

# What's Love Got To Do With It? • Jeremiah 3:6-14

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. *John & Mary*

1. John and Mary met and started dating in high school
2. It was your typical teenage romance; they went to the dances together and spent at least a Friday or Saturday evening going out to eat or catching a movie
3. After graduation they went to the same city college and though there were short periods in which they stopped going out due to some spat, they always ended up making up
4. Three years after graduation from college, they decided to get married; after all, they really did love each other and the thought of being apart was just too much
5. So they got married, had a wonderful honeymoon and moved in to a new apartment.
6. It was obvious to all their friends and family that they were deeply committed to one another; and everyone remarked what a cute and loving pair they were
7. They held hands when they went shopping, sat on the same side of the booth when they went out to eat, and continued their regular habit of going out at least once a week
8. John called Mary every day just to say “Hi.” And Mary made him breakfast every morning before he left for work.
9. Then Mary got a promotion at her job that meant she had to leave a half hour earlier every day so she wasn't able to make John's breakfast anymore
10. But John didn't really care too much, the extra money she was making seemed to make up for it.
11. He was getting advanced at work as well – but the new position meant he had to work different shifts, and it wasn't long before they only saw each other 3 nights out of the week.
12. At least they still had the weekends!
13. Two years later, John & Mary had their first child
14. Ten years after that, with three kids, a big new house, and John sitting in a position of real importance in his career, their schedules were so full it seemed they had little time for anything other than work and sleep.
  - a. if they weren't at some school function
  - b. then it was the kids' softball or gymnastics, or soccer
15. The weekends were shot!
  - a. what with household chores and the kids sports
  - b. there was just no time left for anything
16. About the only time John and Mary had for *them* was the few minutes they had at night after the light was out and they were lying in bed.
17. Then if Mary didn't fall asleep from sheer exhaustion, John did – leaving the other lying their feeling that quiet, nostalgic ache for those days when things were simple

- a. when it was just enough to sit with each other and hold hands -
  - b. when there was that tingly feeling in the stomach because they felt such strong desire and as they looked into each others eyes they could see that same desire
  - c. but now, lying there in the stillness of the night, it felt like the passion was gone
18. They loved each other *certainly* – but not with the same *passion* as before
  19. The love was different now – it was less hot, much less hot.
  20. In fact, it was more a love demonstrated in simple loyalty and mutual care
  21. It was a sharing of memories and common activities centered on the kids.

## **B. What Will Happen**

1. What will happen to John & Mary in *another* 10 years?
2. What will happen when the kids are grown and have left the house?
3. What will happen when John retires?
4. Indeed – what will happen?

## **II. TEXT**

### **A. Vs. 6-10**

<sup>6</sup> The LORD said also to me in the days of Josiah the king: “Have you seen what backsliding Israel has done? She has gone up on every high mountain and under every green tree, and there played the harlot.

<sup>7</sup> And I said, after she had done all these *things*, ‘Return to Me.’ But she did not return. And her treacherous sister Judah saw it.

<sup>8</sup> Then I saw that for all the causes for which backsliding Israel had committed adultery, I had put her away and given her a certificate of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but went and played the harlot also.

<sup>9</sup> So it came to pass, through her casual harlotry, that she defiled the land and committed adultery with stones and trees.

<sup>10</sup> And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah has not turned to Me with her whole heart, but in pretense,” says the LORD.

1. Some background is needed as we seek to understand what Jeremiah is saying here
2. The nation of Israel has broken into two distinct nations: *Israel* to the north and *Judah* to the south.
3. The Northern Kingdom had nothing but one long succession of wicked kings.
  - a. from the moment of the fracturing of the nation, the northern kingdom had turned to idolatry and had worshipped the pagan deities of the nations around them
  - b. as a result, God had judged her by bringing the brutal Assyrians against them and deporting them from their land
4. In these verses, God is likening the deporting of the Jews from Israel to a divorce.
5. You see, the relationship between the Jews and God was like a marriage.

