



PASTOR'S NEWSLETTER COLUMN

For many people when you mention the month of June, they think of weddings. There are many reasons for June being so popular. The weather has turned warmer, yet not oppressively hot, so outside ceremonies and celebrations work well. High School and College graduations have taken place, and whether the couple is eighteen, twenty-two, or older (completing graduate school), they are ready to move into the next stage of their lives. By June, flowers are up and blooming, and fruits, and vegetables are ripe enough to eat, and in centuries past before they were available throughout the year, they could be used for the festive event (more on that later). Also, in the northern hemisphere, the daylight hours were at their maximum length so the celebration could last longer before torches and candles needed to be used.

In doing some research, the popularity of June as a wedding month is not just an American tradition, but goes back over two thousand years. The month is named after Juno, Roman goddess of marriage. It was believed Juno would bring prosperity and happiness to all who wed in her month. Practicality played a part in June weddings, as if married in June, the bride was likely to give birth her first child the following spring, allowing her to still assist with planting and giving her enough time to recover so she could help out with the fall harvest. Prior to the last few centuries, babies born in the spring had a higher survival rate as they had time to grow before having to endure cold temperatures and higher probability of illnesses in enclosed spaces. And finally, in one of those, OH, GROSS, findings, in many cultures the annual bath (yep, just once a year) was taken in May, so the people attending the wedding didn't smell too bad. (The use of flowers at weddings is actually to help cover up the smell of the wedding party and the guests. I bet this will help you smile the next time to see all the bridesmaids and the bride herself with large bouquets!)

So, what does all this history on June weddings have to do a pastoral newsletter column? One of the biblical images we do not focus on much at church is that of God as the bridegroom/husband. Throughout the Old Testament, God speaking through the prophets, admonishes the people of Israel to be faithful and not chase after idols or engage in evil practices, using the imagery of a bride and bridegroom. Isaiah 54:5 "For your Maker is your husband, the Lord Almighty is his name." Jeremiah 31:31-34 "The time is coming says the Lord when I will make a new covenant (the Hebrew word also means "Vow") with the house of Israel. It will not be like the covenant/vow I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, even though I was their husband, says the Lord." Ezekiel 16:32 "You adulterous wife! You prefer strangers (idols) to your husband (God)." Hosea is a prophet God has marry a prostitute to symbolize how the people have gone after other idols and departed from God's ways. Even in the New Testament/Vow, Jesus is referred to several times as a bridegroom. (Matthew 9:15, John 3:29, Revelation 18:23, 21:9).

Thus, as June unfolds, and weddings abound, let us remember to take our annual bath. (No, that wasn't the point I was trying to make, although.....if during 2017 you haven't bathed yet, maybe) Let me try again. Thus, as June unfolds, and weddings abound, holy smoke, I'd better not forget Sara and I were married in June! I'd better at least get a card and flowers. No, wait, I don't want to imply that she smells and the flowers are to cover it up. (That wasn't the point I was trying to make either.) They say third time is a charm, so here goes. Thus, as June unfolds, and weddings abound, let us remember God has made a covenant/vow with us. Like any marriage vows, via the waters of Baptism and when we were Confirmed, we promised to be faithful, to love, and to build up the relationship. Just as husbands and wives daily live out for the rest of their lives the promises they made on their wedding day, we too should daily rejoice in our relationship with God, and reflect that relationship in all that we say and do. While it certainly sounds a bit intimidating to see ourselves as married to God, such is one of the images given in scripture. Perhaps it is there to remind us of how connected to God we are, and how that relationship should without a doubt effect our lives. Well, time to go. I need to take my annual bath!

God's Peace,
Pastor Mike

