

Sermon Preached on the occasion of marriage blessing ceremony between
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Title:

Marriage, God's First Gift of Love to Man

Wedding Joy in Heaven and on Earth

Few occasions elicit as much joy as a marriage ceremony in which two people in love – a man and a woman – are united in a formal relationship covenanted before God and a crowd of well-wishers. Eyes sparkle with joy; faces wear broad smiles; lips part in cheers and shouts of rejoicing.

It's an infectious atmosphere of joy; there's festivity in the air. Something wonderful is happening. Love is being celebrated and being celebrated the right way – solemnized in marriage.

The occasion calls for joy – even in the spiritual context of Christ's marriage to His bride, the church. John the Baptist who styled himself as the Saviour's 'best man' on His wedding day declared:

"He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth Him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.

"He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:29-30).

The bride is betrothed to the Bridegroom at this stage (2 Cor. 11:2), the wedding proper whereupon the marriage will be consummated is yet future. But that time is ever approaching and, as John did at His first coming, the heralds of His second coming (His 'best men') are beside themselves with joy at the sound of His voice thundering in the clouds of heaven.

They cannot replace Him. He must increase; we must decrease. He is the Bridegroom, the Saviour and the Husband of the bride. We lead people to Him and make Him the Lord of their lives. He deserves all the devotion and adoration! He is the resplendent Bridegroom clothed in power and majesty (Ps. 45); we are His messengers!

How sad, some so-called ministers of the gospel of today have made themselves tin-gods at the expense of the Lordship of Yeshua!

Even so, the wedding is scheduled to come off:

“And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God.

“And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

“Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready.

“And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

“And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God” (Rev. 19:1, 6-9).

It’s guaranteed; it’s assured. The “marriage supper of the Lamb” is coming on. Only be ready in your wedding garment (Matt. 22:11-14) – your white garment of righteousness, and you will sit right there with Him *as His wife* in His Kingdom and feast with Him on your wedding day!

It’s fait accompli!

There’s great joy in heaven over the long-awaited marriage supper of the Lamb! And there’s joy here below – though not as grand but nevertheless a joy – over our brother and sister’s marriage blessing today!

A wedding is always a joyous solemn occasion. And so God made it to be.

Give Honour to Marriage

It should seem obvious, but God has deemed it necessary to remind us of the need to honour the marriage institution. It speaks volume about the great importance God attaches to marriage.

He tells us in Heb. 13:4:

“Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge” (Heb. 13:4 NASB).

It’s a divine command to treat marriage the way it should be treated.

God made marriage to be an institution of honour. He invested it with sanctity and dignity at creation. It was He who officiated at the first wedding when He presented Eve to Adam in Eden.

Noble in all His purposes, He conceived marriage to be the ideal holy relationship between a man and a woman.

And it was not an afterthought. He planned marriage as part of His creation of mankind as male and female. When some Pharisees confronted Christ with the question, "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause", He reaffirmed the Genesis narrative that marriage was the rationale behind the creation of man as a male and female pair and therefore not something to trifle with! (Matt. 19:3).

"And He answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that He which made them at the beginning made them male and female,

"And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?"

"Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matt. 19:4-6).

God's favour has no beginning or end. At the time of creation when He created man as the apex of His earthly creation in His own image and likeness (Gen. 1:26), He did man, in the person of Adam, the first male, a favour when He formed a life companion from his own body to be his help mate:

"And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.

"And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof;

"And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made He a woman, and brought her unto the man.

"And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.

"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Gen. 2:18, 21-24).

Marriage is a divine act of grace in the lives of His people. That favour still stands:

"Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD" (Prov. 18:22).

Today, the favour of God has dropped afresh on our brother! And he's reliving the joy of Adam: Here's the bone of my bones and the flesh of my flesh! She shall be called *Mrs. Mensah* because she was taken out of *Mr. Mensah!*

Our brother is complete now!

Now, as a minister of God vested with heavenly authority, I pray and decree that the favour of God shine on a brother at this wedding, that he might fall into a “deep sleep” and wake up to find his ‘missing rib’ the next morning – the bone of his bones and the flesh of his flesh.

Ladies too, I decree the same for you. May a brother soon propose and sweep you off your feet – a man truly worthy of your love and devotion – as though you just woke up to gaze upon the face of an angel from heaven!

Marriage is a beautiful thing, and it is the will of God that, as fallible as we are, we strive by His grace to keep it honourable!

That means respecting the rules of the marriage institution, wherein lies its inviolable sanctity, as God, the Author of marriage, established it in the beginning.

Marriage is a Covenant witnessed in Heaven

Marriage is unlike any other human relationship on the face of the earth. It’s not entered into, say, the way people strike up acquaintanceship and end up as friends. Or how babies are born into this world to fathers and mothers and to brothers and sisters and other relatives.

Marriage is in a unique class. It’s entered by a man and a woman under terms instituted by God. It is a covenant relationship – a relationship of love between a man and a woman in a lifelong union of commitment covenanted before God (Prov. 2:17).

