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Marriage Vows Part 4

Acts 5:1-11

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Let's pray. "Father in heaven, it's a sacred time, all of it is sacred in a worship with You, but this, we are opening Your Word, and we are asking for You to teach us. We pray that You would demonstrate Yourself to us through this experience. We pray that we would sense Your presence, our hearts would be warmed, in fact, our hearts would be healed. Lord we ask for miracles, and that our homes will be healed as well. We are praying for You to do a supernatural work, and we ask this in Jesus' name, Amen."

Weddings are lots of fun for pastors. You get to see many aspects of people's lives when you are planning a wedding and talking about weddings. People get really nervous at weddings. We were having a rehearsal one night, and the father of the bride was so nervous, I thought we'd have to give him medication. And this was just the rehearsal. He was so nervous, he had a simple role, all he had to do is walk his beautiful daughter down the aisle, stop at the front pew, I would say, "Who gives this woman to be this man's wife," and all he had to do is say, "The Lord, her mother and I," then he could be seated. That's all he had to do that day.

So we worked with him, and he was just convinced he couldn't do it. "Oh, yes, you can do it, yes, you can do it," and so it was time to practice. So he came down the aisle, he's got his beautiful daughter on his arm, and all the way down the aisle, I am standing there and I could see him going, "The Lord, her mother and I, the Lord, her mother and I, the Lord her mother and I." When he stopped at the right spot, I said, "Who gives this woman to be this man's wife?" And the fellow was so nervous, he opened his mouth several times and never said anything; and all of a sudden, he blurted it out, "me and my mother." I fell down, I was laughing so hard. And you know the next day, it went perfectly, he did it just right, and it was a beautiful wedding ceremony.

Weddings, they are all unique now, you know. They are really reflective of the couple's personalities and it doesn't seem there is anything normal about the wedding anymore. Oh, there are some elements that seem to show up in most of them, there is still a unity candle in many of them, but some people now are using unity sand. I don't know if you've been to a wedding where they've done that? They'll have sand on one side that is one color, sand on the other side with another color. They'll have a beautiful receptacle and he pours in, and she pours in, and there is a little ceremony that they'll give a pastor to read. "These grains of sand represent our past, and now they are mingling together and we'll always be what we were, but now we are something special together..." And they'll have this beautiful keepsake; which symbolically is better than a candle that is blown out, you know.

So people are going that direction. It's often times now that they'll write their own vows. And some of those vows can be interesting. Most of the time the vows will have certain elements, it will have something like love, honor, cherish, in sickness and in health, good times, bad times, richer, poorer, to have and to hold, and to keep only unto each other until death do us part. They are the basic elements of vows.

We've been studying about marriage vows, this is our 4<sup>th</sup> week. First sermon we had on it, we discovered that marriage will have conflict in it. If you are a healthy person, you are then positioned to have healthy conflict. And we learned that going to Christ is where we get our health, and we learned that we are a person of value and that's the platform that brings good health. The next week we studied about negative speech and how it wounds, and how it destroys and rips and tares relationships apart. Last week we talked about the power of encouragement. How it creates a team and that's a simple concept that if in trying to solve problems that if one wins and the other loses you've both lost because we are a team. And problem solving is where we work together to solve the problem, at the end we both win. That's where God wants us to be.

This week we are going to begin looking at vows themselves. Love! Well, love is kind of a burned over feel, I know you had many sermons about love, and I am not going to give you one today. Honor! Well, that's an interesting concept, but really I can say it all in one sentence. Honor means to give value to another and to esteem them, and that's kind of what we talked about last week with encouraging words. So I am not going to talk about honor. But cherish! Cherish is an old English word, and we use it a little bit, but not a lot. Often times it's associated with love sometimes used interchangeably. But yet, cherish is different than the word love, it is distinct. Cherish in the dictionary means, to hold dear, to treat with affection and tenderness, that is what it means to cherish. There are 4 references in the Word of God to the word cherish. We are going to study those, see what they mean, add a few more texts and by God's grace, have an experience in righteousness today.

