

A Bride Adorned for the Bridegroom

by Art Katz

The sermon emphasizes the importance of maintaining sanctity and holiness in a world that is increasingly opposed to it, and the role of the bride in sharing in Jesus' sufferings.

Duration: 1:14:15

Scripture: Luke 18:35

Topics: "Bride"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker addresses the issue of Christians becoming desensitized to the world and accepting its norms. He emphasizes the importance of maintaining sensitivity to the things that grieve God and expressing anguish over them. The speaker also mentions a specific example of a controversial advertisement involving Star Wars figures in a public school, highlighting the need to speak out against such worldly influences. The sermon concludes with a reminder of the impending judgment of God and the urgency for believers to have a deep passion for sharing in the sufferings of Jesus.

Transcript

So we need an especial grace from the Lord for something that gives every appearance of him, especially dear to him. It describes the Church in her eternal configuration, not as body of Christ overcoming man, but as a bride. Isn't that remarkable? That the final and enduring designation is feminine, a bride.

So we need to really be instructed and understand what it is for which we're attending. So Lord, we ask for your mercy, and we continue to ask and to keep asking. Be present with us, Lord.

And if this phrase and concept is dear to you, for you have yourself invoked and established it, we ask a communication, Lord, that is appropriate to your own heart. And if we have resisted it for the one reason or another, overcome our resistance, open it to us in understanding, my God, that's appropriate, and bless our time together tonight. So we're following you, Lord, with us soever you goeth, session by session.

And we don't know the one from the other until the time has virtually come. So come, my God, and lead us into places where we have not been heretofore, and employ the body, employ the saints, Lord, to bring from this one and that an appropriate comment, a question, an insight that it might, something might be formed for our understanding. Your blessing, Lord.

Thank you, precious God, for tonight. We invoke the blood of the Lamb upon our heads and upon our house. The evening, the blood of the evening sacrifice, as it were.

So come and sanctify our vessels, remove the debris and the clutter of the day, the residue of anything, my God, that has issued out of our humanity that will in any way dull us or make you in any way to recoil or to withdraw. So have a chaste vessel, Lord, for your presence and your impartation, a chaste corporate vessel in that washing of the blood which we ask even now. Take from us any defilement or stain, for we so covet, Lord, your presence, because the spirit of God is the spirit of truth.

And so come, Lord, and feel comfortable to be in our midst and to bring, my God, all of the preciousness that can only come through your spirit. We bless you for your blood, for the spirit, for the word, all of the great provision, my God, that issues from you. Receive our gratitude, Lord, and delight your own soul tonight.

Worship and praise the word. We look to you in Yeshua's holy name. Amen.

So we need to be yielded to what God is wanting to recognize our unyieldedness, our stiffness, our intractability, our stodginess, even over things that are right. So somehow to be able to hold truth and not be fearful that you're going to lose it, if the Lord is introducing something that stretches us to a new perception, even of that truth. Someone said at the conference in Canada, a Scotsman got up and made a statement.

He said, men who are fixed in a one point of truth, that becomes for them a rut. And if they resist the present truth, the rut becomes a grave. So I thought that that was a remarkable insight.

Pathos, the word that has come up, it's like the Lord playing like a haunting refrain, comes up again and again, a quality that moves one to pity and sorrow. Poignancy, poignant, P-O-I-G-N-A-N-T. Do you know that word? We are supposed to be the guardians of language and be jealous over the maintaining of the integrity of words.

No one in the world should be more word oriented than the church. And so we love words and their meaning and we stand God over them because when words lose their meaning and become blunt and become a grunt, civilization is on its way out. The way in which language is revered and employed is an index as to the condition of an age.

So perhaps part of the church's failure prophetically is to be guardian over language itself, not to allow its misuse and to have a greater sense of its meanings and the exquisite range of expression to be found in vocabulary like the word poignant. Who can define that? Poignant. You know the poignant speaks of and points to something that lies too deep for words.

Poignant is standing at the place where the trade towers in New York City had once stood and looking over the cabin of a terrible flattened area and you're unable to express the mortification, the tragedy, that what had happened, that something was struck in a point of time that not only affects the geography of New York City but has gone into the nation and into the earth. That's irretrievable. It's like visiting Dachau or Auschwitz, standing at those places.

What can you say? It's something poignant. As I described that German cemetery with those thick granite stones that are lurching and were not able to be thrown down by men and it's like a bizarre, strange configuration of stones. Or going to Prague and look and visiting the oldest synagogue in Europe going

back to the 12th, 13th century and outside of it are the gravestones and on each of the gravestones of the great and memorable rabbis of past history are stones set on top of the gravestones.

I don't know where this tradition comes from but it denotes a very visit that someone has come to commemorate the passing of some sage rabbi and so you see these stones in the different postures with little stones on top of them and you get a sense of the passage of time, of life. I went to the Jewish cemetery in Bombay, India and read the tombstones and the inscriptions. I remember still in the church in Singapore, Baptist Church, my first visit to that country and there were plaques all around the room of the missionaries who had come and had died in that country.

Esther Smith, born 1897, arrived in Singapore 19-something, died two years later from malaria and you could just read the tombstones and get a sense of the roll call of God's saints and what has been invested and then the meeting begins and seven or eight hundred Chinese believers are singing the praises of God to the God of Jacob and the God of Israel. Do you have a word for that? If you're incapable of the poignancy of such a moment, you're not living in your full humanity and salvation means a salvation to the uttermost, that we are full orbed men and women who are alive in the inner man and have a respect and an affinity for things by which where we can be touched. Pathos is the ability to be touched and to be touched in those things that are too deep for words.