This is where the heart of the matter is. Marriage is not just a man and a woman living together and which has been inaugurated with fanfare! Instead, it’s a husband and wife relationship of mutual commitment in which either party performs a core set of God-ordained obligations designed to complement each other for the total enrichment of each other’s life and the greater glory of God.

That’s why the Lord warns us: “... let the marriage bed be undefiled.” It’s a reminder to the married partners of their obligations under the marriage covenant, including mutual fidelity (faithfulness).

So, what set of roles has God assigned husbands in marriage?

The husband is primarily to love and care for his wife. And Christ’s unparalleled love for the church is the yardstick. It’s thoroughgoing love:

*“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it;
“That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,
“That He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5:25-27).*

Christ, the Husband of the church, has changed the destiny of His wife; He has given her a spiritual makeover. The process involved great sacrifice – at the cost of His life – and acts of

kindness *that He might have a wife He could be proud of* – “a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish”!

Christ proved His love for His bride, the church, with deeds.

God expects the same of you husbands. Don't just whisper sweet nothings into her ear. Prove your love for your wife. Provide her needs (see 1 Tim. 5:8). Improve her circumstances. Make her a 'better person' (in social standing and spiritual life) than you met her.

The key is to love your wife as your own self:

“So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.

“For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:

“For we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones.

“For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.

“This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

“Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband” (Eph. 5:28-33).

See a man who hates his wife by neglecting to provide her needs, and you have seen a self-hater par excellence! But many husbands do hate their own selves by hating their wives because they don't understand the spiritual chemistry of marriage. A husband is “one flesh” with his wife, and it's the height of absurdity to starve your own body of nourishment and care when you are in a position to care for it.

It becomes all the more critical when we come to consider that marriage is not just any human relationship but a metaphor for Christ's relationship of love with the church. So it's imperative that husbands take good care of their wives in order not to be an unworthy type of Christ's love for His church.

What about wives? What set of roles do they play in marriage?

The wife is primarily to submit to her husband and accord him due regard as her head. Once again, the yardstick is the faithful church's submission to Christ, her Head:

“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.

“For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Saviour of the body.

“Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing” (Eph. 5:22-24).

The point is well made, the wife is to submit to her husband as the head of the home, as if she were submissive to Christ Himself, but it's not just submission in terms of demeanour – calling him 'lord' as Sarah did minus her works (1 Pet. 3:6) – but to manage the home on his behalf:

"I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully" (1 Tim. 5:14).

So then, while the husband is the chief executive officer (CEO) of the Christian home, the wife is the managing director (MD). In Bible-logic, she's "an help meet for him".

The wife is literally the nerve centre of the home; the live wire! Her numerous duties spelt out in Prov. 31:10-31 cast her as a thoughtful, diligent and industrious care-giver and a pillar of support behind her husband.

Such is the kind of home God envisioned when He instituted marriage for man – a home where happy families are raised and the duty of love is the order of the day. Anything short of this courts divine judgment!

Married life is not the place to adopt a cavalier attitude toward the relationship, or show lack of commitment to each other or cheat on him or her. God, the Author of marriage, jealously guards the sanctity of marriage!

Heaven Indicts Immoral Lovers!

Man naturally craves companionship; men and women naturally attract each other, except in this age of rank evil where same-sex attraction is all the rage!

Yet the only sexual relations God has sanctioned and hallowed for mankind is marriage between one man and one woman. All other forms of sexual relations – though having a semblance of marriage and is in fact a perversion of it – are not invested with any divine sanctity or dignity. They are all sinful and immoral (marital parodies, so as to speak including same-sex relationships!), and the holy God has passed His judgment against them: "Fornicators and adulterers God will judge!"

The only safe place for sexual relations, free from divine judgment by fire, is marriage.

Marriage is therefore a choice in favour of salvation. For the average person, it's really an uphill task to stay unmarried and stay chaste. As is often the case, you are more likely to have bouts of desire or, as the Bible puts it, "burn" with passion which ebb and flow and back again!

But do take care how you satisfy your passion. If you intend to satiate it illegitimately *by fornication*, be assured that you will burn the second time, this time in hell fire. That was why the Apostle Paul makes a strong case for marriage as a better alternative for the single believer who cannot longer control himself and therefore risks sinning, even though he himself never married. Celibacy is special grace for the precious few (Matt. 19:10-12)! He wrote in 1 Cor. 7:8-9:

*“I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I.
“But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn”.*

Marriage is far “better”—far honourable and rewarding, and it’s incumbent on us as believers to give it due recognition and honour.

Yahweh, our God, expects nothing less, as we call upon Him, even the God who instituted and blessed the first marriage in Eden, to bless this marital union between our brother and sister and grant them every blessing promised to believers who join in holy matrimony in His Name.

And we ask that He bless all well-wishers present with us here for their show of love and support.

Finally, we ask Him, the Father of Lights from whom all blessings flow, to bless this holy assembly and all our loved ones both far and near on this joyous occasion of this marriage blessing in Jesus’ Name! Amen!