

"The Divine Romance" (and how you can help)

John 21:25 and John 12:32

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Opening song

Sermon

Several years ago my friend, Burt Decker, paid for me to attend one of his national Public Speaking Seminars. Great seminar, geared to the business sector. Well, the first day our instructor taught us about persuasive speech and asked us to prepare a persuasive speech for the next day. He asked that we choose a theme inherent to our profession. I thought, "No problem."

The next day I arrived with my speech. He then began to teach us about the importance of eye contact in persuasive speech. He also told us that each speech must end by asking the listener to make a concrete commitment to something. And then, right before we began, he said, *"And oh yeah, I'm going to add something fun to your assignment. If the person giving the speech maintains 3 seconds of continuous eye contact with you, at some point during his/her presentation...you have to agree to whatever they've asked you at the end of the speech."* I swallowed hard and began to sweat.

Everyone except me was selling some "thing" or "idea" for their business. For instance one lady got up and gave a speech on her Credit Union and then asked, *"Who would commit to join Patelco Credit Union?"* And we went around the room one by one, having to say (if counted 3 seconds), *"Yes, I will join Patelco Credit Union."* One gal worked for a vineyard and we had to say, *"Yes, I will sample your chardonnay."* One guy worked for a phone company, *"Yes I will sign up for Advantage Calling."*

And so it went till it was my turn. I had prepared my message on the need to commit to Jesus as Lord. It was too late to change it. So, I gave it. I gave a great speech on why we each need Jesus as Lord. I got to the end and realized the only logical thing to ask them to commit to...was Jesus. And so I said, *"Ah...ok...umm...Who will commit their life to Jesus the Christ as Lord?"* To my absolute amazement, I soon found out I had maintained 3 seconds of eye contact with every person in the room; such that I had to watch as everyone in the room, (all 15 or so) (one after another). I had to watch them fidget, squirm, roll their eyes, as they said things like:

"Yeah...umm..I guess I commit my life to Jesus the Lord."

"OK. I joined the credit union; got the phone deal...I take Jesus as Lord."

Every one of 'em...all of 'em...said they gave their life to Jesus.

100% conversion rate – WOW!

Billy Graham would be jealous. I'm quite the evangelist. And yet, it seemed as if something was missing...like Faith, Hope, and Love. They packed up their notebooks and left. Never even said *"Thanks for the Eternal Life."*

You know I think I've always felt the call of the Great Commission. But I really started working on it in high school.



I started witnessing to old friends like Brad Braverman. Brad had lived up the street from me and been my best friend through most of elementary school. He was Jewish. His dad was Jewish by race and his mom by conversion. She had been Presbyterian (switching is called apostasy). Well by high school we ran in different crowds, but we had Jewelry Making class together – 7th period, senior year.

I think I really loved Brad and so I would try to evangelize Brad. I presented really good arguments to Brad on why he needed Jesus. And I was “winsome.” I acted relaxed and free. I chuckled at Brad’s comments but I was terrified – terrified for Brad and for me ‘cause Brad just continued to reject Jesus; pack up his notebook and leave.

Last week we reached the end of the Gospel of John and it didn’t end with the Great Commission. Matthew ends with “Go disciple;” Mark with “Go proclaim;” Luke with “Be my witnesses.” Now Jesus commissions His disciples in John’s Gospel.

But it doesn’t end with what we must do...

But with what Jesus did do.

²⁵Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.

John 21:25 (ESV)

And if we take John literally, the World itself is something Jesus did. All creation is something Jesus did.

He is the Word through whom all things are created.

Yet, maybe John is referring to what Jesus just did in chapters 20 and 21:

His Resurrection appearances.

But, now after the Resurrection...it’s hard to nail Jesus down.

It’s like He’s everywhere

and can show up anywhere

and you won’t always know its Him.

We just preached on most of these appearances:

In John 20 He’s like, present but hidden in the garden, by the tomb. He waits for Peter and John to leave. He lets Mary weep. She’s seeking Jesus (a dead Jesus) and the living Jesus is seeking her.

In John 20:13 Mary said to the 2 angels

*"They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him."
14Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. 15Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?"*

[Jesus is playing dumb...teasing, coaxing, drawing out this desperate longing in Mary's soul – "Whom do you want?" "Make a wish."]

Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." 16Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him in Aramaic, "Rabboni!"(which means Teacher).

John 20:13-16 (ESV)

Mary jumps on Jesus; clings to him and won't let go. Jesus says, *"Mary, don't cling to me for I have not yet ascended to the Father."*

Well I think there are some amazing theological reasons Jesus appeared as the gardener (reasons we talked about a few weeks ago). But Jesus does it again, later that day, but not as a gardener. John doesn't record it but Luke does in detail. Jesus appears as a traveler on the road to Emmaus. He just walks with these 2 guys, probably for hours: *"But their eyes were kept from recognizing him,"* says Luke. He does the same thing. He plays dumb and asks them about their conversation. They say they had hoped that this "Jesus guy" was the Messiah. Then Jesus (incognito) explains all the Scripture pertaining to Him. He stays with them and when He breaks the bread at supper – they recognize Him. *"Their eyes are opened,"* says Luke.

He vanishes and they say, *"Did not our hearts burn within us while He talked and opened Scripture out on the road?"*

That night the disciples are locked in a room, when according to John 20, Jesus just walks through the wall. Thomas isn't there. Jesus let's Thomas hope and long for 7 days, and then does it again and Thomas goes nuts crying, *"My Lord and my God."*

Then in John 21, Jesus appears on the Sea of Galilee. Once again they don't know it's Him. He just watches them struggle. He's present but hidden and He plays dumb. He teases their longings:

"Do you have any fish?"

"Throw it on the other side."

Even the fish work for Him. He's controlling all the circumstances. They recognize Him and go nuts with joy and have breakfast. Jesus asks Peter three times for three denials – *"Do you love Me?"*

I think Jesus enjoyed forgiving Peter.

And then John says, *"There are also many other things Jesus did..."* Maybe He's doing this kind of stuff all the time.

But why didn't He just walk through the wall in my 7th period Jewelry Making class and

say, "*Repent Brad Braverman*"?
Why didn't He manifest just once in Jerusalem or Rome?
Why doesn't He materialize on the set at CNN for Anderson Cooper?
[They could get it on video and we'd be done with this whole evangelism thing,
right?]

What's Jesus doing?

[image: cartoon of Jesus hiding behind the curtains while
door-to-door evangelists ask "Have you found Jesus?"]

I love this cartoon...Ellen Haroutunian posted it on her Facebook page. The evangelists are at the door asking the lady this question, "*Have you found Jesus?*" They think they know how to find Him...They have the method; what she needs to do.

"*Have you found Jesus?*" and there's Jesus hiding behind her curtain – see him?
And that's really the way it is – ask Mary, Cleopas, Thomas, John or Peter.
So what's Jesus doing? What's Jesus doing?

Watching

Hiding

Dropping hints

What's Jesus doing?

...Manipulating all the circumstances but enticing hearts

...Asking questions

...Making people seek

...Present but hidden

...Playing hard to get; all so He can be got

What's Jesus doing – that He must do Himself?

Not with a program,

an argument,

book,

law,

or army?

What's Jesus doing? That He won't let someone else do for Him.

What's He doing? I think He's doing what He said He'd do:

...And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die.

John 12:32-33 (ESV)

What’s He doing? He’s romancing His Bride.

He said, I will “draw” (*helkuso* in Greek). It’s a fishing term as in “to draw in a net.”

- In John it means “to draw to one’s self in love” according to the *Theological Dictionary of New Testament Theology*.
- “It means to woo a lover” writes D. A. Carson.
- It means to control everything except the one thing you want most – a human heart that loves in freedom.
- It means to entice, romance or allure.
- It’s what Jesus said He would do and what the prophets said God would do.

In Hosea, God says he’s just gonna decimate Israel because she’s played the whore and then He says

Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness and speak tenderly to her. And there I will give her her vineyards and make the Valley at Achor (trouble) a door of Hope.

Hosea 2:14 (ESV)

He’s gonna take her camping and romance her in the wilderness – good strategy.

