealthy man who owns it. And he says, the boss, he treats me like his own son. He says, I haven't been there very long, but he already has sent me to America, to England, and all over the place.

And he told me that just these days I had some holidays, and he thought of his boss. He's got his own children and a daughter as well, but she doesn't help the father with anything. He has to go and hire other people to do the work.

She works, but just like anybody else. She looks at the watch, whether it's time to start, it's time to stop. And his secretary is an old lady.

She should have retired long ago. But she sees what kind of a predicament he's in, her boss, so she comes and helps him. And the son, he's busy studying in England.

He's just carrying on with his studies, not a real help to his father. Just imagine, you get parents with such children. So Hartmut came.

Now he's working for him. So the other day it was a holiday. He says, here I am at home, I'm not working, and my boss is working.

Now it's time to drink tea. I'm drinking tea here and eating cake. My boss is working.

everyone that he'd get the death sentence.

And then he thought he was going to get the best lawyers and advocates. Now he was a drunkard, he used to get raving mad if he didn't get alcohol. Now in prison, he suffered because he couldn't get it.

And then the day came for his case to be tried. The judge sat there, and it wasn't just one, there were almost a dozen of them. And then this judge spoke to this man, addressed him, and said, Is there anything you still want to say before we sentence you? No.

Could you say, is there anything that you could say that would save you from being hanged? Because you need to be hanged. But is there anything that you could say? The man stood there, he was silent. You could have heard a pin drop.

Everyone with their gaze fixed on him, waiting for him to say something. It was an icy silence. And then the man got up.

He said, yes sir, my lord, there is something I would like to say. I'm not guilty alone. Everyone suddenly woke up and they wondered who this other guilty person was that was guilty together with him.

What, my lord, I would like to bring to light and expose that I'm not the only guilty one in killing my wife. And their eyes opened wide, even his lawyers thought, my, has he been quiet with this thing? Why said he? He said, my lord, I'm going to start with you. He spoke to the judge.

He says, remember, don't you also, when you go to a cocktail party, also lift up your glass? And all the other judges here, isn't everyone here guilty of having a drink now and then? Like when they go to a party? And he said, look, here are my lawyers and here are all these other people. Even my minister himself, he also, when there's a wedding, he will also lift up his glass. When there's a toast and he says, I've seen all of you doing it.

And I always said, well, that's just the way it's done. And he said, well, even right here in our state, the government allows bottle stores and bars to be opened. And all these things played a role in what I eventually did when I killed my wife.

They didn't know what to say. He says, I saw your example. And he said, the state is trying me, but they are themselves guilty of selling us this alcohol, which drives us.

So I was actually only supporting them and you. He says, well, now I can die. You can pass that death penalty, but I'll die having said what you asked me to say.

And there was a minister who was deeply touched and convicted. And he said. This minister was so convicted.

He said, I also still want to confess my sin because what I've done is I voted for this government who passes these laws to do these things. And that minister wrote the story and what he went through. And I thought, is that what it's going to be like when we meet with God? Remember here in South Africa, elections are coming up soon.

Are you going to vote for a government that allows homosexual laws to be passed and giving them all their rights and prostitution and all the things that are happening? Are you going to vote for a government that's going to pass such laws and allow such things? Remember, you'll have to give a count on Judgment Day

for that. Pornography, also child pornography, where this becomes and where pornography is allowed and children can get hold of the stuff. You pray and say, Lord, may your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

But in the next breath or the next moment, you go out and you vote for a government that passes laws that are contrary to God's will and his word. You vote for such a government. And you... What will you feel like when your son comes home from Joburg and he comes with another man and he says, Mom, Dad, I've come to introduce my wife to you? And it's a man.

This is your daughter-in-law. This is your daughter-in-law. And he's wearing pants.

It's a man. You and I will still stand before God. If I haven't told you the truth, then I will be condemned.

But if I've told you the truth and you don't listen, then you will stand condemned. Who hasn't repented, let him repent. And who hasn't put on that heavenly ring, let him do it.

He says, I want to be betrothed to you. What is your response to that? Are you going to go home and maybe get your children together, your family and say, From today I want to be faithful to the heavenly bridegroom. I've heard him propose to me and I want to respond positively to it.

And even if I didn't in the past, but from today I've decided to choose him. Let us stand. He is offering you his ring.

He wants to get engaged to you. What do you say to this offer? Do you accept, say yes, or do you say no? And remember, once you've accepted that ring, you need to be faithful to him. You cannot change your mind and choose someone else again.

Unless of course you want to take off that ring and return it to him. But you'll regret it for all eternity. Have you said yes, yes Lord, I agree? Or have you said no? That you say no and then the devil will rejoice.

Let us pray. Lord, you've heard as we sang and where it is said, I say yes Lord. And you also know whether it was just the lips or whether it was also the heart that said yes.

And you also know whether we'll go out from here with that ring or whether we're just going to take it and throw it away.

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