

God Remembers Your First Love

by Erlo Stegen

God remembers Israel's first love and longs for it to be restored, warning of consequences if we forsake Him and create idols.

Duration: 1:05:38

Topics: "First Love"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher shares a story about a young man who had lost his inheritance due to his reckless lifestyle. However, after encountering the Lord, he changed his ways and his father decided to reinstate his inheritance. The preacher then reads from Jeremiah 3:12-14, where God calls out to the backsliding Israel and offers them a chance to return to Him. The sermon emphasizes the importance of acknowledging one's sins and turning back to God, rather than being enticed by worldly desires. The preacher warns against becoming friends with the world, as it is considered enmity with God.

Transcript

Our text is Jeremiah 3, verse 12 to 14. 14a. We'll start with verse 11.

So kalanefe sile shuminaenge. Why say to Jehovah, give me? U Israeli o shesh dayo, u bonagele e lungile, guno juda o kolhisayo. Then the Lord said to me, backsliding Israel has shown herself more righteous than treacherous Judah.

Hamba umemezele izwi, umemezele izwi, laomazwi, nasehnyagato uti. Go and proclaim these words toward the north and say Buiyawena Israeli o shesh dayo, u shu Jehovah, angigumia ngogumia gamela, ngoguba ginomusa u shu u Jehovah, angigukina intukutelo kuzagube pagate. Return backsliding Israel, says the Lord.

I will not cause my anger to fall on you, for I am merciful, says the Lord. I will not remain angry forever. Yazigupela ububibako uguti, upambugile gu Jehovah ngulunguluako, wazislagasa izindelazako, gubo abezizwe, pansigwayo yonkimate lushasa, anilshadelanga izwi lami, u shu Jehovah.

Only acknowledge your iniquity, that you have transgressed against the Lord your God, and have scattered your charms to alien deities under every green tree, and you have not obeyed my voice, says the Lord. Return, O backsliding children, says the Lord, for I am married to you. Az kulume ege, kad ngane ngale ndaba.

Let's share something about this, but let's pray once again. We pray, Lord, that you will send your Holy Spirit, that he will speak to us through your word to us. Tintai leona leon tlizio, ku ngabi kozopume ngalzoangizwi lako.

Touch every heart that not one will leave without having heard your voice. Amen. There is no life in this earth without God.

Without Jesus, you have nothing. You are lost for all eternity, forever. You can have everything in this world.

Yet you are poor, miserable, wretched, and on your way to hell. Ugu peleliwa, ugu kolwa, fulfillment and faith. Ugu kolwa, ngokwesizulu, kushuguneliwa, umauselebzeli, bati basamletelogyne, uguta uvelutinkoliwe, kushugunelisiwe.

To believe in Zulu is the same word as saying, I am satisfied. When you've had a meal, you've had enough, and they offer you more, then you say, I am fulfilled, I am a believer, in other words. I've had enough, I'm satisfied.

Kamelelelelu. It's a wonderful way of saying it, saying, I'm a Christian, I have everything I need, I need nothing else, I'm completely satisfied. If we have Jesus, if we have Jesus, we don't need wealth, we don't need position, or worldly pleasures, because Jesus becomes your life, and if you have Him, you have everything.

If you speak of life, throughout the Bible, Jesus is portrayed as being the life. He's not the God of the dead, but the God of those who are living, those that are alive, for He has risen from the dead. He's also not like the spirits of the dead, because He sits at the right hand of God.

He's also not an idol that's been fashioned out of wood. He is alive, He's not just an idol that's been made out of or even stone like an idol, no, He is alive, sitting at the right hand of God. And He loves you with eternal love.

Revelation 22 verse 17, the Spirit says, Come and let him who hears say come, and let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take of the water of life freely. So He offers life for free to everyone who comes to Him.

You don't have to pay anything, you just need to come to Him. And God accepts everyone who draws close to Him, who comes to Him. John says Jesus came to bring us eternal life.

Says the thief comes to destroy and to kill. But He says, I've come to bring you life in abundance. Abundant life, overflowing life.

Jesus doesn't just give us a little bit of life, but life in abundance, overflowing life. Without Jesus, you don't have that, you don't have that life. But through God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

He is three and yet one, the Trinity is one. So the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, instructing him to go and speak to Israel. And tell them that I, the Lord, think of them.