Let's turn first to First Kings, chapter 1. In First Kings chapter 1 we are going to read 4 verses. And in most of you, these verses are going to get your attention. But not because the word cherish is used. David, speaking about him it says, "Now King David was old." By the way if you want to know how old that is, he was 70. So he was old, "advanced in years; and they put covers on him, but he could not get warm. Therefore his servant said to him, 'Let a young woman, a virgin, be sought for our lord the king, and let her stand before the king, and let her care for him; and let her lie in your bosom, that our lord the king may be warm.' So they sought for a lovely young woman throughout all the territory of Israel, and found Abishag the Shunammite, and brought her to the king. The young woman was very lovely; and she cared for the king, and served him, but the king did not know her." That means he did not have physical relationships with her.

Well the word cherish is used in verse 2 and also in verse 4. In verse 2 it says, "Let the young woman, a virgin be sought for our lord the king, let her stand before the king, and let her care for him." That's the New King James Version. In the King James Version it says, "... let her cherish him." The Amplified Version it says, "... let her wait on and be useful to the king." In the New American Standard Bible it says, "... let her attend the king and become his nurse." In the NIV it says, "... attend the king and take care of him." So in this verse, cherish means to care for, to wait on, to be useful, and to attend to and nurse. That's a picture of cherish. In verse 4 it says, "And the young woman was very lovely, and she cared for the king and served him, but the king did not know her." Cared for the king is translated, cherish for the king in the King James Version. Waited on and

nursed him in other Versions, served him and waited on him. So the word cherish in these verses means to tenderly care for, or to nurture, to serve, to be useful, to be like a nurse, and that's quite a picture.

But already I know you are not paying attention because some of you can't get past the story. What is going on here? You got an old man, he is 70 and he can't get warm, so you hunt around for a hot young chick, and she lays next to him to keep him warm and this is in the Bible? You know, all I can say is, I'll explain it a little bit to you I hope, but this is 3000 years ago, things have changed a bit, got to understand that. I imagine when I am old and if I am cold, I am going to get a hot water bottle. That's going to be my Abishag; maybe she'll write it on the side of it, "Here, let this keep you warm." But David is a king, and things are going on, and... but the story itself is a little alarming until you understand everything. In verse 5 it says, "Then Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, 'I will be king.'" Now Adonijah is the oldest boy of David. He is the oldest boy; he is the rightful heir to the throne. David is on his death bed. And so Adonijah gathers a group of people together, and they are going to crown him a king. You have to read all of chapter 1 and 2 to get this story, but I am going to help you get past the first 4 verses.

So Adonijah gets a group of people, they are ready to make him king, word gets out and Bathsheba runs to David and runs to the prophet, and they go to David and Bathsheba reminds David that David promised that Solomon would be king, and David said, "That's right, Solomon is going to be king." And so David, while he is still living, anoints or ordains Solomon to be king. So his brother, Adonijah is in trouble actually. So he goes humbly to Solomon after David dies, Solomon is king. Adonijah goes to Solomon and he says, "Look, are we okay, are we all right together, you know?" And Solomon says, "Everything is fine as long as you behave well, if you don't behave well then it won't be fine."

As the story progresses, Adonijah goes to Bathsheba and he says, "Will you intercede for me on a matter?" She says, "What is it?" He says, "I really would like to marry Abishag the Shunammite. I'd like to marry her." So if you read the story, you are at that point thinking, oh how nice, you know that poor girl she'll have a husband and she would be wonderful. When Solomon hears it, he has the guy killed. Adonijah is killed. And it says why, it says he is the oldest brother, what could he want but the kingdom. Now what the scriptures don't explain there that we know historically is that if you got the harem of the king, you had the kingdom.

Do you remember when Absalom was trying to take over the kingdom, what did he do there in Jerusalem? He took part of the king's harem and made them his wives. So here is what is happening, Adonijah wants Abishag to be his wife, he is the oldest boy, he would be marrying into the king's harem, the kingdom would be his. What does that tell us? It tells us that David married the girl. He was married to her. Now the only problem you would have with the story is, why would the 70 year old man on his death bed marry a young girl when he's got all these other wives? You worry about that, I'll just try to explain the story to you, all right? So those are the 2 references in the Old Testament.