Well, that brings me to the little booklet on the Bride of Christ written by Basilia Schlenk, now passed on through the Lord. I think she died in her mid-90s, about my mother's age, only within this last year. I had the privilege of having her ladle gravy on my food at a meal where I was invited with my German interpreter and honored.

One of the sisters came and recited a poem written in our honor and mother Basilia ladled gravy. Always took a personal interest in Ben Israel, Inga, what we are about. When I first visited that place and came through the gate in Darmstadt, Germany, I felt that I had entered heaven.

There's something indescribable. There was something so hallowed in the atmosphere that prevailed in that place that I was immediately touched. I learned later that when David Wilkerson made the same visit after touring the property, someone told me, I think it's true, he flung himself upon the compost heap.

He felt so much the sinner by contrast of the sense of holiness that prevailed in that place that he threw himself on the compost heap. I didn't go that far, but I could well appreciate a man doing something like that. Later on, that movement dispersed its sisters to different parts of the world, and that's why you'll find them today in Australia and Europe and different nations, Denmark even.

I went to visit them in Cairo, and I thought, huh, one thing to maintain the kind of sanctified atmosphere that you have established in Germany, because Germany lends itself to that. There's a whole history and tradition of celibate communities of men and women that are Protestant and who are married to the Lord, so to speak, that is outside of our American experience. I can understand that your movement will have a conducive environment in Germany.

By the way, the movement was born in 1945 at the end of World War II when Darmstadt was ruthlessly bombed. Without any apparent reason, it had no longer any military or strategic value. Like Dresden, the city famous for its china, both of them were demolished at about the same time with firebombs, armadas of Allied bombers flying overhead, so that tens upon tens of thousands died from suffocation.

The fires were so intense that the air was sucked up. People were mired in the asphalt. Their feet were stuck in melting asphalt, and they perished.

And the way in which Vasily Ishchenko responded was that this was God's judgment upon Germany for its brutal mistreatment of the Jew. It was a movement born in repentance for Germany for its conduct toward the Jew. That was its very inception.

And they have, I believe to this day, maintained that character. So when I went up to Cairo to visit them, I thought, huh, one thing to maintain this atmosphere in Germany. Let's see you maintain it in one of the most congested cities in the world.

Fourteen million people, donkeys, camels, asses, roads that have lanes for two cars, have four cars, and people drive by censor, not by white markings. You guys don't know what the world is like. And they honk their horns continually so as to know whether somebody to the right or to the left and front and the rear.

And the noise is day and night, as is the stink, the smell, the garbage, the filth, the congestion, the animals, the poverty. It's overwhelming. Let's see you be spiritual in an environment like that.

One thing in Germany, but let's see you do it in Egypt, in Cairo, where people spit with their phlegm. It's vile, it's Islamic, it's poisonous, it's corruptive. And I was in its hospitals in 1964 with an ear infection and a hepatitis because I ate their food mindlessly.

I almost died. The Jewish community paid my medical bill. You'll read about it in Ben Israel.

So I went up this flight of stairs where these sisters have their apartment, expecting that they would be adversely affected by having to live in an environment of that kind. I know I could not maintain any kind of spirituality when everything in that society militates against it. And the door opened and the same breath and sense of God's presence and sense of holiness, sanctity that had prevailed in Darmstadt was there also.

And so the sisters showed me that we as believers can triumph over every adverse thing that is to be found in our environments. And there can be an island of sanctity, sanity, the presence of God in the midst of turbulence. So it's a remarkable movement.

I'm saying all that to heighten your appreciation of what I'm about to read selections from her little booklet that I've had for years and never till now have picked up because the subject itself was a little icky. This, what do they say, passion for Jesus. There's something about romanticizing this relationship that almost borders on a kind of erotic note.

So how do you maintain what is properly bridal without it becoming disfigured into something sensuous or worse yet erotic? Because these women are demonstrating to us what is the ultimate character of the church for which we are presently being fitted. One little chapter is called suffering, sharing Jesus' sufferings in the end times. A great blessing is granted to the bride of Jesus Christ in these end times on which vital souls in other centuries were not able to experience to such an extent, apart from a few single out by the Lord to share in some measure in this fashion.

Today, a bride of Jesus should bear not only his sufferings from Gethsemane to Calvary in her heart, but also his present day sufferings. They are the only movement that I know that speak about the present sufferings of the Lord. We always think of it in past tense, the sufferings that accompanied his passion at

Calvary, but that he has present sufferings, that there are present griefs never occurred to me.

But when you think on it, why not? He's a man of sorrow still, and his heart is grieved still. And who commiserates with him? Who senses the ache of his heart and wants to be a solace and a comfort as any wife would be to a husband? You know, to know that your husband is anguished in his soul and is bearing something and to be indifferent to that is not to be wifely. So, today a bride of Jesus should bear not only his past, but his present day sufferings.

Nowadays, Jesus is being crucified many times over throughout the world. Hebrews 6.6. Because of the falling away of thousands who are once consecrated to God, among them are souls who have betrayed their Lord and who in positions of Christian leadership are leading countless numbers astray. Jesus must witness a fallen humanity wallowing in the most appalling sins that the world has ever known, and the growing influence of Satan in many lives.

Satan is acknowledged as Lord, small I, with many consciously or unconsciously serving him. And so the earth increasingly bears the imprint of hell. Jesus is suffering immeasurably.

His heart is almost breaking. Well, how would you know that? Are you guessing or are you in such proximity to that heart that you sense it? This is pathos. This is what is too close, too deep for words.

This isn't something that you obtain through analysis. This is something that you obtain through intimacy and through union. They sense his heart.

It is impossible for his bride to be indifferent. Love shares in the sufferings of the beloved, as every bride knows. Yet many who know the Lord confess with sadness, oh, my love is still so small.