In Isaiah He gives Israel a divorce (Isaiah 50:1). Then He says in Isaiah 54:5-6

for a brief moment I deserted you, but with great compassion I will gather you. For your Maker is your husband.

Isaiah 55:3

I will make an everlasting covenant with you

Isaiah 62:5

I will rejoice over you as a bridegroom over his bride.

In Ezekiel 16 He says

I married you and you played the whore so I’ll pour out my wrath and then I’ll have compassion on Sodom and Samaria and you too Jerusalem. I will quiet your arrogant boasting when “I atone for you, for all that you have done,” declares the Lord.

On the Cross, God atoned for all we have done...

formed an everlasting covenant and Jesus is the door in the Valley of Trouble.

He said, “When I’m lifted up, I will draw (romance) (entice) all people to myself.”

Last week we preached that each person is a Love story that God is telling, with His Word, who is Jesus.

What’s He doing?

He’s romancing His Bride.

It was 1977; Masterpieces of American Literature, Heritage High School - Mrs. Rydberg read the seating chart:

She placed Hiett



next to Coleman.



It was a miracle and sign from God. Under my breath I muttered, *"Thank you Jesus!"* I was sitting next to a total "hottie." And then and there I had a mission – *"helkuso"*

I would romance her to myself.

- I would do it (no one could do it for me).
- I was the bait; she was the catch.
- I would be present to her every Monday, Wednesday, Friday during American Lit...present but hidden.
- Hidden as her future lover, spouse and lifelong companion.
- Unbeknownst to her, I would manipulate circumstances. I would control the environment to be conducive to love.
- I would allow her to steal my junior thesis and forgive her (just to demonstrate my grace).
- If all went according to plan, I'd take her to scary movies (just so she'd cling to me.)
- I'd take her to the wilderness hiking, camping and I would be her strength.

But for now I'd play dumb (that would be easy). I'd be subtle (that would be hard).

I'd advance and withdraw. Maybe even play hard to get. And I'd use words like seeds...

- Creating a longing within her.
- Hope in her.
- Faith in her.
- Love for me in her – Love.

That means I couldn't force her. I couldn't argue her into love with me, or threaten her into love with me. It would be her free decision...but created by me with romance. She'd choose because she was chosen. I would romance her to myself such that on the day that I dropped to my knees and said *"Would you marry me? Form a covenant with me?"* she'd go insane with joy.

Well 4 months later I finally got the courage to call her and ask her out. She said *"No, I can't."* (She was babysitting). I asked her again. She said *"Yes"* but then her dad had a heart attack (literally...not because of me but arterial sclerosis).

I asked her again and I took her to a scary movie, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. (I was hoping for a "close encounter" of my own). A very large woman sat in front of us. Susan leaned over. Nonchalantly I reached up and put my arm around her...no big deal. Quiet and subtle, but inside I was screaming *"YES! YES! YES!"*

Maybe Jesus is working His arm around you and all Heaven is screaming, *"YES! YES! YES!"*

Half way through the movie Susan was asking, *"Isn't your arm sore?"* I said, *"No, its fine."* It hurt like hell...but that was "fine." It was a thrill to suffer for Susan.

Reportedly, Jesus said to Julian of Norwich in her famous vision, *"To have ever suffered the passion for you is for me – a great joy, bliss, and endless delight."*

Well, by the end of the movie my arm had died. (I literally had no feeling or movement in my arm whatsoever.) I had to say, *"Excuse me"* as I lifted it off of Susan's shoulders with my other arm; placed it in my lap; and slapped it till it came back to life.

I romanced her:

Present but hidden...

Wooing...

Enticing...

Alluring...

Romancing.

But now imagine if that first day in English class I would've sat down next to Susan and said, *"Hey you're a 'hottie' and I've decided you're going to marry me; give birth to 4 children by me; wash my dirty underwear and love it."*

"If you disagree, you need to know I'm the logical choice. I have a 3.2 GPA and I'm a Christian and you're not. So, if you don't date me, you could burn in Hell."

"So hope in me; have faith in me; love me; date me now!"

If I did that, she'd have totally freaked and run out of the room.

When Jesus appears to John in all His glory – the Glory of His Love. When Jesus appears to John on the Island of Patmos, John drops as if dead.