Now let's go to the New Testament, and we'll find in Ephesians chapter 5 that the word cherish is used. Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 28, it says here, "So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church." Nourishes and cherishes it, takes care of it, the word in the Greek is "thalpo" it means, to warm. And so when we add the definitions together, the definition to cherish, to hold dear, to treat with affection and tenderness, to care for, to wait on, to be useful, to nourish, to serve, to be tender and to be warm.

The word cherish is used again in First Thessalonians 2 verse 7, if you'll turn there please. Paul is describing his attitude towards the church in Thessalonica. He says in First Thessalonians 2 verse 7, "But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children." This is the picture of a mother bird caring for new born young or sitting on eggs. It is demonstrating a sacrificial attitude of a mother towards her children, or her offspring. It is a picture of one giving their life in order to impart life. When we add these 4 texts together, the description of the cherish is to hold dear, to treat with affection and tenderness, to care for, wait on, be useful, to nurse, to serve, to be tender, to warm, to be gentle and sacrificial, giving life. Now does that describe your marriage? Does that describe how you are in marriage? That's what it means to cherish.

We were in church one morning, and some folks showed up and she looked vaguely familiar and I remembered her as being an older student back at Andrews when I was a younger student back then. And they were in their mid 50's she and her brand new husband about 2 weeks into the marriage, maybe 2 months, and they came over to our house afterwards. We had a number of other people over and these 2 love birds were disgusting. They are oing and goeing over each other and just every little attention, "Oh Honey, oh that was a good comment, and..." oh brother, you know! And I looked over at my wife, and she was going, (an expression?) you know the gag me sign, and you know, you think, "Oh, get a grip. When are they going to be married long enough where they realize the goal is toleration?" You know, now, an interesting thing about that, though I was uncomfortable with that at my house and in public; that attention and that fun, you know things that they were looking back and forth and smiling and all that. There is an element of that God wants in our marriages. He wants them to stay alive. He wants us to cherish one another, to attend to one another, to warm one another, even to the point where Paul tells us, "Like a man with his own body." Now it is an illness that somebody has when they seek to destroy their body. That's an illness. A healthy person seeks to build their body.

Now the question is, is this type of cherishing ever modeled for us in the Word of God? Look at Ephesians chapter 5. Paul in verse 25 says this, "Husbands love your wives just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ..." in other words, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. Here we have a picture of Jesus saying, "My church is my body." Now we have heard that many times, "We are His hands, we are His feet, and we are to

go here, and we are to do this for the Lord, we are His body. And yes, we are not all the same, one is the hand, one is the foot, and one is one thing, and one is another,” we have heard that a lot until the point it doesn’t mean anything to us; and right here, that’s not what it means. It means Jesus loves us **as** His body. Just as a man is to cherish his wife, as his own body, take care of that body. Now Jesus is not sick. He is not slicing Himself. He is not anorexic; He is not involved in any of these things that destroy His body. He is life, and life incarnate. And He says here to us, He cherishes you like His own body. It even goes beyond that. We are His body, you hurt, He hurts. You are happy, He is happy, and that’s how close the connection is, and that’s the picture that is being drawn.

Now there is an amazing allegory that is written in Ezekiel chapter 16, and I want to turn your attention to that. Ezekiel is one of those books you start out reading, and you think, “Wow.” It’s like the Book of Revelation in a way, lots of symbols and lots of different things that are hard to understand. It reminds me when I was giving a Bible study to a man one time, and we were reading the Book of Revelation, and this guy, he didn’t know anything about the Bible, he didn’t know anything about Christianity at all. And we read some stuff in the Book of Revelation, and he goes, “Wow man, was that guy on acid when he wrote this?”