And remember them and remember their youth. And reminding them also of their first love. When you followed me, he said, in the wilderness.

There where the food was not even sown. Because Israel was holy unto the Lord. Being holy, meaning being separate, being set apart for Him alone.

What does it mean when God says, I remember you? He remembers that time when that first love was still burning in your heart. That first love. When that first love was burning in your heart, that you were interested in nothing else.

He was your sole interest. When you were still young at heart, in your spirit. That you were like his bride and he your husband.

Every day he was top of mind for you. You thought of him. You sought ways to please him.

He, Jesus himself, was your joy. And when you followed the Lord Jesus, even there in the wilderness. There where there is no food.

Before we get to know the Lord Jesus, we are in a spiritual wilderness. Where there is nothing. And he said, there where you found me, where I found you, you trusted me.

You trusted me. You followed me. And you were my people.

And I protected you from all evil. Why? Because you were set apart for me. You were a holy people.

I chose you. Among many nations, I chose you. I destroyed your enemies before you.

And then he said, oh, how I remembered you. I longed for you. And there you can take out the name Israel.

Now put your name in there where the Lord says to you, oh, how I long for you. That you will once again have that first love. And he said, my people have sinned in two ways.

They've forgotten me. They've forsaken me, the fountain of true love. And then they made for themselves cisterns that cannot even hold water.

They are like a leaking container. You put water in them and the water just runs out at the bottom. But a fountain is different because there the water never stops.

It just keeps coming. And this is no ordinary fountain. Because this fountain has very special water.

It's the water of life. The most precious, wonderful, fresh water. Clear as anything, pure.

And the amazing thing about this fountain is it never runs dry. But Israel forsook this fountain of pure, precious, clean water and forsook it. And he said, you have sinned in two ways.

You forsook me. Turned your back on me. I gave them life, this fountain of life.

And the second sin is they created for themselves their own idols. They committed harlotry. Instead of going to this fountain of true life daily, they created themselves their own thing for themselves.

But the cisterns which they created for themselves were leaking. And their idols were worthless. They were broken cisterns which were worthless, useless.

They were ineffective, pathetic, a waste of time. And left them in a very sad and sinful state. So you wasted your time on worthless idols.

But God is not pleased when you do that for he sees us as his bride. And he is a jealous God. He doesn't want you to run after other idols and gods.

Paul said I want to present you to Christ as a pure bride. And you can imagine how one feels, that husband feels when that bride is not faithful to him. When he's married to her and she has other men in her life.

And Jeremiah 2 verse 4 onwards. Hear the word of the Lord, O house of Jacob, families of the house of Israel. He reprimands them for having forsaken him, the true God and following idols.

So you can have the first love and then forsake it over time. Slowly but surely you drift away from God and then you create your own idols which you serve. And worship.

God says I saved you. I brought you to land where there is bountiful food. That you may eat the best fruits.

But when you enter the land you defiled it and my inheritance you turned into a cursed place. So preachers, ministers. They said where is the God that we served in the beginning? And the congregation members.

They forsook me and they prophesied in the name of Baal. And they sought after other things which profit nothing. And God says what injustice have I done to deserve you forsaking me? Where did I harm you? Did I harm you that you forsook me? Why did you forsake me so soon? How could you do such evil sinning against me? Have you forgotten what I've done for you and your fathers that you forsake me? That you now follow other gods? I want us to understand this point.

People they experience God's judgment coming upon them. But when people repented God turned from his wrath. If we forsake God we start serving other gods.

Maybe you say well I don't serve foreign gods or idols. However your money could be your idol. Your idol could be sports.

TV. Internet. Houses.

Cars. And sexual sins. And unfaithfulness in marriage.

You've got a husband and you've got other men in your lives. Whatever it is in your life that you worship that's become your idol. And God should be the first in your life.

God wants you. He wants the whole of you. Everything.

Not half. Jesus wants all or he wants nothing. You're all.

That we say not a mite will I withhold. Nothing. Absolute perfect surrender.

Total surrender. Jesus even said. Jesus said if you love father, mother, wife, brother, sister or children more than you love me is not worthy of me.