The suffering of Jesus today ought to stir my heart more deeply, kindling in me the desire to share in his sufferings. Don't misread this or don't mishear this as if this is some masochistic delight in a kind of suffering. I want to suffer like the great Russian actors.

This is not that. Don't think that this is maudlin, M-A-U-D-L-I-N. Maudlin, define that.

Maudlin is a perverse kind of sentimentality that likes and enjoys a kind of morbid suffering. This is not that. Don't misread this.

This is pure. This is holy. This is different.

This is not some enjoyment of suffering that one goes out of his way to experience. This is a suffering that inexorably comes by virtue of the kind of relationship one has with the man of sorrows. This is the kind of suffering that comes when you know what will grieve him because you love what he loves and hate what he hates.

That when he says it's an abomination for him, it's an abomination for you. While all the world celebrates and loves the rap culture and the music and the metallic noise and so on, a person who has this affinity for the Lord shatters and knows that he has to look upon it and sees it more clearly than we, for everything is transparent in his sight and nothing is hidden. Praise God for us.

There is a certain protection. If we could see the whole condition of the world and the nation wallowing in what it does, I don't know that we could take it. But he sees it all and has got to take it.

And it's a grief because Satan is busy to mar and to distort all that is made in his image. He wants to take a delight in marring creation itself, in uprooting it, in disfiguring it, in raping it. So the Lord is watching as all of this takes place, this traffic, this commercialism.

Children themselves are now objects of merchandise. It's interesting that at the end of Zachariah, it says there's no longer a Canaanite in the land or in Jerusalem. And the word for Canaanite is a merchandiser, that the spirit of merchandise has been taken out in the city that has been made holy.

So much merchandising is taking place in our religious world and allowing ministries to prevail and succeed. And we ourselves, suckers, are responsive to that. Full-color mailings and four-color this and in the mailboxes.

I don't want to mention the name of the ministry, but it is symptomatic of many of the biggest named ministries in our nation today, where I was given the red carpet tour, not because I deserved it, but because a bishop from Singapore, whose son or daughter is enrolled in the school established by that ministry, was given the gold, the red carpet tour, because he's a principal donor. And because I was chaplain, so to speak, for that group, I went in with them. And I saw the great banks of computers, like nothing I had ever seen, filling a vast football field-sized building with, I don't know how many employees, sifting the letters that had come in, in response to the telecasts and to the sowing of seed faith.

And that the answer was already programmed on the machine in which the data had been factored in, so that the name of the person could be in the letter which they receive and something of their prayer request acknowledged. So the person would get a letter back, Dear Sister Smith, I have read your letter and have taken it before the Lord, and we pray that your mother's ailment will soon be healed. Thank you for your contribution of twelve dollars and fifty cents.

Know that it goes into the king... to learn that the man who signs the letter had not even so much as read that letter, and that the reply is already calculated electronically and automatically. And so tens of thousands of replies can be factored. And there are women, full-time employees who are not Christians, opening the letters, taking out the check, sending it on a conveyor belt in one basket, and then the rest on another.

It was horrible. I don't have a word to describe it. And the young man showing us around was boasting in it and saying, even if our founder dies, he said, the system will still go on.

And boasting in that, the Lord sees all that, dear souls, and anguishes. And the poor soul who had sent twelve fifty from her social security check, receives that letter with the great man's name, who says, who calls me by my first name, and that he acknowledges my prayer request and that he's praying. Her heart is uplifted.

It's deceitful, dubious, what's the word for it? It's merchandise. And they make millions a month, millions a month. Their income is astronomical because it works on the principle that if you send out a sufficient quantity and get only two, three, four, or five percent response, it will more than pay for the mailing and add greatly to your comforts.

And so these great ministries have found the world's principle and are practicing it. So we have a suffering Lord. Jesus is waiting for his bride to respond to his suffering, for a true bride wants to share the innermost burdens or concerns of her bridegroom.

Jesus wants to show his bride what is on his heart and impress it on her. Lord, what's on your heart for your people Israel at this very historic moment? What's on your heart for the New York Jews? What's on your heart for the people in Israel and their increasing calamity? What's on your heart knowing that they're moving irresistibly, ineluctably, inexorably, catch the language, to disaster, to catastrophe, for which there'll be no remedy? What's on your heart when you know that the church by and large does not even anticipate this and has made no preparation and will be itself taken by surprise and stunned in the suddenness with which this will come and be disappointed in you? Because how can you allow Israel again a second time within the same century to suffer a catastrophe of this magnitude? Something is wrong with you. Something is wrong with the scriptures because we had believed that this Israel was the fulfillment of prophetic expectancy.

So we are disillusioned and we might even just flake off and cop out from the faith and be among the great numbers that fall into apostasy as Paul has predicted in the last days. Out of disappointment of expectations that were shallow and not tempered and not instructed and were convenient because of believers who wanted Israel to succeed as they want themselves to succeed as if the issue of success is the issue. And so you say, well, isn't it? No.

The issue is not success. The issue is glory. And have you ever known from scripture that glory should not first be preceded by suffering? Why then are we naive not to expect that a nation that will glorify God forever, both in his judgments and dispersal and in their restoration and return, should go through that without a suffering and that we should go through it without a suffering? That they should experience that and we should be unaffected and be disappointed if it happens and be disappointed in them and even join the world's course saying you got what you had coming? What is in the present heart of the Lord? What is his innermost concern and burden? Jesus wants to show his bride what is on his heart and impress it on her so that she will become more and more intimately united with him as she shares in his suffering.

Suffering is not just external or physical. Maybe the most painful kind is that kind that is internal and within. As I often say, the worst sufferings I've ever experienced have not come externally.