When Jesus appears to Paul on the Damascus road, Paul is literally knocked over and blinded by the Light – the Light of Love.

In 2nd Thessalonians 1:9, He writes that those who disobey the Good News will be destroyed by the Glory, from the face of Christ. If right now you were to truly see...that every atom in your body only exists because He continually wills it. And that you have continually rejected Him and yet He continually and absolutely desires you. If you saw Him, who is Love, right now as He is in all His glory, you'd die.

So, Jesus is present, but hidden...preparing your weak little heart for that day...present but hidden...

Like a gardener asking questions

Like a hitch hiker on the road to Emmaus

Like a guy on the beach offering advice

Like a baby in a manger

Or "someone sick or in prison" like "the last and least"

Drawing love out of you

Inspiring love in you.

Present but hidden like a word, a thought, an idea,,,

"The mere idea of you, the longing here for you."

He is the Way, Truth, Life, and Light.

John tells us *"the only way to the Father is through Jesus the Son."*

But John also tells us *"He's the light that enlightens all men."*

"He's the only Way, but the Way descends into Hell and ascends in order to fill all things."

(Ephesians 4:9-10)

I'm just saying Jesus is still present, but hidden.

[image: cartoon of Jesus hiding behind the curtains while door-to-door evangelists ask "Have you found Jesus?"]

What's He doing? Is He a stalker? What's He doing? He's "romancing all people to Himself."

(John 12:32) I didn't write it. It's in the Bible.

A few years ago I got a phone call out of the blue.

"Is this Peter Hiatt that used to live on Prince Circle in Littleton?"

"Yes."

"I'm Michelle Braverman, Brad Braverman's little sister."

"Oh wow. Michelle, how are you?"

"Brad died. He died of AIDS. He would want you to do his funeral."



People say theology doesn't matter, but suddenly it mattered a lot. I mean Brad wasn't a concept to me...I knew Brad. I encountered the Breath of God in Brad. I needed to know

"God do you love Brad?"

OR

"Do you despise Brad and long to torment Brad without end?"

You know I was terrified to witness to Brad in High School 'cause I loved Brad and worried God didn't love Brad. And so I had to save Brad from God. So with my words I testified that Jesus saves for God is Love. And with my fear I testified that I save for God may not love Brad.

Once in Seminary, Brad called me at the church where I worked in LA. He had become an artist and moved to Hollywood near us. He said, *"Peter, I'm having a party and you have to come. I've got a Communist, a physicist, a lesbian, a Rabbi and an atheist and you're a pastor – it would be perfect. And I could show you my latest piece of art: an 8 foot phallus...."* I remember I stuttered and said something like *"I don't think I can."* I would've hated it. I would've felt like I had to judge everybody and save everybody. So I hung up...on Brad.

But ya know Jesus showed up at parties kind of like that (prostitutes and sinners). And when folks were drunk He even changed water to wine. Jesus is God's word – *Theo Logos*: it means God Word. Theology matters.

The voice on the other end of the phone said *"Peter would you do Bradley's funeral?"*

And I said *"Yes."*

I hung up the phone and began looking for Jesus in Brad's life.

[image: cartoon of Jesus hiding behind the curtains while door-to-door evangelists ask "Have you found Jesus?"]

In High School I tried to tell Brad how to find Jesus and now I began to look for Jesus in Brad
...behind the curtain.

Brad's funeral was kind of a skit. Omar, Brad's lover, was there in a leopard skin suit reading love poems for Brad. Brad's sometimes girlfriend, Brenda, was there as well. Brad's sister was there. Her husband had just left her and her daughter for a gay lover...

It was a tragic skit.

And Brad's family: mom, dad, relatives, all Jews – they were there.

Omar, Brenda, Michelle, the Jews and me, the Pastor...quite a party.

And Jesus was there.

In the service, I told of how Brad and I would spend hours in the ditch behind my house, as children, catching bugs and watching things grow. How we would put caterpillars in jars and watched *The Way* they'd metamorphose and change into butterflies. (Metamorphosis comes from the Greek *metamorphao* – to "transform.")

Brad was fascinated with "metamorphosis" – the Way and the Truth.