You see even they can become your idols. God sent Jeremiah to those who had forsaken their first love. And to warn them that his wrath would not come upon them.

Saying to them they should repent so that he would not cause his anger to fall upon them. Says because I am married to you. Just think of that.

God says he has married you. He's married to you. He's married to you.

Are you aware of that every day? Every hour? Every minute that you're aware that you are married to him? It's a thing we can't understand. We can't fathom that he has been. That he has married us.

Whether you like it or not. You are married to him and you are to be faithful to him. If you're not you're living in harlotry.

God says I am married to you. Are you fully conscious of that? Day by day? Moment by moment? You are married. You didn't marry him.

He's married you. We are married to him. I am married to him.

Hebrews 13 verse 4. Marriage is honorable among all and the bed undefiled. But fornicators and adulterers God will judge. God says I am married to you.

You are his bride. What kind of a bride are you? What would you say of a wife who's married to a husband and has other men in her life? She's unfaithful to her husband. What would you think of her? And the word here says marriage is to be honored by everyone.

And you need to honor your marriage to Christ. Let your conduct be without covetousness. Or in other words the love of money.

Yet be content with such things. Be content with such things as you have. For he himself has said I will never leave you nor forsake you.

So we may boldly say the Lord is my helper. How wonderful. He being our helper and we can just accept his help.

That we don't need to worry about many things. We can be content with what we have. I will not fear.

What can man do to me? That's when Jesus. So we can say if God is our husband. For whoever touches me touches the apple of his eye.

And so we read in James 4 verse 4. Adulterers and adulteresses. Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? If you fall in love with the world or with money. Or other things that could even.

It could even be your own children. Then God classifies you among adulterers and adulteresses. Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world.

Makes himself an enemy of God. If you forsake God and forsake that first love. Woe to you if you do not repent.

There was a young man here. He suffered from epileptic fits. He really had it seriously.

He repented. He was prayed for and he was healed. He was perfectly healthy.

But then one day we went out to another place to have a service there. When we came back they said this young man has fallen and he has these fits again. After we had left he went here to the neighbours and he got some alcohol and he drank there.

And after he had drunk it he got such a fit. He fell over unconscious but he never woke up again. He died like that.

And then another young man came here from Germany from a very wealthy family. He fell into drugs. Now the father said my son because of the way you're living you're losing your inheritance and that was worth millions in euros.

He came here and met the Lord and the Lord delivered him and set him free totally. After a few months he went back and lived for the Lord. Life had changed so much.

His father said my son I withdraw what I said about my inheritance. Every Sunday morning he was off to the service. But one day he wasn't in the service.

They contacted his parents and the parents said but he left this morning dressed to go to church. They said well he never got to church so they started searching for him and they found him in the park lying on a bench. Instead of going to church he got sidetracked.

He went to the park and he got hold of the drugs again and heroin and he after taking it he passed out and that's how he died. When they found him on the bench he was dead. It's a frightening thing to forsake God because you forsake life.

You become an adulterer. He forsook his heavenly husband and got married to the devil. And amazingly God says in spite of that I still love you.

I remember when I was then cup maiden Pumalanga where the Lord called me. I went to my minister and I said God has called me to preach the gospel. But when I was out there I suddenly started thinking about the consequences of this decision and I thought if I become a preacher I'll have nothing.

I won't have money and I'll just be there to baptize babies and to marry the young people. I said no rather I'll just get myself a good job and earn enough money and then I will support preachers or missionaries. I just made this decision that I would not become a minister myself.

I'm just going to support them. But then I prayed I said Lord but I don't want to make this decision without you. I want you to give me your stamp of approval.

I want you to be with me in it. I said Lord I don't want to do it without you. I want you to be with me.

I said Lord I ask you please now I've made this decision but I want you to give me your blessing for the decision I've made. I took my Bible and I said Lord I want you to speak to me through your word just to give me your stamp of approval on my decision. So I prayed and asked God for a stamp of approval.

I opened my Bible and read from Matthew 4 verse 18. Jesus walking. I read where Simon and Peter, Peter and Andrew were fishing and the Lord said to them follow me I will make you fishers of men.

I got so angry I almost threw my Bible down. I said no Lord I'm glad I didn't do it but I still said I'm not prepared to do it. That was 1951.

