

**WEDDING SERMON: The Groom's Big Day**

**CALL TO WORSHIP & CONFESION:**

I will greatly rejoice in the Lord;  
**my soul shall exult in my God,**  
 for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation;  
**he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,**  
 as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress,  
**and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.** (Isaiah 61:10).

Let us confess our sins to God:

**Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed – by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have failed to prepare ourselves for Christ's promised return. We have adorned ourselves with sin, instead of with your holiness. We are truly sorry, and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son, our Bridegroom, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us. Clothe us with his righteousness, that we might walk in your will and delight in your ways, to the glory of your name. Amen.**

Dearly beloved: We have come together in the presence of God to witness and bless the joining together of this man and this woman in Holy Matrimony. The bond and covenant of marriage was established by God in creation, and our Lord Jesus Christ adorned this manner of life by his presence and first miracle at a wedding in Cana of Galilee. It signifies to us the mystery of the union between Christ and his Church, and Holy Scripture commends it to be honored among all people.

The union of husband and wife in heart, body, and mind is intended by God for their mutual joy; for the help and comfort given one another in prosperity and adversity; and, when it is God's will, for the procreation of children and their nurture in the knowledge and love of the Lord. Therefore, marriage is not to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly, but reverently, deliberately, and in accordance with the purposes for which it was instituted by God.

Into this holy union *N.N.* and *N.N.* now come to be joined. If any of you can show just cause why they may not lawfully be married, speak now; or else for ever hold your peace.

*Then the Celebrant says to the persons to be married*

I require and charge you both, here in the presence of God, that if either of you know any reason why you may not be united in marriage lawfully, and in accordance with God's Word, you do now confess it.

**THE DECLARATION OF CONSENT:**

*The Celebrant says to the woman*

N., will you have this man to be your husband; to live together in the covenant of marriage? Will you love him, comfort him, honor and keep him, in sickness and in health; and, forsaking all others, be faithful to him as long as you both shall live?

*The Woman answers: I will.*

*The Celebrant says to the man*

N., will you have this woman to be your wife; to live together in the covenant of marriage? Will you love her, comfort her, honor and keep her, in sickness and in health; and, forsaking all others, be faithful to her as long as you both shall live?

*The Man answers: I will.*

*The Celebrant then addresses the congregation, saying*

Will all of you witnessing these promises do all in your power to uphold these two persons in their marriage?

*People*            We will.

**THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD:**

*The Celebrant then says to the people*

*People*            The Lord be with you.  
                      And also with you.

Let us pray.

O gracious and everliving God, you have created us male and female in your image: Look mercifully upon this man and this woman who come to you seeking your blessing, and assist them with your grace, that with true fidelity and steadfast love they may honor and keep the promises and vows they make; through Jesus Christ our Savior, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

*Amen.*

**THE LESSONS:**

1. **Ephesians 5:21-33** – Wives and Husbands
2. **Psalms 67** – May God Be Gracious to Us and Bless Us
3. **Revelation 19:6-10** – The Marriage Supper of the Lamb

#### 4. **Matthew 25:1-13** – The Parable of the Ten Virgins

### **THE HOMILY:**

What makes a great wedding?

- Is it the fragrance and color of the flower arrangements?
- The particular grandeur of the venue?
- Is it the number and camaraderie of the guests?
- Or the quality and sound of the music?
- Is it the menu at the reception?
- Or perhaps the selection at the (hopefully open) bar?

I hope it's not the quality of the sermon!

But, really, what makes a wedding great?

Surely (gestures toward bride and groom) these two have something to do with it.

- Is it, perhaps, their physical appearance?
- His rugged handsomeness? Her stunning beauty?

What about their relationship?

- Is the wedding great because of the intensity of their love for one another?
- Their glorious dreams for the future?
- The optimism of this moment between them?

What is it that makes a wedding great?

I guess, if most of us had to pick, we'd say that a wedding is great if the bride is happy. Right?

I mean, even if the weather stinks, the singers are off-key, and the sermon is just absolutely awful – if the bride is happy, everything is OK. Right?

Which is a great reminder that weddings are about people, not performances.

However, I'm here today to tell you all that, sure, *you can have a good wedding if the bride is happy*.

But, **if you want a really great wedding – if you want a really great marriage – then it's really all about the groom.**

Great weddings, might I even say heavenly weddings, are all about the **groom**.

Now, either you're not listening or I've probably upset you!

Really? Has the preacher lost his mind? Is he some sort of chauvinist pig?