It's not from Jews who have spat at me or kicked me when I'm standing on a soapbox on Broadway and 72nd Street preaching the gospel. The greatest affliction and pain that I've had to experience in 38 years as a believer has come from the church, from God's own people, from the brother with whom I broke bread and we went into the house of the Lord together and to experience not only his betrayal but his seeking to bring others to the same place as he himself. Jesus feels especially for his bride who has to live in these end times.

Increasingly she is rejected by a society that promotes the triumph of evil because it is dominated by hellish concepts and methods, satanic music and idols. It is a painful experience for the bride of Jesus to be ostracized even in Christian circles which are often infiltrated or seduced by the deception of our times. Have you guys taken note of the Elvis Presley revival? Talk about revivals.

What they can do with a dead man is pass finding out. Who died out of being overdressed has now become a new culture hero to a whole generation after the time through public relations machinations. It's remarkable and you're flooding to Memphis to see the mansion of the great figure and his music now being put in albums and selling by the millions.

There's big money in this and what is it doing? The kids that are being sucked into this and many of them are not kids. Middle class women are traipsing out there and look at the mansion-sized bed upon which

the great figure had lain. Want to see his limousine or his bathroom fixtures or the toilet that he flushed.

Talk about idolatry and how can their children come on Sunday to the Sunday school and listening to some well-meaning plotting servant going on and discussing bible stories or trying to indicate something of the riches of scripture. How do you compete with that flash and glitz that is so powerful that men have never attained such mastery in the manipulation of human beings as we're now seeing in the world of merchandise. I cannot believe it's mere human unaided skill or intelligence that satan himself that wily serpent is himself infiltrating and influencing men who are selling their souls in order to obtain fame and fortune and we live in that environment.

How come we're not flinching? Why don't we wince? Why don't we grieve? If we lose our sensitivity to that and become dull and just accept it as normative we have lost the keen edge and the world has prevailed. So to maintain sensitivity to those things and an anguish over them, to write a letter to the editor, to complain as I have done about these giant cut-out figures from Star Wars that Pepsi-Cola advertised and paid 25 million dollars or more for the right to use the Star War name and in the public school in Cass Lake in the school breaks, maybe I'm just naive I'm from another generation, in the 10 minute break whatever it is to go from one room to the other the loudspeakers begin to play rock and roll music. They can't make it from the one class to the other except they have this kind of accompaniment.

So the world is becoming profaned, coarse, deadened in its spirit and there is a generation being prepared who will be incapable of human sentiment and kindness. How does it say perilous times shall come men shall become lovers of self, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God without natural affection. That's what I'm looking for.

That is to say capable of cruelty without blinking an eye. Our murderers are already being prepared by this present culture. What about the dinosaurs and what about the ET and all the monsters that kids cuddle and take to bed with them.

They have it imprinted on their sheets and pillowcases. What is the enemy doing but deadening the sensibility of a generation that will be our murderers by making a very comfortable now with demons and that they can cuddle and have an affection for more than they have an affection for us I can assure you. By the way noise, tumult, confusion are intrinsic evidences of the activity of the enemy.

You'll see it in the Psalms. Just reading it today Psalm 59 that the noise and the tumult of the enemy. I thought how characteristic the enemy loves chaos, bedlam, noise, confusion, deadening of our humanity and our sensibilities.

The Lord loves quiet. Be still and know that I am God. To find a place of quiet is an accomplishment in our generation and we have a whole generation of kids that goes back even to earlier times who can't do their homework without the TV set on or without the radio on without something binning in the background because silence somehow chills them.

Do you love silence? I love silence. I love quiet and so when we break the silence to speak a word from God the word will be so much more hallowed and choice because if we reveal silence we will reveal the sound of the word when it comes but if we are deadened and have not a respect for silence we'll have not a respect for words either. So keep your heart with all diligence in such a time as this and know that the Lord grieves when he looks down upon a world moving toward a Sodom and Gomorrah final collapse of all morality.

It's no longer the issue of morality versus immorality. What's worse than immorality is amorality. To become amoral is to lose any moral sense at all and that's the deadening that is presently taking place that one cannot even say what is good or bad is not affected by what is good or bad you have become amoral, atheistic, amusement.

The word the prefix a negates the word that follows so to become amused which is great business today and unhappily many Jews are in the forefront of those businesses in marketing the rap thing and they're all about music culture so-called but to be amused is to negate musing and the word muse means to reflect, to consider, to meditate, to contemplate. Isaac was a man of the tent. Abraham was a man of the tent.

God is wanting the J fifth nations as you'll probably hear tomorrow or soon to bow to enter the tent of Shem. There's something about a tent and its mobility and quiet that is suggestive of contemplation, the contemplation of God. So to be amused is to negate the ability to reflect and to contemplate.

We would be bored. We need to have something visual, something auditory, something sensual. We need movement, we need motion, we need noise or we're doing or we're distracted and we're bored.

What will we do if we are the only source of our own enjoyment is the saints and we're cut off at the pass. We can no longer go into town or gas is not available and we're locked in with ourselves. So in these end time sufferings the heavenly bridegroom comforts her and endows her with glory.

She undergoes these sufferings in union with him and in complete surrender to the will of God. Yes, he uses them to transfer, transform her into his image so that she stands out more than ever against her surroundings. She's implying that it's suffering in union with the bridegroom that brings the very transformation of the believer into a bridal state.

I've never heard this thought expressed and it seems sensible and worthy of every consideration. Where many faces today reflect the sin and darkness of our times, her face reflects Jesus. She is radiant with an inner beauty born of the deep suffering she has to endure in the end times just by virtue of the end times themselves.

