



**The Blessing of Marriage
For
Joshua and Sylvia
Hoffer**

**July 31
Year of Our ✝ Lord 2020**

Anchored in Christ



**ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN
CHURCH**

**A Church of
The Lutheran Church—
Missouri Synod**

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✝ A WORD ON MARRIAGE ✝

What is marriage? Is marriage an unchanging promise of commitment for life together forever, before God, or is it an invention of an outdated culture and, therefore, something that needs to be revised from generation to generation? Is marriage simply any two people choosing to live together for sexual convenience or mutual financial benefit or is it a prerequisite for the creation of families? Is marriage the union of man and woman or is it also the union of a man to another man or a woman to another? The message for Christians from the Word of God is that marriage is not whatever we choose to make of it. It is what God has made it to be.

Marriage is a one-of-a-kind experience between a man and a woman. No other relationship, even between closest friends or between parent and child, compares with the experiences unique to marriage.

Biblically, marriage is the one-flesh union of a man and a woman, the most natural expression of which is the procreation of children and the formation of a family.

More specifically though, Ephesians 5:21-33 speaks of marriage, but verse 33 comes as a surprise as Paul reminds us that, what we are really speaking about here is not just marriage, but marriage as a sign of Christ and the Church. In other words, marriage is an outward and spiritual sign of the greatest, holiest, worthiest, and noblest thing that has ever existed or ever will exist: Christ's love and commitment to His beloved Church.

An illustration from computer technology might help us understand this a bit better. Those familiar with icons on a computer screen will know that when you click on the icon, it opens up something behind it. You click on a simple icon, and a tremendous program opens up. Marriage, as God has given it, is such an icon, "an outward and spiritual sign of the greatest, holiest, worthiest, and noblest thing that has ever existed or ever will exist" as Luther put it.

When you "click" on marriage, you see the deeper reality of the relationship between Christ and His Church. That is, when you look more deeply into marriage what you see are not just two people with a commitment to one another for life, but also a paradigm of God's commitment to us for life.

This is more than saying marriage is an illustration of our life with God; rather it is an earthly enactment of a heavenly reality. Marriage is the sign that reveals to those who have the eyes of faith to see it that God has wed Himself to us for all eternity. This is why marriage cannot be whatever a society wants it to be. It is given by God and as such it carries a message. Even more than an experience between a man and a woman who promise lifelong faithfulness to each other, marriage mirrors the relationship between God and His faithful people.

With all of that said, it is not our human prerogative to redefine marriage for the sake of political correctness, social justice or to accommodate the changing times. As God does not change, but is ever faithful, so marriage does not change and ever proclaims the faithfulness of God to His people.

Today we celebrate Biblical marriage. As we hear the vows of the bride and groom, we remember the vow of the Lord – spoken in His Word – to be with us and for us to the end of the age.

✠ ORDER OF SERVICE FOR THE BLESSING OF MARRIAGE ✠

Prelude

Seating of Parents

Entrance of Wedding Party

[The Congregation is asked to Stand.]

Entrance of Bride

P In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

G Amen.

P Dearly beloved, we are gathered here in the sight of God and before His Church to witness the blessing of marriage. Marriage is an honorable estate instituted and blessed by God in Paradise, before humanity's fall into sin.

In marriage we see a picture of the communion between Christ and His bride, the Church. Our Lord blessed and honored marriage with his presence and first miracle at Cana in Galilee. This estate is also commended to us by the apostle Paul as good and honorable. Therefore, marriage is not to be entered into inadvisably or lightly, but reverently, deliberately, and in accordance with the purposes for which it was instituted by God.

The union of husband and wife in heart, body, and mind is intended by God for the mutual companionship, help, and support that each person ought to receive from the other, both in prosperity and adversity. Marriage was also ordained so that man and woman may find delight in one another. Therefore, all persons who marry shall take a spouse in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust, for God has not called us to impurity but in holiness. God also established marriage for the procreation of children who are to be brought up in the fear and instruction of the Lord so that they may offer Him their praise.

For these reasons God has established the holy estate of marriage. Today, Joshua and Sylvia receive the blessing of God on their marriage and give solemn pledges to live together as husband and wife according to the Word of God.

[The Congregation and Bridal Party may be Seated.]

Old Testament Reading

Hosea 2:18-23

Hosea 2:18-23

¹⁸And I will make for them a covenant on that day with the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the creeping things of the ground. And I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land, and I will make you lie down in safety.

¹⁹And I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy.

²⁰I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. And you shall know the LORD.