Well Ezekiel is kind of that way, it’s complicated. And so a lot of people start and they say, “Well I am going to read Ezekiel but phew;” so chapter 16 may not be that familiar to you. But here is an allegory about this type of cherishing being demonstrated. It begins in verse 1, “Again the word of the Lord came to me, saying, ‘Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations, and say, ‘Thus says the Lord God to Jerusalem;’ ‘Your birth and your nativity are from the land of Canaan; your father was an Amorite and you mother a Hittite. As for your nativity, on the day you were born your navel cord was not cut, nor were you washed in water to cleanse you; you were not rubbed with salt nor wrapped in swaddling cloths.’”

Now in this allegory a birth takes place, and there is a baby that’s abandoned. The cord is not cut, the baby has not been washed, it is not being rubbed with salt like they did, it is not wrapped in swaddling cloths, it has been abandoned and left to die. This is God’s people when they were captive in Egypt. And the story goes on, verse 5, “No eye pitied you, to do any of these things for you, to have compassion on you; but you were thrown out into the open field, when you yourself were loathed on the day you were born. And when I passed by you and saw you struggling in your own blood, I said to you in your blood, ‘Live!’ Yes, I said to you in your blood, ‘Live!’ I made you thrive like a plant in the field; and you grew, matured, and became very beautiful. Your breasts were formed, your hair grew, but you were naked and bare. When I passed by you again and looked upon you, indeed your time was the time of love; so I spread My wing over you and covered you nakedness. Yes, I swore an oath to you and entered into a covenant with you, and you became Mine,” says the Lord God.” That means they got married. And so in the story, the man finds this baby abandoned and nurtures the baby, and it grows up to maturity and marries the baby, this is Mount Sinai, where they become covenant people of God.

Verse 9 it says, “Then I washed you in water; yes, I thoroughly washed off your blood, and I anointed you with oil.” This washing is referred to twice in the Scriptures regarding marriage. When Esther went in to see the king, she washed and he chose her. When Ruth went in to be with Boaz, and her mother-in-law, Naomi said, “Wash up really nice, and put on the best smelling perfume you got, that will get him.” She went in and proposed to him. It’s an amazing story, it’s associated with marriage.

So here we go to verse 10, the Lord says: “I clothed you in embroidered cloth and gave you sandals of badger skin; I clothed you with fine linen and covered you with silk. I adorned you with ornaments, put bracelets on your wrists, and a chain on your neck. And I put jewel in your nose, earrings in your ears, and a beautiful crown on your head. Thus you were adorned with gold and silver, and your clothing was of fine linen, silk, and embroidered cloth. You ate pastry of fine flour, honey, and oil. You were exceedingly beautiful, and succeeded to royalty. Your fame went out among the nations because of your beauty, for it was perfect through My splendor which I had bestowed on you,” that’s when they hit the peak with David and Solomon. But then they turned, they turned. The Lord lavished His love upon them, He cherished them.

Now, you go to the end of the chapter and you will discover that they have not only committed adultery and harlotries, but they are worse than a harlot, it says in verse 32, it says that harlots will get paid for their harlotry, “But you paid people to be with you in your harlotry.” That’s how corrupt they’d become. And now they are captive in Babylon. But that’s not the end of the story.

Go to Ezekiel chapter 36, the Lord has the promise for those whom He cherishes. In verse 26 He says, “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you. I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My commandments and do them.” God is into giving a new hearts. He is into giving new starts as it were. And maybe some of you in your home, you are thinking, “Man, this cherishing, I mean, this attitude of attentiveness that is so far from us. We don’t know how to get there.”

Well, there is a story I read about a man and a woman. They have been married for a long time, and their marriage was kind of growing cold, and they were drifting, they were still in the same household, good man, good woman, but they weren’t cherishing one another. And she went to somebody for counsel, and they said, “Well, start by being nice, saying one thing nice every day to your husband, and see if that doesn’t warm you back to him.” And she thought, and thought and thought, “What can I say that is nice to this guy?” And it was so foreign to her because it wasn’t a part of their relationship anymore, that it seemed fake, it seemed contrived, it seemed out of place, it was so awkward, and she said, “But I am going to do it.” And so there they are at breakfast, and he’s got the newspaper up and he is reading the sports section, and she is across the way. She’s got a lump in her throat as big as the basketball. She is trying to get words that are complimentary out of her mouth, and ah, ah, she finally says, “I really appreciated that you fixed the toaster for me the other day.” The paper rattled and there was a grunt. That was it, first day. So the second day, she said, “I just want you to know, I really appreciate

how you've always cared for the children." The paper rattled again, and there was another grunt. By the 4<sup>th</sup> day, the paper was down. And they had eye to eye contact, and they began to rebuild a relationship.