Not necessarily the persecution but the character of the end times and its depravity. Sharing in the fellowship of her sufferings increasingly refines and transforms her making her strong and radiant. Having to live in this satanic age does not have a depressing effect on the bride.

Many others witnessing the devastation caused by sin grow discouraged or come under a sense of oppression. The bride bears the pain in union with Jesus rather than alone. Her suffering is bound up with his.

This is why the end time sorrows are incapable of driving her like some believers to despair. Her heart is filled with divine life and love which no suffering can destroy. This divine life impels her to make the most of the short time left to express her love for Jesus by ministering to others in love and actively serving in his kingdom.

So this is not some kind of retiring into some separate idealistic mystical union with the Lord where you're walking on eggshells and you can't touch the world or those that are suffering or are lost in it. Quite the contrary. This kind of vital love compels you to come into the world and pluck the branch from the burning and to have a sense of the lostness that is in the world and the shortness of the time that remains.

So I'm happy for that night note that she strikes lest we think that we ought to be encouraged into some kind of idealistic reverie of living in some kind of glass house and just Jesus and me. The Lord is concerned for the world. He so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son.

So there's a cry in her heart. Divine judgment is about to descend. Judgment such as the world has never seen.

The earth will be in a turmoil. Mountains will tremble and fall. The oceans will roar.

Large tracts of land will be submerged. Disastrous earthquakes will strike with growing frequency. Cities and entire areas will be erased from the map.

There will be scenes of untold devastation and misery. Many will lose their lives. In view of the coming judgment of God, a true bride of Christ is gripped with a consuming ardor.

A-R-D-O-U-R. Time is short. I've got to do all that I can before it's too late.

She takes her place beside the Savior as he rescues souls from the abyss of sin in which mankind lies today. Like an extended alma of the Lord, she helps to save those perishing in sin and misery through repentance, priestly suffering and prayers, as well as outreach. Through repentance, priestly suffering and prayer.

This is priestly ministry. What makes it priestly? And how will that affect reaching out to the lost in an age in which these severe judgments are falling and already falling? It affects the whole character of it. It's the difference between brash evangelism, are you saved, brother? And you'll face hell if you're not, as against a priestly ministrations of the same message that is so fused and charged with a pathos and an empathy of God's heart.

For that one will be victim if they don't turn. Priestly is altogether something else. And if there's any value in our service and ministry of our own self-enhancement or our own enjoyment, like that man in Switzerland who picked me up at the side of the road, if there was something in it for him to put a notch in his belt that he has saved a Jew, I would not have been saved.

That very attitude and character, I would have instinctively recoiled, but that was not part of him. But what he expressed to me, now that I look back, was altogether priestly, which is to say, personally disinterested. There was nothing to be gained for him in his ministrations to me.

It was entirely unto the Lord. Israel has not seen that kind of ministry. I'm talking about the land of Christian Zionists who have come with a kind of sentimental concern, but it's not priestly.

There's something that returns to them in a kind of satisfaction and an enjoyment that affects the character of the witness that goes forth. To be priestly is not to profit from your ministry, even psychologically or emotionally, and therefore you do not need applause and recognition, and therefore you can just as readily receive rejection. It's a priestly stature, and that's what he describes as being intrinsic to the bridal makeup obtained in union with the bridegroom to the degree in which we share in his sufferings.

I'm not saying thus saith the Lord about any of this. I'm wanting to contemplate it, but I think that there are so few who have any insight like this. It's worth our hearing and testified by the reality of that movement, and so far as I have been able to see it and know it over the years.

Her book on repentance, I think, is an all-time classic, *Repentance, the Secret of the Joy-Filled Life*, and many years ago, when the wall still stood, some brothers in publishing asked me, what one book would I recommend for translation and publication in Russian? And I thought, and for a moment I said, Master Leo Schlinck's book on *Repentance, the Secret of the Joy-Filled Life*. So she has a, or now she's passed on, had a depth of insight that did not flinch from the judgments of God and interpreted present calamity and disorder in the world as being already preliminary judgments sent from God as a mercy to alert those to be, who would turn in order to avoid the ultimate judgments that subsequently follow. She's not some ivory tower saint who does not see reality.

She lived through it. The movement was born out of the judgment that fell on Germany in the Allied bombings that turned their cities into melted asphalt. So through repentance, priestly suffering, and prayers as well as outreach, she helps to draw people out of the jaws of hell.

To this end, she sacrifices time, money, sleep, and so on. On her sacrifice may lie on a different plane, the willingness to bear affliction, the trials of everyday life, the collapse of her plans or the thwarting of her will. So there's different kinds of suffering.

Here she's mentioning the kind of suffering that I think is a necessary ingredient in community. You'll not have community unless there's a willingness to bear affliction, the trials of everyday life, the tensions that come with intensity of relationship that is more than just Sunday services, the collapse of personal plans, the thwarting of one's will. Such acts of dedication underline her prayers as she battles her souls threatened by the powers of darkness.

The bride's suffering with the Lord yields great fruit, as suffering born in union with him always does. Yes, the end times, probably more than any former era, create a special bond between the bride of Christ and her bridegroom. We enter the fellowship of his sufferings.

I've never heard anyone expound on that. But there is a distinct fellowship of a kind of those who will share in those sufferings. And you don't have to look for the sufferings.

It's not manufacturing them or producing the circumstances by which they will come so you can enter their fellowship. It will come of itself. Be assured you'll be a candidate for it by virtue of this disposition of intimacy toward and for the Lord will itself provoke the powers of darkness to see you as one mark and one upon whom they will ventilate their hatred against him.

Suffering that constitutes the fellowship will be the logic of a life that is lived for God totally. You'll not have to look for it and you'll not have to manufacture it. It's not some masochistic desire.

