

SERMON: A NEW BEGINNING PART 6
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February 14, 2021

SCRIPTURE: Ezekiel 11:14-20

The Lord replied: Ezekiel, son of man, the people living in Jerusalem claim that you and the other Israelites who were taken to Babylonia are too far away to worship me. They also claim that the land of Israel now belongs only to them. But here is what I want you to tell the Israelites in Babylonia: It's true that I, the Lord God, have forced you out of your own country and made you live among foreign nations. But for now, I will be with you wherever you are, so that you can worship me. And someday, I will gather you from the nations where you are scattered and let you live in Israel again. When that happens, I want you to clear the land of all disgusting idols. Then I will take away your stubbornness and make you eager to be completely faithful to me. You will want to obey me and all my laws and teachings. You will be my people, and I will be your God.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Part 6 of our series on New Beginnings. Today is the last part of the series. To recap;

Week 1: We discussed Revelations looking how it is not a book about the end times but a book about a new beginning.

Week 2: We looked at the words of Dr. King and the need for change.

Week 3: We looked at why the Lord might do a new thing.

Week 4: We looked at each day being a new beginning.

Week 5: We looked at beginning new goals.

Today we will look at beginning new attitudes.

PART 1:

Today is Valentine's Day. It is the special day that comes once a year that reminds us to show appreciation to that special person we love. And with Valentine's Day there are certain expectations. But to spend 300% market up on flowers for one day

always feels a little like be held hostage. Honestly and truthfully, I enjoy getting flowers for my wife without it being told by a calendar to do so. I like to get her a card or buy her flowers when it is not expected. There is this passage in scripture (Ephesians 5:25) that says, “Husbands, love your wives”. I think it is important to show the person you love they are special by doing something special for them. But with Valentine’s Day getting flowers doesn’t seem special because it is a pretty standard thing to do. But love should be fulfilling the standard expectations and also exceeding them. So guys, today should not be the one day a year to express love and appreciation with flowers. Now let me share a little secret that is some of the best advice I have gotten in marriage. I teach a class called “Laugh Your Way to a Better Marriage”. It is a great comedy class that teaches Marriage Enrichment skills. And in the presentation of the program one of the secrets shared is about flowers. The secret is this, it is better to give one rose 12 times a year than it is to give 12 roses once a year. But you have to read the fine print on that policy because Valentine’s Day is excluded.

DISCLAIMER: Now when I get Carolyn flowers, I have to bring home a receipt. And that is because years ago, when we were engaged, some lovely ladies from the church one Saturday after a funeral came to me and said “Pastor, here are some flowers you should take to your finance”. They were beautiful and I thought I would be the hero if I gave them to her. But about an hour after I gave her the flowers the church secretary called me and told me the family had come back to the church to get the flowers from the funeral service. So now when I give Carolyn flowers. I have to prove they are not funeral flowers, and I won’t be called to return them. As a general disclaimer I cannot expect funeral flowers.

PART 2: Being the One and Only

So back to our passage for today’s message. We are at the end of our series on “NEW BEGINNINGS”. And today we are looking and developing new attitudes as part of new beginnings. And the concern in the passage today from Ezekiel is God wants an exclusive relationship with Israel, and yet there is an unfaithfulness because there are idols and other gods being worshiped. In essence, Israel is not being faithful to God.

What makes certain relationships special is that they are exclusive relationships. And God wants to have an exclusive relationship with Israel. But the relationship has been complicated because Israel has been unfaithful. The relationship is strained. And the prophet Ezekiel is sharing the hope of a new start and a restoration of the relationship.

Good relationships are the ones with many new beginnings. As things change and people mature, it requires an attitude of openness to change and try new things. Instead of giving flowers once a year, it could be giving flowers 6 times a year. Something new and different that shows appreciation and significance of having that special person.

PART 3: Modern Idols

Just like the challenges of Israel thousands of years ago chasing after idols, we to chase after idols today. They may not be wood or stone statues of other gods, but they do take our time, energy, and devotional away from the people we love and the relationships we have. Our goals can often become our idols that we sacrifice for.

I talk to young people who pour everything they have into their dreams and careers. And their relationships sacrifice because of the time and energy those things take. But what they don't see is life after that goal or career is made and returning to relationships that are damaged because they were not nurtured and matured. In the end, the relationships are what truly matter. It can either be the relationships with the people we love and/or the relationship with God. Sometimes at the end it is just us and God.

When we give our time and energy to things that take away from the relationships with people we love, we make sacrifices. And it is a sacrifice to a thing rather than for a person. These are our modern idols that we worship.

But when we make time for the people we love; we have richer and more fulfilling relationships that grow and mature. To create these healthy relationships, require the ability to forgive and change attitudes to grow and mature. When we make little changes in attitudes, we allow that relationship to have a new beginning.

PART 4: Lots of New Beginnings

Good healthy relationships have lots of do overs. They have the ability to forgive and make things better. It is an effort to forgive and try again. Not all relationships can do that. It is OK for those who don't have that. Sometimes there is no do over. But that too is an opportunity for a new beginning.

When we forgive, when we grow, when we make an effort to change and mature in relationships that change and mature; we find richer happier relationships. When we try to stop doing things like chewing with our mouth open, or talking to each

other while being in different rooms not hearing each other; these are all efforts to strengthen the relationships.

Here in Ezekiel is a desire of God to restore a broken and strained relationship with Israel. It goes to this image of love between Christ and the Church being his bride. There is a desire to make it work and try again when things are strained. That is why there are so many opportunities for new beginnings.

CONCLUSION:

Here is the conclusion, make time for others and show you care more than the basic standard of expressing love because a calendar says it is Valentine's Day. Don't allow modern idols to affect relationships. This pandemic has made many of us realize how important being with the people we love is. Prior to this I may not have given as much attention at home to my wife and children as I should have. It is easy to be distracted by so many things trying to occupy our time. But this is an opportunity for all of us to make little changes in our attitudes to make the people we love feel important and loved. Make time to grow and nurture healthy relationships with others. And grow and nurture a healthy relationship with God. Amen.