- a. often in the OT, God refers to Israel as His wife
  - b. but she had been unfaithful
  - c. her worship of idols was like adultery – spiritual adultery
  - d. and though God had warned her and given her one opportunity after another to repent and return to Him, she had not
  - e. instead she had played the harlot and gone after the gods of the nations like a wanton rebel
  - f. every hill had a shrine, every thicket of trees had an altar
6. So God had divorced her and sent her out of His land by the hand of the Assyrians
  7. Israel's sister was Judah, the southern kingdom, in which the city of Jerusalem and the temple were located, and where the descendants of King David still ruled.
  8. But not all of David's descendants were like him: Many were as evil as the kings of the North
  9. Though Judah should have learned the lesson that rebellion and idolatry teaches, they did not
  10. And here God is saying that Judah's sin and spiritual adultery are even *worse* for having seen the example of her sister Israel but still going on toward destruction.

### **B. Vs. 11-14**

- 11 Then the LORD said to me, "Backsliding Israel has shown herself more righteous than treacherous Judah.**
- 12 Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say: 'Return, backsliding Israel,' says the LORD; 'I will not cause My anger to fall on you. For I *am* merciful,' says the LORD; 'I will not remain angry forever.**
- 13 Only acknowledge your iniquity, That you have transgressed against the LORD your God, And have scattered your charms To alien deities under every green tree, And you have not obeyed My voice,' says the LORD.**
- 14 "Return, O backsliding children," says the LORD; "for I am married to you. I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion."**
1. These words are amazing!
  2. Even though the northern kingdom has been exiled from their land, God tells Jeremiah to go and face toward the north and speak a word of *invitation*
  3. It's too late for the *nation* – but it's *not* too late for individuals
  4. If in the land of their exile, they repent and return to the Lord, He will return to them and cause them to return to their home
  5. What a wonderful word of hope and comfort.

### **C. Marriage**

1. What I want to focus on this morning is this picture God gives us of His relationship with His people being like marriage
2. As I mentioned, at several points the OT likens the relationship between God

- and His people to a marriage
3. They had entered in to a covenant that made Jehovah their God, and themselves His people.
  4. There was an *exclusiveness* to the covenant that embraced *all* of life
  5. God was always and only faithful to His part of the covenant – so why did Israel wander?
  6. There *were* times when she was fervent and faithful / what led to her turning away?
  7. In the NT, we have the same picture of marriage between Christ and the Church
    - a. it seems that one of Jesus' favorite settings for telling stories and parables was a wedding
    - b. Paul says that his evangelistic work in Corinth was like *betrothing* people to Christ.
    - c. and in writing to the Ephesians, Paul uses the relationship of Christ and the Church as a *model* for the roles of marriage,
    - d. then at the end, he flips it all around and says that really, marriage is but a model of the relationship between Christ and the Church
    - e. one of the first things we see taking place in heaven is the *Marriage Supper of the Lamb*
  8. All these Old and New Testament passages make it clear that the *kind of relationship* God wants with us is one of the closest possible intimacy
  10. Marriage is the closest thing there is as a picture for understanding what kind of relationship God wants with us
  11. This helps us understand what happened to Israel and later to Judah
  12. And it may give us some insights into the dangers we face in *our* relationship with the Lord

#### **D. Danger!**

1. Few couples, when they first meet and get married, dream of the tragedy of adultery and divorce
2. In fact, when a guy and gal meet and fall in love, a funny thing happens
  - a. their love acts as a powerful agent *against* unfaithfulness
  - b. a guy who is head over heels in love with some gal has much better control over wandering eyes because he *wants to keep them for her*
  - c. and a woman who is goo-goo over her man is hardly likely to find some sensitive, masculine hunk as all that desirable because her desire is focused
  - d. love is like a fence that encircles our hearts and minds; it's like a garden enclosed – much beauty there, but only for those it belongs to and have a right to it.
3. But with the passing of time, as we all know, that kind of love, that intense passion and desire, it, well, cools!
4. We get to know the person better, and when married, we become confronted with the daily ness of *living* together
5. And the result is that things conspire to *cool the passion*
6. One thing that brings a cooling of love is simple *familiarity*
  - a. you know the old adage – familiarity breeds contempt