It will come in and of itself just by your obedience, by your service to the Lord, by being willing to be identified with his burdens and to express them to men. This in turn is an incentive to even greater love. Jesus pours out his love and compassion.

You're going to say his pathos into the heart of his bride and with whom he is so closely united. Pathos is not something that we have to drum up or that we fabricate. It comes from the God who is himself compassion.

He is mercy. And to the degree that we are in union with him in a fellowship of the sufferings through the school of obedience, he communicates what he is in himself to those who are in that kind of union. It also is something to be derived in the times of fellowship with the Lord in the early morning times of

communion.

I can't say enough about that. That there's something of a profound kind lost to those saints who cannot find time for the Lord at the commencement of the day, before they touch the world, before they leave their homes, to have gotten up early enough to seek him and to wait upon him, not for the benefit that we hope for, but because of who he is in himself, deserving the first fruit of our day and the first and best awake liveness toward him. Something is communicated, whether you're conscious of it or not.

And it comes out in the public time. I don't know how to say this. It comes out, you can hear it in the prayer of saints.

You can tell from the resonance of their prayer, the weight of it, the heft of the prayer, their comments, their observation. They're very daring that somehow this is a statement of an interior private time and life with God, of which no one knows, but they and he alone. So I'm happy that this is coming up in my sharing to encourage you to that.

And I regret that I myself was not encouraged in my early years to seek a time of communion. And now it is making all the difference. Well, you who were here for the Sunday message received the benefit.

I didn't have it Saturday night. Where did it come from? It came out of the Sunday morning time of communion itself, because in that time is prayer coming before the Lord at the acknowledgement that we are nearest dust, that we have nothing that compels him even to consider us and that we cast ourselves before him in his great mercy, which is new every morning and then turn to the devotional materials at hand, the Psalm for the day, the chapter of Proverbs for the day, Oswald Chambers for the day or other readings. And it was in Oswald Chambers speaking about the rich young ruler that instantly came alive.

And I went to the account in the scripture and began to see things that I had never seen before. And then noticed what follows the episode with the blind beggar crying out, Jesus, thou son of David, and the juxtaposition of the rich young ruler and the blind beggar became the message given in the devotional time. So there's much to be had.

God is waiting for those who are seeking and seek him consistently and something is communicated. In this case, it was a message, but even when you're not conscious of it, something of the Lord in whose presence you're waiting, because he deserves to be sought, is communicated in to your interior man, into the inner man, whether or not you're conscious of it. And it will come out, the cumulative times before the Lord will come out in the authority of the Lord and the character of the Lord, the disposition of the Lord, because you've had this time.

You're not seeking him for that benefit, but it accrues to you because you've come to him in a priestly way, not for the benefit, but for what he is in himself. So I commend that. Will you believe that he is at 5 a.m. or 4.30 or whenever it is, when all you feel is the cold draft on the floor and there's no sense of God's presence and your words feel like lead that hardly reached the ceiling, let alone ascend on high? Will you believe that he is and that he's a rewarder of those who diligently seek him when there's no sensate awareness of his presence? A bridal believer does not need the confirmation of the sensed, felt presence of God to know that he is and that he's there.

And I think that the final testing of us will come as it did for the Lord at the cross of the sense, not of God's presence, of his forsakenness. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? And that true love will

believe for the Lord in his presence, independent of the sense of his absence. And that's a bride adorned for the bridegroom.

But I don't think that we're going to come to that condition in one fell swoop in another moment if we are not progressively and continually and consciously moving to that relationship. You know what the remarkable thing is? I can't even remember where I've suffered. I don't remember.

Did I? There's a remarkable forgetfulness. You don't save up the episodes and relish them. They fall into the sea of forgetfulness.

Maybe they're recorded in the archives of heaven. But I think that a bridal saint does not take note of their afflictions and make a case of it, or continually feeling their pulse and what is their response or the reaction. And how do you feel when that happens? I wasn't even aware how I felt.

I'm not concerned how I felt. I'm not living in that subjectivity, that as if my feeling and how it affects me is the issue. There's a remarkable senselessness.

I don't know if I've come to that in a perfect way, but I think it's God's intention that we would be beside ourselves. And what did Paul say? That who was stoned, left for dead, shipwrecked in the sea day and night, beaten with rods five times with the cat and nine tails, 39 strokes that cut his flesh to the bone. He said, I count my sufferings as a momentary and light affliction, seeing the eternal weight of glory.

There's a perfect answer for you. Who is more the sufferer than Paul? And a true apostle must know apostolic suffering, apostolic denial, apostolic rejection. Maybe the rejection of his own people who desired to see him dead and said that he's not fit to live was a more painful thing to bear than the lashing of his back.

What about the weight of the church, his problems and the failures, the disappointments? How about the accusations that he was himself a false apostle and some other hotshot was the real thing. He had to bear all of that. And yet he said, I count my afflictions as being both momentary and life.

That means they're fleeting momentary. You forget it in view of the thing that is invisible and eternal. So here's a picture of the bridal Saint.

He's already envisioning the Lord and the eternal union with him. That is what Stephen saw. How does Stephen bear his suffering? When the blood was running down his face and into his mouth and into his eyes and the stones thudding on your nose, when your flesh instinctively rises up in anger at that one who dares abuse your flesh, you're dying by inches and you have every reason to cry out against those that are afflicting you.

Lord forgive them for they know not what they do. His, his, his, how does it say it? He saw the heavens opened and Jesus at the right standing at the right hand of the Father and the glory of God. When you see that you don't feel the stones, but I think it's, it can be clear that that wasn't just a momentary provision in a final moment of extremity.