²¹"And in that day I will answer, declares the LORD, I will answer the heavens, and they shall answer the earth,

²²and the earth shall answer the grain, the wine, and the oil, and they shall answer Jezreel,

²³and I will sow her for myself in the land. And I will have mercy on No Mercy, and I will say to Not My People, 'You are my people'; and he shall say, 'You are my God.'"

P This is the Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

Epistle Reading

1 Corinthians 13:1-13

¹If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

²And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

³If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

⁴Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant

⁵or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful;

⁶it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth.

⁷Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

⁸Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away.

⁹For we know in part and we prophesy in part,

¹⁰but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away.

¹¹When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways.

¹²For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

¹³So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

P This is the Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

[The Congregation and Bridal Party is asked to Stand.]

Gospel Reading

John 15:9-12

⁹As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.

¹⁰If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.

¹¹These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

¹²"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

P This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

[The Congregation may be seated.]

Wedding Meditation

[The Bridal Party may resume position before the Chancel/Altar.]

Solemn Pledges

P Dearly beloved, our Lord and God established marriage when He created the heavens and the earth. With His holy Word He desires to bless the marriages of those who fear, love, and trust in Him. He gives His blessing to comfort and console you when various temptations and crosses afflict your union with each other in Christ. He also pledges that He will never forsake His own and that He will always help and defend those who live in this estate according to His holy will. Therefore, in joyful confidence, I now ask you before God and His Church to give your solemn pledge.

P Joshua, will you hold this woman in the holy estate of matrimony as God ordained it? Will you nourish and cherish her as Christ loved His body, the Church, giving Himself up for her? Will you love, honor, and keep her in sickness and in health and, forsaking all others, remain united to her alone, so long as you both shall live? Then say: I will.

R *I will.*

P Sylvia, will you hold this man in the holy estate of matrimony as God ordained it? Will you submit to him as the Church submits to Christ? Will you love, honor, and keep him in sickness and in health and, forsaking all others, remain united to him alone, so long as you both shall live? Then say: I will.

R *I will.*

[Family asked to stand.]

P Do you, Larry, Bonnie, Joshua, and Sharhonda, give your blessing to this couple? Then say: We do.

R *We do.*

P Will you pray for and encourage Joshua and Sylvia in their marriage, remembering at all times that God wills them to live within their vows until they are parted by death? Then say: We will.

R *We will.*

Blessing of Rings

[Rings are presented to the pastor.]

P Almighty Father, You have generously created all things to serve us for our good. Send Your blessing upon this couple who wear these ✝ rings as a constant reminder of their marital fidelity. Grant that by Your mercy they may live gladly and faithfully in this holy estate; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C **Amen.**

[The bride and groom face each other.]

P Joshua, please repeat after me as you place this ring on Sylvia's hand:

*Sylvia, receive this ring
As a pledge of my love and faithfulness
In the name of the Father,
and of the Son
and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

P And Sylvia, please repeat after me as you place this ring on Joshua's hand:

*Joshua, receive this ring
As a pledge of my love and faithfulness
In the name of the Father,
and of the Son
and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

P What God has joined together, let no one put asunder.

The Blessing of Marriage

[The bride and groom are asked to bow their heads or kneel.]

P The almighty and gracious God abundantly grant you His favor and sanctify and bless you with the blessing given to Adam and Eve in Paradise, that you may please Him in both body and soul and live together in holy love until your life's end.

C **Amen.**

[The Congregation is asked to Stand.]

Wedding Prayers

P Let us pray.

Almighty, everlasting God, our heavenly Father, grant that by Your blessing Sylvia and Joshua may live together according to Your Word and promise. Strengthen them in faithfulness and love towards each other. Sustain and defend them in every trial and temptation. Help them to live in faith toward You, in the communion of Your holy Church, and in loving service to each other that they may ever enjoy Your heavenly blessing.

C Amen.

P O God, our dwelling place in all generations, look with favor upon the homes of our land. Embrace husbands and wives, parents and children, in the arms of Your love, and grant that each, in reverence for Christ, fulfill the duties You have given. Bless our homes that they may ever be a shelter for the defenseless, a fortress for the tempted, a resting place for the weary, and a foretaste of our eternal home with You; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

P Please join me in praying the prayer that the Lord has taught us to pray:

C Our Father who art in heaven,

hallowed be Thy name,

Thy kingdom come,

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven;

give us this day our daily bread;

and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us;

and lead us not into temptation,

but deliver us from evil.

For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever.

Amen.

The Benediction

P The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look upon you with favor and ✠ give you peace.

C Amen.

Recessional

Postlude *Congregation is asked to remain seated as the Bride and Groom will dismiss each row.*

Acknowledgments Holy Matrimony from Lutheran Service Book

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