I told of how we planted a stick and everyone said it was dead but it came to Life and may still be growing in Brad's old yard.

We were fascinated with the Resurrection and the Life.

And I told about art class with Brad.

He loved Light and beautiful things.

And Brad loved me...I know he loved me...He loved the last and the least.

He loved WAY, TRUTH, LIFE, LIGHT, BEAUTY and LOVE.

I said "Seek God" as the Jewish prophets said and now excuse me, I must tell you about Jesus, who is "God seeking us." He said "*I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. I am the Light of the world.*" Jesus is Love in flesh, lying in a manger and hanging on a cross.

I quoted Brad's favorite song, sung by The Pretenders. They had the words printed in the bulletin:

*I'll stand by you
Get you through your darkest hour
And I'll never desert you
Nothing you could confess
Could make me love you less
I'll stand by you
Don't be ashamed to cry
Let me see you through
'cause I've seen the dark side too*

Then I said "*That is the Word of God in Christ Jesus...*

And not just the Pretenders."

You see? Brad had rejected my persuasive speech about Jesus and yet all his life, Brad had sought Jesus,

longed for Jesus...

even loved Jesus....

If in fact, Jesus is the Way, Truth, Life, Light, Beauty, and manifestation of Love; instead of arguing about Jesus, maybe I should've borne witness to Jesus

behind the curtain in Brad's own house
even the temple of his own flesh.

You know Paul writes in Galatians 1:16 that when he was converted, God was pleased to "reveal His Son in Him." As if He'd been there all along, behind the curtain, in the temple of Paul's own flesh. And when Paul went to Athens he bore witness that God was already there. He quoted their pagan philosophers saying, *"God is not far from each one of us, for in Him we live move and have our being."* He even painted out how they already worshipped the true God at their "Temple to the unknown God." Then Paul pulled back the curtain and said: *"It's Jesus...God's judgment is Jesus."*

So instead of arguing in fear, as if I was the Savior or Brad's judgment was the Savior... Instead of a persuasive speech with a water tight conclusion; maybe I should've just borne witness to the one behind the curtain saying, *"Brad you can look behind the curtain. He loves you and I think you love Him too."* See? I think Jesus had been singing to Brad from behind the curtain through the Pretenders...through creation...all Brad's life.

And yet that doesn't mean that Brad was "saved" – not yet.

It doesn't mean that he had looked behind the curtain and seen the Glory of God shining in the face of Christ.

It doesn't mean that a door wouldn't be shut and Brad wouldn't descend into outer darkness where, in the words of Jesus:

"Sons of the Kingdom weep and gnash their teeth."

It doesn't mean that Brad wouldn't run in terror at the Revelation of Jesus in the Revelation of God and His true intention...

Unquenchable, Eternal, Burning Hot Love
for Brad.

Well, as I was saying, I didn't reveal all of my intentions that day in 1977 as I sat next to Susan Coleman in American Lit. But for 4 years I romanced her:

Present but hidden

Seeking, that I might be sought

And it worked. After 3 years she began saying *"Wouldn't it be nice to be married?"* And so I'd say *"Gosh I don't know – maybe I'm not ready."*

I took her out for her 21st birthday; then back to my parents' house for wine and a fire in the fireplace. My parents waited, upstairs. I had a cake made. On top was a hand and I placed a ring on the finger. I brought it in to Susan and bent down so she could blow out the candles and make a wish. But I knew the wish...it had been created with romance. She got half way round the cake; saw the ring and screamed. I grabbed the ring and dropped to my knees asking *"Would you marry me?"* just as she sprang from the couch knocking me over. I stood up and she grabbed me yelling *"Yes! Yes! Yes!"* And I said something like *"Stop clinging to me woman. I have not yet ascended the stairs to my father to tell him of my successful covenant proposal."*

The power of Romance; it's like I had created a good free choice in my bride, called Love. Faith, Hope and Love and I created it with Romance. If she took credit for it saying, *"Oh it was tough. But the right thing to do; the logical thing to do; the prudent thing to do. Didn't wish or want to do it, but knew I should. Peter gave a persuasive speech and I decided to be responsible."*

If she took credit for it – it wouldn't be it – Free Love.