It was a condition in which he had long continued, which is the very reason he was brought to the place of stoning. He came to the attention of the Jewish community because he was a conspicuous saint of an ultimate kind who was radiant and his face was like an angel and could confound the doctors of the law with his greater wisdom. That's what brought him to that confrontation that ended his life.

So the end was not a momentary grace. It was an open heaven that he only saw because he was filled with the spirit. He was in union with the Lord that the Lord got up to greet him and to receive his expiring saint.

That's, that's the first description of martyrdom next to the crucifixion of Jesus. And I believe with watchmanly that what is described at the first is a paradigm of a pattern that will have a final expression at the end. Someone said today that maybe what the Jews are needing is a church willing to beat for them a Stephen.

That's what it took for Saul in his inveterate hatred of this heresy and out in his self-righteous religious indignation to expunge it. He had to see a man die more gloriously than ever he saw anyone live, who was only a waiter on tables, had no religious credentials, no distinction. And Paul, once seeing that was not able ever to spit that out.

He had to kick against the pricks. The Lord said, why do you kick against the pricks? What, what were the pricks? This Stephen to see that beatific expression on a man dying by inches, who somehow unaware that he's even a victim. No self-pity, no anger, only concern for those souls who were his victimizers.

You can't see that and not be a candidate for the God who made Stephen, Stephen. For what he saw in Stephen was God. We can almost say, I hope I'm not perilously close to heresy, God himself is ultimate martyr.

He's the witness. What does it say? The first witness, Jesus himself is a word that precedes witness. He's the ultimate witness.

The word Greek for witness is *materia*, martyr. Martyrdom is ultimate witness that God is God for it reveals God as God, as the one who is willing to give up his life for another. And so where is a bride adorned for that bride group? What some, some woman who's having hastily to do something of a cosmetic kind to make herself acceptable, who has not seen to a quality and condition of life consistently, and that cannot be made up cosmetically in the final moment, whose character has been shaped and formed in the school of obedience and suffering.

That's the bride. What is it going to be some, some hag, some loud mouth, some witchy female insisting on her rights and to be an appropriate bride for the lamb who is meek. That's why Peter says in first Peter, let your adorning not be the awkward braiding of hair and so on and so forth, but a quiet and a meek spirit, which in God's sight is of great price.

So I often say to the women who are ambitious for the ministries. Well, have you considered your ultimate ministry for which your present ministry may actually be a distraction, a side alley that your true and ultimate mystery is to depict to the church. What is the church's own destiny as the bride of Christ? We need to see in you what a quiet and meek spirit is, not quiet in the sense that you clench your teeth while inwardly you're seething for your rights and that you can do it as good as any man.

Of course you can, maybe even better, but your willingness not to do it and to give the man an opportunity to come out from the shadows who is intimidated by your superiority and be willing to die to your ability and to relinquish it that you were given it not to succeed in it, but to give it up. That he might come forth and you in union with him as the one life together so that his speaking is as satisfactory to you as if you had spoken it. Because you're no longer two separate entities who are sharing the same facility and have

your own ministries, your one life, one calling, one purpose, one being.

Because the wife has a quiet and meek spirit and defers and yields, relinquishes and gives up, is the very character of God. So what is it that hinders us from entering into this stature? It is the self-life. We are still dominated by our ego with its wishes and demands.

We may be quick to take offense when corrected, wronged or denied the recognition we think we deserve. In our hearts we may even harbor bitter feelings and accusations. Or perhaps we find it hard to accept difficult, seemingly meaningless paths or times of spiritual dryness when the Lord seems far away.

If we are dominated by our ego like this, a barrier is erected. We cannot reach his heart and our love for Jesus cannot develop. But if we pray for contrition about these points and are willing to mend our ways, the barrier will come down.

Jesus will allow us to share in his sufferings, the greatest privilege there is since it brings the deepest union with him. The fellowship of Jesus' sufferings here on earth will bring the bride wonderful fellowship with him in the heavenly glory. There she will see him and be united with him in never-ending joy.

Yet even here, during the horrors of this satanic age, the bride of Jesus has a tremendous hope. While she increasingly witnesses the advance of Satan, she has the assurance of Jesus' final victory, which she helps to proclaim and even usher in. Even amid the darkness of our times, she sees it dawning on the horizon.

So in contrast to the most tangible manifestations of darkness, a light all the more powerful shines forth from the bride of Jesus Christ. Suddenly her hidden life, her love and suffering with God are revealed for all the world to see, testifying of Jesus' divine life in her, that inextinguishable life which defeated death and hell. Thus she helps to pave the way for his resurrection victory to be manifested in his coming kingdom.

She has oil for her lamp and when the night call comes that the bridegroom is at the door, she is ready. Not only is her lamp trimmed and lit, but she has an additional oil if there is any delay in the bridegroom's coming while the other virgins, equally waiting for the marriage feast, are taken by surprise and they do not have a supply beyond the moment and need in that last moment the scurry to find it and when they obtain it, the door is locked and they cannot enter. I don't know what this means but it's sobering to consider and I think that the oil is the life of God.

Someone in one of our conversations at the breakfast table or lunch table, it had to be lunch, the issue came up about anointing. What is the phenomenon of anointing? It's a holy thing, sacred. Those of us who labor in the word for the Lord and before his people cherish the anointing.

I had an early experience. I was a hot shot and a whiz kid. I had a testimony.

You could hear the proverbial pin drop when the Lord had me to share that testimony before hundreds of people. The testimony itself was anointed and the one time I was sailing along as if it was me and for a moment the Lord removed the anointing and I can't tell you how horrific that moment was. It seemed to last an eternity.

I chafed. I went red in my face. I was totally embarrassed that the Lord had withdrawn something that I thought was with me and when it happened, I knew instantly what he was saying.