You see brothers and sisters; God is always able to work miracles in our heart, and in relationships. And if your home is a home where those tender affections are the thing of the past, and right now we are just, we are together but that's about it. I've got good news for you. God has a great plan for your marriage. It's found in Ezekiel chapter 37. Now the context of a new heart is in 36, and 37 is part of that. Look at chapter 37, "The hand of the Lord came upon me and brought me out in the Spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it was full of bones. Then He caused me to pass by them all around, and behold, there were very many in the open valley; and indeed they were very dry." These are dead, dead, dead, dead bones. Verse 3 it says, "God said to me, 'Son of man, can these bones live?' Ezekiel is not quite sure what to say. So he says, "Well, Lord, You know the answer to that."

"Again," verse 4, "God said to me, 'Prophesy to these bones, and say to them, 'O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord!' That's a picture of modern day preaching right there. 'Prophesy to the bones.' I heard pastors talking one time, and they were talking about how they needed a revival in their church. And one pastor said, "Oh, we don't need a revival, we need a resurrection." And then he said here, that he was glad that he was with his church because he knew he would go first to heaven because it says, "The dead in Christ will rise first." So there is lots of death. He is to prophesy to them, verse 5 it says, "Thus says the Lord God to these bones: 'Surely I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live. I will put sinews on you and bring flesh upon you, cover you with skin and put breath in you; and you shall live. Then you shall know that I am the Lord.'"

God can take death and bring life into it, and those who experience it will say, "That has to be of the Lord." That's exactly what happens here. Bone upon bone, sinew upon sinew, flesh, there it is, and then Ezekiel is told, "Prophesy to the breath, come from the East, come from the West, come from the North, come from the South, come and put breath into these bodies" and they began to breath and the mighty army of God rose up right there. Dead bones, dead valley, but now life, why, because God was in it. I am telling you brothers and sisters your home may feel like dead bones in a desert. But you go to God and you give Him your heart, and you get in on this new covenant thing, and a new heart experience, and you begin to pray, and you begin to cherish the one He has given you, and life is going to come into your home, and dead bones will stack together and there will come a mighty army for the Lord.

Where God is there is hope; and it's not too late. The beautiful thing about being cherished by Jesus, is that He is kindly affectionate towards you. He is nursing you, He is seeking after you needs, He is warming you. He is living sacrificially, willing to give His life so you may have life. You are cherished by God. And maybe today, spiritually, you feel like in your heart, it's a dry valley with dead bones. The good news is; the Lord can bring life, right now, to your heart spiritually. And maybe some of you who are married, you are thinking, "Wow, in our relationship, we are so far from being kindly affectionate

toward one another.” I have good news for you. Let Christ into your experience, and He can bring life out of death, and you can have a bit of heaven, right here on earth. Do you know why brothers and sisters, the devil is trying to make your home a place of hell, do you know why? Because the most powerful witness to the truth of God, the most powerful witness to the truth of God on planet Earth is a happy marriage, it’s a happy marriage. That’s what God wants you to have. That’s what you can have, but it’s going to take a new heart.

So today, if you want to tell the Lord, “I want life spiritually,” and maybe you are not married, and that’s okay, you are going to be some day by the grace of God. You want to be ready for that person that He is going to give you, and maybe you are married, but it’s a dry, dry valley with dead bones. Jesus wants to breathe life and bring a miracle to your house. So today, if you want to ask Jesus to come into your heart and heal you, if you want Jesus to come into your home and heal it, I am going to ask you to stand right where you are at.

“Father in heaven, Lord please, send that breath, send Your Holy Spirit we pray, fill us anew, let us know and experience Your cherishing, and may we cherish those whom You have blessed us with, we pray in Jesus’ name, Amen.”