You could say she chose, but I created the choice with romance...

The Choice was Faith by Grace.

"And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself," said Jesus.

Like we said last time, you are God's Love story that He is telling with His Word and His Word is Jesus. Read the Bible well and from chapter 1 of Genesis to the Revelation. You'll see it's a romance and God is in control of everything:

Creation, Garden, Ancient Dragon, Beast from the Land and Beast from the Sea, the Kings of the Earth and the Great Harlot.

The only thing in question is this...

"Do you Love Me?"

He chooses a group of people – the Jews and
Leads them into slavery...so He can set them free.
Leads them into the Wilderness...so He can be their strength.
Leads them into exile...that they would long for home.
He lets them get lost in lies and even death
Lost so they seek the way...lies so they'd long for truth.
Death so they'd yearn for life...so they would seek Him.
Yet all the while, He is present, but hidden.

In Jerusalem they had a temple and His presence dwelt in the temple in the inner sanctuary behind a curtain. And if you looked behind that curtain you might be consumed by Glory. Well anyway, He romances His Bride...

Even consigns her to sin that she might know His Mercy.

[I received permission to tell you this.]

Three weeks ago my son's 16 year old girlfriend borrowed his car (which is my car) and accidentally drove it off the road and through a fence into someone's backyard. If I had done that or one of Coleman's buddies on the football team, Coleman would have been ticked. But when I arrived at the scene, Coleman was hugging Sarah as she wept in his arms, saying, *"That's OK. That's alright. I'll fix the car."* And he wasn't angry at all. Now the neighbors, the police, Sarah's mom – they were a different story. But I looked at Coleman and I thought, "You're glad. You're happy. You're delighted that Sarah crashed your car...cause now you get to stand here and romance her with Mercy."

Well...does Coleman want her to do that every day? NO!!! *"Shall we sin that Grace may abound,"* asks Paul – NO! But God did "consign all to disobedience that He may have mercy on all," says Scripture. I think He's romancing All that All might see His Glory...

His Glory from behind the curtain...

Grace.

As Jesus hung on the ancient tree, the sky grew black and the earth shook and Jesus cried, *"My God. My God. Why have you forsaken me?"* Jesus entered into our lostness, lies and death. And that curtain in the temple...it ripped from top to bottom as the Glory of God

...the Love of God

...the Word of God

...got out

and descended into outer darkness; the depths of the earth

"Where sons of the kingdom weep and gnash their teeth."

God is better than you thought.

The love of Jesus is deeper than you know.

And the Spirit is everywhere working the wonders of Mercy.

Before Bradley's service, his sister Michelle pulled me aside and said, *"Peter it was weird, before Brad died, for several months, he was delirious and he used to lie in bed muttering strange things like this – over and over – 'I can't be God, I can't be God, it's so hard to be God.'" You see the outer darkness is for those who believe that they are God. That they judge themselves, redeem themselves and save themselves. That their judgment; their choice saves them; that they are the Savior. And in the end nothing is more terrifying than that. Brad would mutter, "It's so hard to be God. I can't be God"...What is that?*

That's called confession.

At the funeral Brenda, Brad's old girlfriend, pulled my wife aside and said, *"Susan it was weird: I asked Brad one day about his funeral and what he wanted (I didn't think he had talked to Peter) and I said Brad, have you talked to your old friend Peter about it?"*

And Brad said, *"Oh Peter – I talk to Peter every week..."*

Well Brad didn't talk to me. And yet maybe he was talking to the one who lives in me

And lived in me...even in high school

even in high school

behind a curtain of flesh, fear, arguments and insecurity.

Maybe Jesus is behind every curtain, including the one that is me.

So, maybe Brad spoke to Jesus and Jesus to Brad, about

Caterpillars that change into butterflies and ride the wind

Sticks that seem dead and come to life

And even some of the stuff I told him in high school:

About a Jewish Messiah that died and rose again

To transform him from a worm

Into a thing of unspeakable beauty and grace.

Maybe Jesus preached to Bradley in outer darkness

Where *"Sons of the Kingdom weep and gnash their teeth."*

Well I don't know the details of Bradley's story, but I know it's a love story and that all stories end with Jesus.