Don't presume that this is yours to command or that you can invoke it at your convenience at any time. If I don't give it, you don't have it. It's from the throne of heaven and from that time forth, I hope never again to need that reminder of the holy unction without which the most correct and best word falls limply to the ground.

It must have that life-giving penetrating power that the unction and anointing of God is. In an interview that's on video that you can have here called Timeless Interview, it is timeless because the man who interviewed me had nothing in it to serve for himself. The questions that he asked drew out the very heart of God and there was a point where the subject of anointing came up and I heard myself saying something that I've never again spoken or spoken publicly and I don't even know if I dare express it now, but it had something to do with this oil.

I said, I think that there's a residue that comes into the deeps of a believer with every instance of obedience to which he or she is called by the Lord, all the more and especially when that obedience will provoke a reaction against yourself or you'll have to suffer a degree of reproach for it. Every obedience that entails a suffering somehow in my imagining leaves behind a residue of something of the oil of God and so by the many such instances there's something formed of an anointing of an unction in the entire person and maybe that was the kind of oil that these virgins had obtained, not just for the moment, but even for the delay while others did not have that supply because they wanted the quality of relationship, intimacy and obedience that the five wise virgins had. So I'm just throwing that out as a speculation because that's what a prophet does.

He's speculative and takes the risk of making aspersions and allusions and suggestions that can't be documented but are provocative and evocative and might serve the purposes of God. So take it in that sense. I like to, I don't know why I said that, it just came out in a completely unrehearsed way, but now that I think of it, the oil that these wise virgins had in their lamps had somehow been obtained, not where it is to be purchased but to be given by the Lord whom we serve in those instances of obedience where there's a suffering that follows in the act of it and in the consequence of it.

The Lord somehow, because that's the Lord, the reunion with very God, that's the way he himself is, that's his own character and when you are with him in that act, something is communicated that remains, I trust, as a residue. So when the call comes, the bridegroom is at the door, though it be midnight, suggestive of great darkness, trial and maybe the last days kinds of affliction that will come, we are ready to join him and to enter that remarkable marriage feast and celebration and not be shut out. Despite the tangible manifestations of darkness, a light all the more powerful shines forth from the bride of Jesus Christ.

Suddenly her hidden life, her love and suffering with God are revealed. Do you have a hidden life with the Lord? I often say, do you have a history of a hidden life with the Lord? Do you have a history of a secret, of a thing unknown to others that you have nurtured and cultivated out of love for him? That comes forth, as Elise Link is saying, when the darkness is the greatest. What had been secret now becomes revealed publicly.

The light and radiance that had been accumulated in all those quiet times of seeking the Lord for his own sake, unbeknownst to others, now somehow radiates out into that darkness. And that will be a beam of light for those who would otherwise be engulfed in that darkness and perish. It testifies of the divine life, the inextinguishable life which defeated death and hell.

So this is what we see happening, not just in individual bridal souls. Today a whole company of bridal souls has come into being as a clear sign of the emerging dominion of Jesus Christ. What a unique phase in divine history.

While Satan and his servants rage and blaspheme, that Christ out to heaven, we are privileged in our day to see the bridal host of Jesus Christ crystallizing. Don't think that this is an individual matter alone. This is a corporate matter.

The bridal company, the corporate expression of the bride, is the new Jerusalem that comes down from above of a bride that has made herself ready. It speaks in individual terms, but the genius of it is corporate and it's being formed now. So sometimes without having ever met before, those who love Jesus are automatically drawn together, united by a common concern.

They speak out publicly against blasphemy and make a stand for their Lord, one in their love for him despite their various backgrounds. So in the end times, we find a whole group of people uniquely providing their love for Jesus as they share in the fellowship of the sufferings. Precious God, save us from schmaltz, save us from sentimentality, save us from corrupting this and demeaning it.

There's something holy here, Lord. I praise God for a woman who has a relationship and you've kept alive till she was 95, 96 because she lived by that life. She was in communion and union with you.

She was wise to the day of her death, remarkable the things that issued from her of which this is not the least. And who would dare even take up the topic and dare to express themselves in it who are just blunderers and coarse and dull and have not even begun to feel for a relationship like this. So my God, what are you saying to us? That if we're to be to Israel and to the Jew in the last days what we must, we must at the same time be this.

And in fact, the two are inseparable. We cannot be to them what we ought, except we are this to you. And because we're this to you, we are that to them.

And you'll see what they have never seen. Something of yourself depicted in a bride adorned for the bridegroom, having the character, the holiness of God. So Lord, this ends the age.

And we ask that you would give us every grace that we would see our daily occasions and opportunities to grow in this grace. And that you will give us and draw out our hearts to spend that time with you, to seek you out and to meet with you Lord and to have something imparted and imputed that waits in fellowship, either the fellowship of communion in communion in the early morning times or the fellowship of sufferings in the school of obedience. But there's something of a mystery of what that fellowship means that affects our eternal destiny, configuration, and identity for which you wait a bride appropriate for you.

Show me the bride appropriate for you. And we're called to be it corporately. So Lord, bless, help, give grace, draw out our hearts, give us a desire to be such and school us and bring us, my God, into a daily, a knowledge of this thing, a proximity, a closeness.

We bless you. Thank you for sounding this note tonight. Let it not be a last note.

If there's yet more to be expressed and show us my God where we presently are and where you would have us to be. We bless you a whole church with a quiet and the meek spirit, which is in your sight of great price. We're full of striving.

We're full of contention. We have our pet categories and doctrines and all of the rest. So forming us, my God, your own essential character of the lamb.

We bless you. Thank you, Lord, for the preciousness of the call in Jesus name.

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