- b. that may be a bit strong, but there is a hint of truth there
- c. when we become so familiar with someone that there are no surprises anymore, it can present a challenge to keeping a person interested
- 7. Then again, *change* can work against passion: When two people grow, but grow apart, there can be a problem
- 8. *Hurts* are definitely a passion cooler.
  - a. when unforgiven hurts build up, they produce bitterness
  - b. and bitterness is a certain love-killer
- 9. The point is this – any relationship, if it is to be healthy, needs to be GROWING.
- 10. It is the nature of life to either be growing or dying – there is no standing still
- 11. And so it is with relationships
- 12. The relationship between a husband and wife is either going forward or it's in reverse
- 13. John & Mary that I began with this morning, came to realize that they had diverted their focus away from the one relationship they had to make sure they maintained and pressed forward – their marriage
- 14. *Familiarity* with one another and *change* in their lifestyle had conspired to drive a wedge between them
- 15. They still *acted* lovingly toward one another – but the *passion* had turned to ice
- 16. And quite frankly, both of them were now easy targets for the temptation to commit adultery, if not in deed, then at least in thought

### **E. Love & Passion**

- 1. Okay, let's tie all of this together
- 2. Here's why Israel committed spiritual adultery with idols; and why Judah was now going down the same path – while they claimed Jehovah's name, their *passion* was long gone
- 3. And because their passion, their desire, their zeal was cold, they were an easy target for temptation
- 4. God doesn't just want some kind of cool, indifferent obedience on our part
  - a. He is not some power hungry deity who demands that we just do what He says
  - b. His chief desire is that we *love* Him
  - c. and not with a coolness
  - d. not casually – not formally and religiously
  - e. but with the kind of passion and intensity that marks someone who is *in love!*
- 5. What's love got to do with our relationship with God? EVERYTHING!
- 6. Christianity is the only faith in the world that proclaims the message that God loves man and that what He is looking for in return *is* love
  - a. the Muslim's God doesn't love
  - b. the Hindus many gods don't love
  - c. the Buddhist's god, doesn't love – if he is one of those Buddhists who even

- believe in a god
7. Only Christianity is a religion of love
  8. In fact, we will soon be celebrating Christmas, which commemorates this truth:
  9. God so *loved* the World that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

### III. CONCLUSION

#### A. *Do You Really?*

1. Christian – you say you love God – do you really?
2. How?
  - a. do you love Him with a cool formality
  - b. is your relationship with Jesus more like John & Mary in their first 3 years or their last three
  - c. is your faith a living, vital, growing thing or is it merely a set of intellectual propositions on the nature and character of God?
3. We err when we *equate* love with emotions, but we also err when we *strip* love of them
4. Genuine love for God better have some heat to it – or it's, well cold!
5. So let me ask again – Do you love God?
  - a. do you *desire* Him? Do you *want* Him?
  - b. are you "*hot*" for God? That's a completely legitimate way to put it because the word *zeal* means "hot"!
  - c. does your heart *ache* to be with Him?
  - d. do you find yourself thinking about Him a lot?

#### B. *Commanding Feelings*

1. Many are the men and women who realize, after years of marriage that the passion is gone
2. It's but a distant memory – and they wonder how they could ever get it back
3. As they think back, they realize that it wasn't something they sought, it just happened
4. And now that it's gone, they have no clue how to reclaim it
5. How do we get our *passion* for God back?
6. Or how do we get it, if we've never had it?
7. People initially come to faith in Christ for all kinds of reasons
  - a. fear of hell
  - b. desire to be free of guilt
  - c. intellectually persuaded of the truth of the Gospel
8. There are many reasons why people *first* come to Christ – but all of them need to be exchanged for love and zeal for Christ before too long
9. How do we get it, or restore it?
10. We ask the *God of Love* to impart it!
11. You and I cannot work up passion
12. But what we can do is surrender our will and ask Him to capture our affections and gives us passion for Him

13. Jesus, light the flame – give us passion, for Your name
14. Lord light the fire again

### **C. Familiarity**

1. If you're one of the many here this morning who have been a Christian for many years, in some ways, it's like being married for many years.
2. There's a familiarity with God, things are so new and fresh
3. And it's easy for the passion to cool
4. Go deeper!
5. There's a song by Delirious that well sums up the cry of the saint who realizes the desperate need to press on pass the familiarity into a new place of rekindled passion and zeal for the Lord
6. Go deeper.
7. Reinvest yourself in God's word and start keeping a journal of the things you learn
8. Avail yourself of some of the good writing of other men and women who have gone deeper and discovered God in new ways
  - a. Knowing God – JI Packer
  - b. The Pursuit of God AW Tozer
  - c. Experiencing God – Blackaby & King
9. But most importantly. Spend time with God in prayer – let Him speak!