

Passion – A Sermon on Matt. 22:34-46

Well the football season is almost upon us again, and after the Celtics big year I'm starting to get the passion up!

In fact this is the Patriots theme for this year, or question they ask of their fans, do you have the passion.

Let me say after the last 3-4 years you need passion, because there is not a lot of success to get excited about.

I want to talk this morning about passion.

You see without passion in your life, there is not much life.

Without a passion to live, to succeed, to have significance to achieve something you might end up living your life without meaning.

So, the important question to ask ourselves this morning is: what gets us passionate?

- What gets us out of our seats yelling and screaming, shouting
- What gets us down on our knees crying our eyes out
- What gets us so mad we could start a bushfire with our eyes
- What gets us so happy we could light up the room.

I go to the Gillette or TD Garden , you all know that, and to see 70,000 or even 30,000 fans screaming and yelling is great, you feel part of something.

But you know once you walk out of the stadium or arena, back to your car, and maybe have sung the song, its over.

It does not mean much in the real world, in real life, its just a lovely escape actually from life.

It is not a life-giving passion. Listen to this from Psalm 42:1-4

*” As the deer pants for streams of water,
so my soul pants for you, my God.*

*² My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
When can I go and meet with God?*

*³ My tears have been my food
day and night,
while people say to me all day long,
“Where is your God?”*

*⁴ These things I remember
as I pour out my soul:
how I used to go to the house of God
under the protection of the Mighty One^[d]
with shouts of joy and praise
among the festive throng.*

“As the deer pants for streams of water, so I long for you, O God. I thirst for God, the living God. When can I come and stand before him? Day and night, I have only tears for food, while my enemies continually taunt me, saying, "Where is this God of yours?" My heart is breaking as I remember how it used to be: I walked among the crowds of worshipers, leading a great procession to the house of God, singing for joy and giving thanks-- it was the sound of a great celebration!”

Can we picture something of the psalmist from that story, people are laughing at him, taunting him, where's God you loser, he's crying, he cant eat, he is so distressed, he cant put food into his mouth, all he does is cry all day.

I remember what it used to be like, there were stacks of people and we were all going to the temple, to the house of God. Singing, a great celebration,

Listen a group of people walked to church and a riot broke out, a group of people went up to the temple to sing and praise God and a riot broke out, that is what it used to be like.

Can you hear the passion echoing down through the book, through the words?

When asked what the greatest commandment in the Law is, Jesus replied “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.”

He wasn't giving a new commandment, it's from Deuteronomy 6.

Jesus was repeating what Moses had taught the Israelites as they prepared to cross the river Jordan into the Land that God had promised to them when He brought them out of bondage in Egypt.

It perfectly encapsulates the first three of the Ten Commandments that God had given to Moses on Mount Sinai.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.

Love the Lord with every ounce of your being. Love the Lord with passion.

He wants a relationship with you, a passionate heart-felt love, a love that is based on the knowledge of His character and His promises, a love that saves you, body and soul.

Do you love the Lord?

Your presence here this morning in God's house indicates that your answer is 'Yes'.

But do you love Him with passion?

Do you love everything about Him? Do you know Him well enough to love God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind?

Our relationship with God is like a good marriage.

After years of marriage, a man and a woman can know each backwards and forwards.

They know each other's likes and dislikes.

They know what makes their mate happy and what makes them unhappy.

They know each other's strengths and weaknesses.

They know each other so well that they can finish each other's sentences.

But this kind of marriage doesn't just happen on the wedding day.

It takes an intentional effort to share with each other everything about themselves, to know each other with the mind and to love each other from the bottom of the heart.

That's how God wants us to know Him.

When He created Adam and Eve, He walked with them in the garden of paradise.

He spoke with them. He knew them perfectly and they knew Him and loved Him.

But when sin came into the world, Adam and Eve's relationship with God was broken and no longer did men and women love the Lord their God with all their heart, with all their souls, and with all their mind.

Because of sin, our relationship with God has been tarnished, but God is constantly seeking you out, wanting to restore you to a passionate love of Him because He is passionate towards you.

A relationship between a man and a woman begins with an introduction.

I first started talking to my wife on an online dating site and we had been going back and forth for a little bit.

Now, She says that she saw me before I saw her at a restaurant one evening and I guess she liked what she saw.

But it required an introduction before the two of us could begin to know each other and allow a love to blossom.

And our relationship with God also requires an introduction. Someone who knows God and the love He demonstrated for us in Jesus Christ must tell us about Him.

Every passionate love for God begins with a believer introducing an unbeliever to Jesus.

And when our own love for God is a passion of the heart, soul, and mind, that introduction is just like introducing someone to your best friend.

After the introduction of a man and a woman, if they are each interested in the other, they may become infatuated with each other.

Infatuation can feel like real love, but it's a passion of the heart without a passion of the mind.

