

Family Series 2024 - #4

The Great Marriage and Yours – *Rev 21:2-3, 9-10*

Introduction – God the Creator, revealed Himself in His creation, “...what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen...” (Rom 1:4-5). We get that mixed up. We think, having seen a human father, that God is “like” a father. But it is the other way around. God is Father, He is not “like” a father. Jesus is the Son, He is not “like” a son. Jesus has a bride to whom He is betrothed and one day there will be the great wedding feast. His relationship to the church is not “like” a husband and a wife, rather, the marriage relationship is a reflection of the Great Marriage, the true and eternal marriage.

This is why every marriage preaches the gospel (Eph 5:25-27, 32). We are to align our marriage to the Great Marriage and in doing so preach the gospel of Jesus Christ through our marriages. This is inescapable because God created human marriage and so it is always and only a matter of how well we are living that message. Marriage also reflects a theology of the Triune God (one and many, unity and diversity, mutual indwelling, ontology and economy – 1 Cor 11:3).

We have considered these truths in other sermons. But every marriage also reflects an eschatology (*the study of last things*). Your eschatology declares the expected efficacy in the work of the kingdom of God over the earth (what must happen, where it must go, what is the end game). As your theology and gospel story informs your marriage and likewise your marriage declares a theology and gospel story, so your eschatology informs your marriage and is revealed in your marriage. Our theology, as has been said, works itself out in our fingertips. So does our eschatology.

A Wedding (Rev 21:2-3, 9-10) – The Bible begins with a story of a wedding and ends with the story of a wedding. The first and the last Adam both are married to a bride, blessed by the Father and instructed to go and take dominion of the earth, to be fruitful and multiply. The first Adam fell as he watched his bride fall to the deception of the serpent, only to join with her in outright rebellion. The second Adam perfectly obeyed His Father, crushed the serpent’s head, and rescued His bride, bringing her to Himself in all love and loyalty. John sees in a vision the end of the old order of the world and, with the death, burial, resurrection, ascension and reign of the second Adam, a new heaven and a new earth established. He likens the holy city, the new Jerusalem, whose origin is from heaven, to a bride perfectly prepared for her husband, established definitively upon the earth by Christ, to bring forth the rivers of living water, the gospel, to the ends of the earth (John 7:37-38).

Which Eschatology? – So many argue that our eschatological choices don’t make that much difference. But I would argue that they are imbedded in the story of the Marriage and therefore imbedded in our own marriage relationships as well. There are three main eschatological positions: pessimistic, agnostic, and optimistic. The pessimist says that Scriptures teach us that the Bridegroom fails and the bride falls into apostasy. The agnostic believes the Scriptures are silent, or that there is only a picture of constant struggle between faithfulness and unfaithfulness and no promise of real maturity or victory. The optimist teaches that the Scriptures declare that the Husband’s efficacious love will result in growing fruitful victory, dominion, and glory. All of church history is simply the time it takes for the bride to walk down the aisle. When she gets to the front, she is found to be without spot or wrinkle or any other blemish (Eph 5:27). That is her final destination.

Your Marriage: Not Just Reflecting, but Empowered with Gospel Hope – If your marriage declares and even embodies the theology, gospel, and eschatology of Christ and the church, what is in the fiber of this instituted covenant which God has given you? To answer that, we must consider what we are told the work on the cross accomplished. Christ’s blessed work on the Cross is powerful to turn every one from his or her iniquities (Acts 3:26). In the gospel’s declaration, the Spirit brings great grace upon all (Acts 4:33). Our union with Christ is a living hope (1 Pet 1:3). He surprises us and makes us laugh at the seeming impossibility of this powerful deliverance being true (Gen 17:17, Psalm 126:1-3, Luke 6:21).

This is the efficacy that created the Great Marriage, which your marriage imperfectly reflects. Joy, contentment, gratitude, acceptance, and fellowship all overflow into laughter and gladness because we cannot believe from whence we’ve come (in an ironic twist, belief in Total Depravity is the road to unspeakable joy). Who loves much and who loves little (Luke 7:47)? There is forgiveness in the Marriage and it runs deep; and our marriages are bastions of forgiveness because two sinners are living together (add kids) – at least there are lots of opportunities for forgiveness to be given and received – and what is the result? Love. Laughter. Hope.

Reflecting a Trajectory – What is this love of Christ going to accomplish – with and for His bride? The City, which is Christ dwelling with His Bride, brings healing to the nations (Rev 22:2), nations will flow to the mountain of the Lord (Mic 4:1-2),

the knowledge of the Lord will cover the earth (Hab 2:14). A marriage, rooted in this hope, becomes characterized with that hope and gladness (Isaiah 35:10) even in days that seemed a waste (Isaiah 51:3, 52:9). Just as the church has gone through many seasons of discipline from the Lord due to her unfaithfulness and compromise, so too will you often find your marriage under the discipline of the Lord. And yet, through each struggle there is the hope of victory and there will be celebration (Isaiah 35:10). When there is victory, repentance, reformation, in the marriage relationship, there is a return to joy and celebration (Neh 8:10).

Putting Some Feet to This – Marriage is God's idea, and so by definition, it works. But how does it work? Like everything else God gives us, it works only by grace through faith. And even that faith is a gift of God. Therefore –

Turn to Christ First and Always – You are not individually the bride of Christ, but you are a member of His body. As such, everything in your life is to be in submission to His Lordship. Nothing ever matters more than your right relationship to Him as servant to Master (Luke 14:26). A man who loves Christ more than his wife loves his wife best. A woman who loves Christ more than her husband loves her husband best.

Repent of Fussiness – Why does God forgive so much; why does love cover a multitude of sins? Because Christ knows where this is going and so, with great confidence, He gives Himself to His bride with joy. Learn to let it go – gladly.

Practice a Godly Jealousy – In another marital metaphor, Paul said that, like a good father protecting his betrothed daughter, he had a godly jealousy that she (the church) not fall into the deceptions of the enemy (2 Cor 11:1-3). Christ loves His bride and closely guards that relationship and their future from the enemy. Learn to protect that good gift you have been given.

Give Yourself to More Celebrating – Every week He wants to have a celebration with His bride – again! He has us continually celebrate a marriage definitively accomplished, an ongoing sanctification of that marriage, and all the while practicing for that final wedding feast at the end. Learn to practice gratitude in little and big things, in simple and profound events – learn to laugh with God. Hope in God; He is about to surprise you again.

Dave Hatcher – March 17, 2024