So, I know that Jesus loves Brad

and I know that Jesus is Bradley's Savior,
and I am not Bradley's Savior.

"I can't be God. I can't be God; it's so hard to be God."
I can't be the Savior, but I can bear witness to the Savior.

Actually Jesus never told us to "make disciples"
I can't make a disciple.

The Great Commission literally reads as follows:

Jesus says, *"All authority (all power) in heaven and on earth has been given to me."*

[That means I save, I judge, I redeem, I romance...I do it all.]

"Therefore going = disciple all the peoples and I am with you always."

I can't make disciples, but I can disciple.
I can't make the Gospel, but I can proclaim the Gospel.
I can't save someone, but I can bear witness to the Savior.
I can bear witness to the Divine Romance – Jesus.
I mean I can tell people
 Who He is and what He's doing.
I mean I can say "There's a man behind the curtain...and
 He's not a stalker
 He's a romancer
 His name is Jesus.
Hey...Let's look behind the curtain.

Communion

And He took bread and He broke it. The book of Hebrews says that His flesh is a curtain. He took bread and He broke it saying *"This is my Body given to you."* And in the same way, after supper, and having given thanks, He took the cup and said *"This cup is the New Covenant in my blood, poured out for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it, all of you, and do it in remembrance of Me."*

And so we invite you to enter the Throne Room of Grace, boldly. To come behind the curtain to the Mercy Seat; that's what it's called. And receive the Love of God, for you, the Bride of Christ.

In Jesus' name, believe the Gospel and worship.

Benediction

All over the world people are terrified with one question that they would say, formulate in a bunch of different ways. The question is this "What's behind the curtain?" Because of that terror,

 people live driven,
 they live in fear,
 they live addicted,
 in jungles,
 back rooms,
 even in our city...

people sacrifice chickens and dogs and all sorts of things.
Out of fear...for what's behind the curtain.

What's behind the veil?

What's behind space and time?

What's behind this world of ours?

What's behind the Big Bang? What's before the Big Bang? What's on the other side of the Big Bang?

What's on the other side of the curtain?

You know the answer? You know who it is and what He's doing...and it's good. It's Good News. It's worth telling.

You know when my kids were little, one of my favorite things to do with them was I'd go buy Susan, like some roses or some flowers at the store. And then I'd let Jon or Coleman or Elizabeth or Becky; we'd come home with the flowers and I'd say "Hey buddy, you give mom the flowers." And they would. "Hey Mom. Good news. I got you flowers." And they knew; Susan knew; I knew; I paid for the flowers. But it was their great joy to hand her the flowers. You get to hand the Bride her flowers and its Good News.

So, believe the Gospel

And preach the Gospel

Proclaim the Gospel

Be His witnesses wherever you go

'Cause you're witnessing to the greatest story ever told
The Gospel.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

The Pretenders – Lyrics for “I’ll Stand By You”

*Oh, why you look so sad”
Tears are in your eyes
Come on and come to me now
Don’t be ashamed to cry
Let me see you through
‘cause I’ve seen the dark side too
When the night falls on you
You don’t know what to do
Nothing you confess
Could make me love you less*

*I’ll stand by you
I’ll stand by you
Won’t let nobody hurt you
I’ll stand by you*

*So if you’re mad, get mad
Don’t hold it all inside
Come on and talk to me now
Hey, what you got to hide?
I get angry too
Well I’m a lot like you
When you’re standing at the crossroads
And don’t know which path to choose
Let me come along
‘cause even if you’re wrong*

*I’ll stand by you
I’ll stand by you
Won’t let nobody hurt you
I’ll stand by you
Take me in, into your darkest hour
And I’ll never desert you
I’ll stand by you*

*And when...
When the night falls on you, baby
You’re feeling all alone
You won’t be on your own*

*I’ll stand by you
I’ll stand by you
Won’t let nobody hurt you*

*I’ll stand by you
Take me in, into your darkest hour
And I’ll never desert you
I’ll stand by you
I’ll stand by you
Won’t let nobody hurt you
I’ll stand by you
Won’t let nobody hurt you
I’ll stand by you*