- This is the bride's big day!
- That's why her outfit is more impressive!
- That's why we all stand when the bride walks down the aisle!
- Are we really going to take this moment away from her and say that it's all about this handsome chump here?

Well, no.

Heavenly weddings are all about the groom, but you (gestures to the groom) better not use this sermon as an excuse for anything resembling male chauvinism!

Because, for one thing, I'm an egalitarian!

And, for another, I'm not talking about **you** (gestures to groom), **her** (to bride) bridegroom, but rather to **Christ, our** (gestures to everyone) bridegroom.

**Great weddings, and great marriages, are all about Christ, our Bridegroom.**

Take a glance at the Bible readings on your order of service everyone.

Did you catch the names on the wedding invite in Revelation 19? We're not invited there to this wedding, of this woman to this man, but the wedding of the **Church** to **Christ** himself!

This is the same marriage Paul speaks of in Ephesians 5.

In both passages, the Groom, Christ, takes center stage.

You see, in the ancient Jewish culture out of which the Bible came, weddings were done a bit differently.

- Modern weddings often center around the arrival of the bride to her groom,
- but these ancient Jewish weddings really hinged on the arrival of the groom to his bride.

First, what would happen is the groom would pay the bride's father her bride price.

After this, the couple was betrothed – legally joined together, although not physically, for they still were not fully married.

Instead, they went their separate ways.

- He went to prepare their future living quarters as an addition to his father's household.
- She went back to her father's household to prepare herself – including the preparation of her beautiful wedding dress.

After the groom had completed their home, he would gather his friends to go and get his bride.

She and her companions would have a ballpark idea of when he would come, but the exact hour was a surprise.

So, the bridal party had to stay ready.

This is the scene we read in Matthew 25, where things went wrong.

- Five members of the bridal party were ready for the bridegroom to arrive,
- but the other five were not ready to join the evening's lamp-lit procession.

Ideally, the bride and all her friends and family would be awake and ready to join the groom on the journey back to his father's household and their new living quarters.

Once there, the real party began!

Which, by the way, if things have sounded real intense up to this point, let me assure you: these people knew how to party!

The wedding celebration would go on for days and days, launching the couple into their new life together.

Now, why in the world am I telling you all this?

- I mean, first I steal the bride's thunder,
- and then I give you a Jewish history lesson?!

Here's why (looks directly at bride and groom):

- **your wedding, and your marriage to each other,**
- **finds its true meaning and glory**
- **as a part of Christ's Bride – the Church –**
- **preparing herself for the Bridegroom's return.**

*Great weddings and marriages are all about the Bridegroom*

What does that mean for you? Well, as we read in Ephesians 5, it means you are to love each other sacrificially and humbly.

After all, our Bridegroom died for us. He cleanses us from sin. And he sets us apart as his holy people.

Will your marriage be an image of this kind of love for each other?

Look around the room, you two. Now look at each other.

- I think it's safe to say that you will each bring the other more joy than anyone else in this room.
- However, I think it's also safe to say that you will cause each other more pain than anyone else in this room.

Because you are sinners.

- You each, like us all, have fallen short of the glory of God.
- And marriage is about to make you especially aware of your spouse's sinful flaws!

Thankfully, though, that's not the end of the story. Thankfully, your marriage can point beyond itself, and therefore be truly heavenly.

- For you both have been bought by the very blood of Christ – a steep bride price if there ever was one!
- You have both been betrothed to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, who is preparing a place for you both in his Father's household.
- And you are therefore both called to prepare your wedding garments through holy living – especially in how you love one another as husband as wife.

Should you love each other as Christ loves his Bride, your marriage will be a powerful witness – through both laughter and tears – to a world which desperately needs the Bridegroom.

It desperately needs the Bridegroom to return and wipe away every tear, to right every wrong, and to make everything new.

Do you know what that's going to be like?

It's going to be like a wedding banquet.

In Revelation 21(:2-4), John writes:

“I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a *bride* beautifully dressed for her husband.

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.

‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.’”

Now, we can anticipate that joy and celebration at the reception later today!

But we also get a glimpse of what's coming when we partake of the Lord's Supper.

- Just as God has not left the two of you alone, but has blessed you with each other's companionship,
- Jesus has not left his Church on her own, but promises to be with her in the breaking of the bread and the sharing of the wine.

Therefore, every time someone comes into contact with you as a Christ-centered couple, I pray they are reminded of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

And every time the two of you, and all of you, partake of the Lord's Supper, I pray you'll remember that **heavenly weddings, and the very best marriages, are all about the Bridegroom.**

Amen.

