

**March 15, 2020 - “Beth and Kirk: A Love Story”** The Reverend Doctor Thomas C. Willadsen, Faith Presbyterian Church, La Vista, Nebraska, Psalm 127:1-2, Luke 14:27-32

Some people will say it was love at first sight. Maybe it appeared that way, but Beth and Kirk tell a different story of their courtship. They say that their love grew over time, it simply did not happen spontaneously. They took their time getting to know each other. Still there was a real attraction between them, and they shared a genuine respect for each other from the start.

Let me tell you a little more about the happy couple. Beth is a bundle of energy. She’s always going about 200 directions at once. She dreams dreams and works at making them come true. Her drive and determination are absolute and unwavering. And contagious. It is hard to refuse Beth and impossible to ignore her. Still Beth has a deep sense of wonder. It’s not what you’d expect the first time you meet her, she always seems so busy, but she has the ability to step back. Beth can see The Big Picture and appreciate everything that God is accomplishing through her.

Opposites attract. That’s what some people say about love. Maybe opposites attract—it’s never really been proven when it comes to people. In the case of Beth and Kirk it happens to be true. Kirk is deliberate, methodical, even slow-moving. Kirk appreciates drive, determination and energy...but from a distance. Kirk is all for dreaming dreams, but he looks at dreams from ten different angles before he takes the first step in making them come true. Kirk is extremely gifted, he’s good at a lot of different things. He has more ability and potential than even he is aware of. Beth sees his hidden ability, and she is forever challenging Kirk, subtly, to dream more and bigger dreams. Kirk doesn’t take things lightly. He means what he says and Beth knows she can count on him. I’ve been watching this young couple for a while, preparing them for their big day, and I think they’re going to be a very, very good match.

When I’m working with a couple to plan their wedding there are a number of things I have to accomplish. Obviously, the couple works with me in planning the ceremony—what scripture will be used, how they want their vows worded, where their grandmothers will sit. We work together on the practical, nuts and bolts details of their wedding ceremony. I also do a little work with them on their relationship. It’s one thing to prepare for a wedding, I tell them, it’s an entirely different thing to prepare for a marriage. Finally, I ask some questions so that I can get to know them, and they can get to know me. I’ve been to weddings where it’s obvious that the presider is giving the same wedding homily he has for 30 years, you can practically hear him say, “insert groom’s name here.” I get to know the couple so that their wedding can reflect who they are. All couples are unique.

I asked Beth and Kirk what they would do if they won \$100,000 from Publishers' Clearinghouse. Beth went first. There were 15 different ways that she could see herself spending the money. The ideas gushed out of her. She asked if she could pretend she won more money—she had so many great ideas! When Beth paused to catch her breath I asked Kirk how he would spend \$100,000. He was quiet... thinking... As he was thinking Beth was bouncing up and down in her chair; she continued to come up with more ideas. She stopped talking, but didn't stop dreaming. Kirk kept thinking. Finally he said, "I'll tell you next time, I want to give your question some serious thought."

Maybe Kirk was being his slow, methodical self. And maybe he was taking this ice breaking exercise a little too seriously...but he was being scriptural. Jesus told his followers to consider carefully the cost of discipleship before taking action. Kirk applied this advice to my hypothetical question. Jesus told us, "Be careful, know what you're doing. Know what you're getting yourself into." He didn't want impulsive followers who would put faith on and take it off like the latest fashion. He was looking for people with commitment and follow through.

[Jesus was also making fun of Herod in this passage too. Herod had a lot of grand plans to show how important he was by building palaces and ornate buildings. (Some would say he had an Edifice Complex.) Herod's problem was that it took a long, long time to complete his buildings. Some of them were only finished after he died, so they were like memorials to his vanity and selfish whims.)

Back to Beth and Kirk. They met last spring. They hit bit off right away and have been seeing each other steadily ever since. Kirk was ready to get married. And, true to his nature, he did a thorough search to find the right partner. It's funny, if you ask them who proposed to whom, they really won't give a clear answer. Kirk didn't get down on one knee with a diamond ring. It was more like one day they just realized they were right for each other and set a date: March 15, 2020. And you're all invited. In fact, you're already here! The reception will be in the Family Life Center starting around 11:15. Baked potatoes are on the menu. I hope you're hungry. The honeymoon will be a series of trips to King's Lake.

Beth and Kirk are real, but they're not people. Beth with all her energy and projects represents Presbyterian Disaster Assistance. And Beth is not short for "Elizabeth," but comes from the Hebrew word בית "bayit" "house. And Kirk isn't named after the captain of the starship Enterprise. Kirk's many gifts and untapped talents represent this congregation. "Kirk" is the Scottish word for "Church."

Today we commission members of this church who will work with Presbyterian Disaster Assistance in the coming week. Earlier I talked about Beth and Kirk being

opposites. While PDA and Faith Church are different and distinct, we are hardly opposites. We are both strong organizations, richly blessed with human talents and gifts. We are both deeply concerned about our brothers and sisters and neighbors. We are passionately committed to ministering in Christ's name in a hurting world. And we're both ready to be committed to one another.

If we look at the commitment like a marriage, and if we're honest with ourselves, we'll recognize that we also have the potential to drive each other crazy. And we'll have to continue to work at communicating. But now we're ready. We've followed Jesus' advice, we looked carefully at the costs of this commitment. We're ready to work together and follow where the Holy Spirit leads us. Ready to build a relationship. Ready to rebuild houses. And ready to witness to what the Lord is doing in through and with us. Together.