FASTING FOR LOVESICKNESS
(Isaiah 58:1-14)

I. FRIENDS OF THE BRIDEGROOM

Matt. 9:14-17

14 Then the disciples of John came to Him, saying, “Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but Your disciples do not fast?” 15 And Jesus said to them, “Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast. 16 No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and the tear is made worse. 17 Nor do they put new wine into old wineskins, or else the wineskins break, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.” (Matt. 9:14-17)

A. Fasting and prayer is often thought of as a means to get something.

1. In the last several decades, the “Name it and claim it” and “Health and Wealth” gospel was perhaps one of the fastest growing segments of Christianity. (Much of that is could be an over-simplification and unfair media coverage.) My intention is not so much to criticize individuals and leaders of those movements but to say that the fact that people followed it in mass says something about the bent of the human heart.

B. Our desire in the Bridegroom Fast is not to get something. Fasting can be thought of as the same thing: a formula to get something.

C. Fasting is often thought of as a show of strength: to move God, to change people and circumstances.

1. E.g. A hunger strike. Fasting for social change. I’m not going to eat until you change this unjust law! I’m so serious, I’m going to not eat to get everyone’s attention!

D. Fasting is not simply a push the button of fasting to get results type of thing.

1. Fasting is actually a way of humbling ourselves.

E. Jesus: When you fast…

16 “Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. 17 But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, 18 so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. (Matt. 6:16-18)

1. There’s an inclination of the human heart, it’s part of the fleshly nature, a bent inside people that wants to make fasting about outward change. It’s more about the posture of the heart.
a. Fasting in the secret place. It’s not for outward show. It’s about humbling my heart and making myself available to prayer and the Word. God meets us in that place.

II. THE BRIDEGROOM FAST

A. When we look around us and see that God’s Kingdom is not manifest. Jesus, we need you. I need you, my family, my city, my workplace, our nation, the government. We need you Jesus.

B. We long for Jesus. We humble ourselves with prayer and fasting. We voluntarily take up weakness through fasting.

C. This type of fast is not to see how dedicated we can get to God, but to enjoy God and receive more of Him. This type of fasting does not move God’s heart, this fasting captures our hearts and tenderizes our hearts by removing spiritual dullness.

D. We’re not going to fast to try to get a prayer answered. We pray because God answers prayer.

E. It is easy to fast for the wrong reasons, in seeking to earn God’s favor or attention. We do not fast to prove anything to God.

1. Fasting is not primarily about changing God or convincing Him that you’re serious enough about wanting something.

2. Fasting is more about humbling ourselves, removing distractions, making more time to be with God. It makes us more aware of our frailty and humanity.

F. When we are rooted and grounded in God’s love, we can experience the heights, depths, length, and width of the love of Christ. We don’t have to worry about getting weird spiritually.

16 THAT He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, 17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; THAT you, being ROOTED and GROUNDED in love, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—19 to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; THAT you may be filled with all the fullness of God. (Eph. 3:16-19)

III. CONCLUSION

26 And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." 27 Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. 28 "For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. 29 "But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom." (Matt. 26:26-29)
Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!' " And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God." (Rev. 19:9)

A. ASK God to give you a desire for more of Him.

1. This is the work of God in your life. Respond to the Holy Spirit’s call deep in your heart.