

## Zechariah 8

So the bride flirts with the best man. And makes eyes at the limo driver, and runs off with the photographer. And those who care for the groom a lot are advising him to cut his losses and go find someone who really is as good as she looks.

But this groom meant his vows when he said them. He meant every rejoicing word over his bride. He is committed to their future together. He is willing to do whatever it takes for them to be together and for her to trust in his love.

Last week we read from Isaiah 62. The Lord will rejoice over his people, as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride. Today, we own up to being 'the bride' with wandering eyes and wobbly integrity. In a nutshell, that's the picture of the Lord with his people, with the city of Jerusalem, with Israel and Judah, with his New Testament people, the church.

The only thing that is solid in this relationship is the passion of the bridegroom, the Lord.

It is the jealous love of the Lord, the God who 'so loved' the world that he gave his only Son.. it is the passion of the Lord that ran through Jesus' veins. One day when he saw how the money changing middle men had gotten in between his people and prayer, he went off on the money changers and livestock sellers. On that day his disciples looked at each other and remembered the old line from Psalm 69, 'passion for your house will consume me'. And they nodded.

The Lord is the passionate bridegroom of his wandering bride.

*\*Note: This is an analogy and it has a point of contact and a point of departure. The point of contact is the deep, passionate love that the Lord has for you and me. The point of departure is that human relationships, even human marriages are different on one basic point. The two parties are both human beings. If a husband or a wife, after having spoken marriage vows really wants out, there will come a day when the other can only let go. In fact, one of the healthiest things in such a situation is for the person who wants the marriage to work, to stop trying so hard. The more anxious you are to see that something is done, the less motivated your partner will be to take the lead or to change. (Ed Friedman in 'A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix'.*

The kingdom comes by the passion of the Lord, the kingdom comes by the faithfulness of the Lord Almighty. Literally, the expression is, 'the Lord of Heaven's Armies'. And, we hear it six times in eight verses.

The passionate bridegroom is the Lord who has all the powers of hosts of angels at his command.

There is no power in the heavens or on the earth that can stop him or his kingdom from coming. Not the power of rebellion or the dull weight of apathy can stop the Lord Almighty from coming to dwell in the midst of Jerusalem.

Most powerful of all, the Lord Almighty will transform and change the human heart.

Remember how the first city the Bible tells us about was built by Cain, the fearful, resentful killer, looking for security?

Remember the tower builders of Babel, who set to work on that great project so they would not be scattered. The tower would keep them safe.

Remember Jerusalem, the city so secure that the Jebusites loved to say, 'even the lame and the blind can defend this place'?

Remember the prideful human heart that still says, 'we can take care of ourselves as long as we just get organized, or educated enough'?

The Lord Almighty will transform the heart of his bride. Jerusalem will get another new name. Jerusalem will be called, 'the City of Faithfulness' (NIV 2010) Belief, Trust, Firmness, Stability, Integrity, **Security**. The people of God will say and live and find the security they long for in the Lord.

The vision is for a people, a bride who returns the passion of the Lord with courageous trust.

City of Faithfulness.

Faithfulness/trust in large things. Long term. Big picture. Life decisions, life direction, life style)

And small things. Short term. Decisions of this moment, or this morning, or this day. I will admit to being most interested in the small things. The short strokes. That's where the difference will always tell. That is where the challenge is. We can set out to do big things for God and yet be anxious wrecks who compromise our witness every time we turn around or open our mouths.

Trusting the Lord Almighty is trusting the Lord with **whatever** it is that we are anxious about.

Trusting the Lord with the details of our lives will mean different things for different people.

For some, it will mean trusting enough to get up and move. Trusting will mean action.

For some, trusting will mean that we finally dare to stop.

What does it mean for you to trust the Lord with those 'small things'?

It always means is love God and love for neighbour.

City of Faithfulness.

It is that simple. That is what the Lord Almighty longs to see.

Now listen to the list of blessings that come to the Faithful, trusting, neighbour loving people:

The Lord will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. The people will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem.

The streets will be full of boys and girls playing. Old people will be sitting along the streets, leaning on their canes.

The people will be a blessing to their neighbours.

Sad feasts will become celebrations.

And this, most amazing, most wonderful of all blessings:

“People from many cities will say, ‘let’s go to Jerusalem and pray to the Lord.’ It is a reversal of Babel.

And, in a direct reversal of anti-Semitism and a reversal of Christian persecution, or nervousness about identifying with the Lord, ‘ten men from all languages and nations will grab the hem of Jew, saying, ‘take us with you, because we have heard that God is with you’.

As with last week, there are waves of fulfilment... return from exile, first coming, second coming. Every fulfilment recognizable, but surprising. This one will be too.

**Application:** Do not be afraid, but be strong, trust in the Lord.

The Lord be gracious to you.

The Lord be gracious to me.

And all God’s people said, Amen.