**THE MARRIAGE:**

*The Man, facing the woman and taking her right hand in his, says*

In the Name of God, I, *N.*, take you, *N.*, to be my wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, until we are parted by death. This is my solemn vow.

*Then they loose their hands, and the Woman, still facing the man, takes his right hand in hers, and says*

In the Name of God, I, *N.*, take you, *N.*, to be my husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, until we are parted by death. This is my solemn vow.

*They loose their hands.*

*The Priest may ask God's blessing on a ring or rings as follows*

Bless, O Lord, this ring to be a sign of the vows by which this man and this woman have bound themselves to each other; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

*The giver places the ring on the ring-finger of the other's hand and says*

*N.*, I give you this ring as a symbol of my vow, and with all that I am, and all that I have, I honor you, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (*or* in the Name of God).

*Then the Celebrant joins the right hands of husband and wife and says*

Now that *N.* and *N.* have given themselves to each other by solemn vows, with the joining of hands and the giving and receiving of a ring, I pronounce that they are husband and wife, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Those whom God has joined together let no one put asunder.

*People* Amen.

### **THE PRAYERS**

*The Deacon or other person appointed reads the following prayers, to which the People respond, saying, Amen.*

Let us pray.

Eternal God, creator and preserver of all life, author of salvation, and giver of all grace: Look with favor upon the world you have made, and for which your Son gave his life, and especially upon this man and this woman whom you make one flesh in Holy Matrimony. *Amen.*

Give them wisdom and devotion in the ordering of their common life, that each may be to the other a strength in need, a counselor in perplexity, a comfort in sorrow, and a companion in joy. *Amen.*

Grant that their wills may be so knit together in your will, and their spirits in your Spirit, that they may grow in love and peace with you and one another all the days of their life. *Amen.*

Give them grace, when they hurt each other, to recognize and acknowledge their fault, and to seek each other's forgiveness and yours. *Amen.*

Make their life together a sign of Christ's love to this sinful and broken world, that unity may overcome estrangement, forgiveness heal guilt, and joy conquer despair. *Amen.*

Bestow on them, if it is your will, the gift and heritage of children, and the grace to bring them up to know you, to love you, and to serve you. *Amen.*

Give them such fulfillment of their mutual affection that they may reach out in love and concern for others. *Amen.*

Grant that all married persons who have witnessed these vows may find their lives strengthened and their loyalties confirmed. *Amen.*

Grant that the bonds of our common humanity, by which all your children are united one to another, and the living to the dead, may be so transformed by your grace, that your will may be done on earth as it is in heaven; where, O Father, with your Son, and the Holy Spirit, you live and reign in perfect unity, now and for ever. *Amen.*

*The people remain standing. The husband and wife kneel, and the Priest says one of the following prayers*

Most gracious God, we give you thanks for your tender love in sending Jesus Christ to come among us, to be born of a human mother, and to make the way of the cross to be the way of life. We thank you, also, for consecrating the union of man and woman in his Name. By the power of your Holy Spirit, pour out the abundance of your blessing upon this man and this woman. Defend them from every enemy. Lead them into all peace. Let their love for each other be a seal upon their hearts, a mantle about their shoulders, and a crown upon their foreheads. Bless them in their work and in their companionship; in their sleeping and in their waking; in their joys and in their sorrows; in their life and in their death. Finally, in your mercy, bring them to that table where your saints feast for ever in your heavenly home; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

### **THE BLESSING**

*The husband and wife still kneeling, the Priest adds this blessing*

God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, bless, preserve, and keep you; the Lord mercifully with his favor look upon you, and fill you with all spiritual benediction and grace; that you may faithfully live together in this life, and in the age to come have life everlasting. *Amen.*

### **THE PEACE**

*The Celebrant may say to the people*

*People*           The peace of the Lord be always with you.  
                          And also with you.

*The newly married couple then greet each other, after which greetings may be exchanged throughout the congregation.*

### **AT THE EUCHARIST**

*The liturgy then continues with the Offertory, at which the newly married couple may present the offerings of bread and wine.*

*At the Communion, it is appropriate that the newly married couple receive Communion first, after the ministers.*

*In place of the usual postcommunion prayer, the following is said*

O God, the giver of all that is true and lovely and gracious:  
We give you thanks for binding us together in these holy  
mysteries of the Body and Blood of your Son Jesus Christ.  
Grant that by your Holy Spirit, *N.* and *N.*, now joined in Holy  
Matrimony, may become one in heart and soul, live in fidelity  
and peace, and obtain those eternal joys prepared for all who  
love you; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

*As the wedding party leaves the church, a hymn, psalm, or anthem may be sung, or instrumental music may be played.*

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