I went home. I lived in rebellion but that next year was like hell for me. I knew I was living in disobedience to God.

I knew if I died I'd go to hell. For one and a half years I experienced what it's like to live a life without God. I wish that on no one.

I had no peace. I had just lived in fear. When I just heard a noise I thought oh that's the Lord returning and I knew I was lost.

One day in desperation I knelt by my bed took my Bible and I read and I read about God's love and it melted my heart. I said oh Lord how can you still love me? I'm living in a rebellion against you showing you my fist and yet you still love me and that love melted my heart. After a few days I went I also knelt beside the bed where I was sleeping at the time, took the Bible, opened it and then I read where Jesus said challenged Peter about his love.

He said Peter do you love me? The second and even the third time he asked him when I read it it wasn't just like reading in the Bible. It was as if the Lord Jesus himself was standing there speaking to me personally asking me these questions. I didn't know Greek at that time.

Even though I didn't know the Greek meaning of the word is the love that Jesus used in that instance yet just that by the third time the Lord asked me my heart just broke. In the Greek if you look at it the Lord Jesus asked Peter do you love me with agape love? Do you love me with God's love? That's God's love that transcends everything and overcomes everything. Jesus Peter had responded and said I phileo you which is the friend love for a friend and that's why the third time the Lord Jesus asked him he said Peter do you just love me as a friend? And Jesus Peter loved him as a friend.

He couldn't have loved him with God's love. Otherwise he wouldn't have denied him those three times. Peter couldn't truthfully Peter couldn't truthfully say I love you with God's love for he had just denied him and that's why he responded and said I just love you as a friend.

Even though I didn't understand the Greek meaning even though I didn't understand the deeper meaning I But for me it was such a challenge that's just the fact that the Lord said to me do you love me more than these people? More than these fish? More than fishing? And that broke my heart and I got up from my knees. I went to my mother in the kitchen. I said mother I'm going.

The Lord has called me. I From there I went to my father outside and I thought he wouldn't accept He would it would be difficult for him to accept it, but I had to tell him I said father God's calling me I need to follow his calling but my father said my child. I'm happy if you go then I'll always have someone to pray for me Oh When I that I am what I am today is because I said Lord I'm prepared to forsake everything and serve you and To do your will To be a fisher of men And I could do it for he Said I am married to you and I just said Lord I agree.

I want to be your bride Is Not because I loved him first but because he loved me first and that's why I said Lord, I am prepared and I want to do this above all other things that are past or present or to come Can do And today I can say I am a witness to the fact that it's wonderful to be married Have you put on that ring that marriage ring with God Never take it off To fall in love with the devil was the world the things of the

world Then And that that marriage to to christ to god will mean more to you than anything even to family and relatives Just like I forsook my family and relatives and I became I was married to christ Now, what do you what do you say about Me God says I'm married to you. What's your response? Do you say no? No, I don't want to be married to you I'm married to the world. I'm married to the devil and I married to my Pence And if you don't want to be married to god to christ Then your lot is in hell and hell is the worst thing you can imagine worse than any cancer or aids or anything else you can think of Some Sad Recently when I was on my way back from Durban I got a phone call that Someone who was a young man He worked here in the dairy when the cows were still here and we were still making our own silage This boy had worked there and he his hand went into the silage cutter and it was chopped off here at the wrist It's That was a yes Me Foreign At that time I asked him I said house What what did you feel like when you had lost your hand? Was it painful? He said it was so painful if I would have had a knife I would have committed suicide That's how painful it was But any pain you can imagine is nothing compared to spending eternity in hell and it's forever doesn't end So sir in dealing of satani fine We have woman ah So take off the devil's ring put on God's ring, are you prepared? Us who missing any our Tina is not true from at all.

Let us stand and pray together Go suggest Lord Jesus. Yes. Oh to shut it in art.

We hear that you are married to us steadily Forgive us Lord for not having my daughter So close away and I don't know for all I went I know I went I am feeling heat But that we flirted with other men forgetting what you've done for us in our lives Sevens on my god is of course work Lord an amazing way home. So walk in your grace See there's some shot. We need What is really? Who's a paparazzi and by your grace, maybe we be faithful in that heavenly marriage for all eternity

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