Infatuation is based on appearances and perceptions and not the reality of the other.

It's a passion that comes before the fullness of a true loving relationship...before a couple begins to know the depths of each other's character.

When you light a campfire with some dried grass and some twigs, the fire can leap high and burn brightly and then fizzle out because the logs never catch. Infatuation is like that.

A relationship between a man and woman can quickly ignite into a blaze of heart-passion and fade just as quickly because the passion of the mind and soul doesn't follow.

The passion of the heart may not extend to a passion of the mind.

A new believer's passion for God may be like an infatuation and quickly fade if they don't nurture the flame.

When someone comes to faith in God and hears the wonders of God's grace and mercy in the forgiveness of our sins through the blood of Jesus Christ, a new believer can ignite in a blazing fire of passion for the Lord.

But if that believer doesn't dig deeper into the mysteries and the character of God, his passion and his faith may turn to ashes.

Relationships require more than a passion of the heart, it requires a passion of the mind as well.

Knowing the character of someone brings a relationship to life, gives it passion and ignites the fire that continues to burn.

In a good marriage, a man and a woman continue to build on the passion of the heart by learning more and more about each other as the months and years go by.

They grow closer with each passing year.

By experiencing life together, holding each other up, providing comfort when difficulties come, when one provides strength when the other is weak...the bonds of their relationship become tight.

They trust each other and know that the other will always be there for them. They can't imagine being without the other.

The passion of the heart that the relationship began with remains and a passion of the mind is added to it.

“Love is like a friendship caught on fire. In the beginning a flame, very pretty, often hot and fierce, but still only light and flickering. As love grows older, our hearts mature and our love becomes as coals, deep-burning and unquenchable.” Bruce Lee

Our relationship with God is like that as well. The beauty of the Gospel message of forgiveness and reconciliation with God our Creator that ignites a passion for God in the heart of the believer is built up by spending time with God and learning of His character.

We read and study His Word, we gather to worship Him and receive the body and blood of Christ, we enjoy fellowship with His followers and by doing so, we come into a deeper relationship with Him.

We begin to learn of His faithfulness to us His creatures, His creations.

We revel in the accounts of His steadfastness and His loving-kindness.

As we continue to draw closer to Him, the Lord pulls us in and we trust in Him fully because then we know that He is worthy of our trust and our praise.

Over time, we can't imagine what our life would be like without Him.

We are transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit to have a heart, soul, and mind that is more like Christ's.

Our thoughts become His thoughts, our actions begin to conform to His will.

But if a marriage is neglected, if husband and wife develop completely separate lives, not spending time together, neglecting to nourish their partnership, the passion fades over time.

If the troubles and travails of life are not faced together, the passion can grow cold.

A relationship can die if the flames of passion are not continually stoked. And to renew a relationship that has been battered by the storms of life requires a rededication to the one you love, a commitment to love when the fiery emotion of love seems to be dying.

My wife and I knew that we needed to rekindle our passion for each other after dealing with difficulty in our marriage.

We had drifted apart due to the conflicts and needed to come back together.

So, we put in the work. We prayed together, had dates together, read scripture together. We made “us” a priority.

Our love for God can also fade with neglect of our relationship with Him.

In that favorite hymn, *Amazing Grace*, we hear “How precious did that grace appear, the hour I first believed.”

His grace and mercy are so precious, but when we neglect coming together to worship Him, when we fill our days with meaningless pursuits instead of cherishing the Word of God in study and meditation, we lose the sense of God’s presence with us, and we begin to think that He has abandoned us. His grace no longer seems precious, but distant.

The emotion of our hearts is fickle. We can love one day and hate the next. But God’s love for us never fades.

In 2 Timothy, Paul writes “if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself.” God’s faithfulness is a part of His unchanging character. We may break a promise, but God always keeps His promises.

If the passion of your love for God has faded, if the trials of life have beaten you down, now is the time to renew that passion.

Now is the time to rekindle the passion through spending of time with the Lord God your Savior.

In your baptism and through your faith, God made a promise to you that He would be with you throughout your life and beyond.

He keeps that promise and He continues to seek to renew and restore your relationship with Him.

God has a passion for you. He loves you with all His heart, with all His soul and with all His mind.

He loves you with so much passion that He cannot leave you alone.

His passion for you is so intense that He stepped out of eternity, into this temporal existence, and died on the cross to win the victory over sin and death for you.

Through faith in Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven, and you are a child of God.

That is His passion, for you to know the fullness of His mercy, grace, and love.

How precious does that grace appear, in the hour I first believed, and in every hour and every day following.

And how precious will that grace appear when we stand before the throne of God and hear the words of Christ, "This one is mine. You are my child. Come into my arms and be loved."

Christ loves you with all His heart, with all His soul, and with all His mind.

Love Him with passion, love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind.

May the peace of God that passes human understanding be with you now and forever. Amen.