

This Marriage Will Last!

A sermon on Luke 20:27-38

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Not to exclude some of you, but I have a question for all the husbands and wives out there this morning. What is the greatest day of your life? I know my wife would disown me if I answered something like, February 6, 2011, the last time the Packers won the Super Bowl. Some might say, when we gave birth to our children, and that day might carry some weight, but what about the day where God set that plan into motion? Most of us would answer, my wedding day!

What was so great about that day? It's the promises, isn't it? The vows, to love and cherish each other "til death do us part" or "as long as we both shall live." But the vows don't last, do they? I'm not talking about divorce. But a marriage, no matter how great, no matter how perfect it might seem, it must come to an end because we all die.

Today is Saints Triumphant Sunday. Today, whether you're married or not, you have a wedding day to look forward to. You have a Bridegroom who is eagerly waiting for you. And the best part about that? This marriage will last!

Now, I'm going to tell you this morning, right off the bat, that in our text, Jesus was wrong! (Pause for a few seconds and make sure God doesn't smote me) I'm glad to see God didn't smite me down for that statement, so I get to explain what I mean. In our text, Jesus is wrong...kind of.

You see, it was actually just a couple of weeks ago that Becky and I were talking about being married in heaven. I told her we wouldn't be. I could tell she didn't like that thought, as I'm sure many of you wouldn't either, if I tell you that none of us will be married to our spouse in heaven.

Jesus makes that clear in his words this morning. Now, when Jesus spoke these words, it was Tuesday of Holy Week, so it was just a few days before Jesus would die on the cross. And it seems Jesus, at least when you read through the gospels, was intent on sharing every last morsel of knowledge he had with his disciples, using every moment to teach them, even when those moments came at the expense and humiliation of his enemies.

So it was with these words. Jesus was confronted by the Sadducees, a group of Jewish religious leaders who thought they had a real zinger for Jesus, a question they were certain would make Jesus look like a fool, maybe even trap him in his own words so they could justify arresting and killing him in a few days.

The Sadducees didn't believe in a resurrection or even an afterlife, so they asked Jesus about marriage in heaven. They even used Scripture to try to trip Jesus up. If a wife was married to a man, and he died, then according to the Old Testament, that man's brother was to marry her and have children with her. That brother died, too. So the next brother was up, then the next and the next until all seven brothers died without giving the woman a child. When she died, who would she be married to in heaven?

Jesus' answer wasn't what they were expecting and it's one we probably don't like to hear, either. "Those...in the resurrection from the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage." Now, why? Why won't there be marriage in heaven? It's a blessing to have that someone in your life. A spouse is a precious gift from God. So, then why won't that blessing carry over to heaven?

Well, you know how God blesses marriage? With companionship and sometimes even with children. In heaven, we're not going to need that. God has given us marriage for this world, for this age, not the next. In heaven, there will be no birth. There will be no death. And our companionship, we're going to find that in someone else. You know who that is, don't you? In heaven, we'll have Jesus. The only relationship that will matter will be the one we have with Jesus, and that will be more than enough for us, wouldn't you agree?

But we're not there yet. Yes, we have a relationship with Jesus in this present age, in this life. But it's a little different from the one we'll enjoy in heaven.

Oh, God's part in that relationship hasn't changed. The God, who in his love, carefully "knit me together in my mother's womb," as the Bible says, is the same God who in that same love richly and daily provides clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, wife and children, land, cattle, and all I own, and all that I need to keep my body and life, who defends me against all danger and guards and protects me from all evil", as Martin Luther reminds us. God even tells us in his Word, "I, the LORD (the God of free and faithful grace), do not change..."

But let's take a look at the other side of that relationship, at me, at you, at each one of us. You know, today is Saints Triumphant, a day when we are reminded that there are believers who have gone before us, who have fought the good fight and, by the grace of God alone, have triumphed and have reached the final goal of heaven. But that's not us, not right now. We're the church militant, those who are still fighting a spiritual battle here on earth, and you need only to look at your relationship with God to see how that battle is going.

You know the sins you struggle with individually, the arrows of Satan, the world, and your own sinful nature you which threaten you every day. Maybe the struggle comes from the sin of greed, maybe not necessarily wanting more money, but not being content with what possessions God has blessed you with or the position where God has put you in life...maybe an attitude of selfishness for what you think you ought to have in this life, even if God may not want it for you.

Maybe the struggle is making God a priority, finding time for the most important person in your life, but either you just can't make it work or you're not trying to make time for him and his Word. Maybe the struggle is with the way you behave, with a general attitude of anger and malice towards others, hanging on to frustrations with someone else which then affects how you treat him or her.

You know the sins you personally struggle with, and you know what those sins do in your relationship with God in this present age. As the Bible says, "Your iniquities have separated you from God." Our sins drive a wedge between us and God, which threatens our eternity. I mean, if we're going to be talking

about marriage, just like Jesus is in our verses, then because of our sins, God should just divorce us, get rid of us, kick us to the curb of hell and just be done with us.

He really should, but does he? You remember a few minutes ago, what was that pretty contentious statement I made? When Jesus says there is no marriage in heaven, he's wrong.

Here's why. Listen to what the Bible says, "Let us rejoice and be glad and give [God] glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready." It says, "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth...I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband."

Yeah, Jesus is right that there won't be marriage in heaven in the sense of what we think of marriage, that I will still be married to my wife there, or I will still be married to my husband there. But for all of us, our heavenly Bridegroom is waiting because in heaven, we're going to be married to him forever.

You know, at the end of the service, these are words we're going to sing, "Blessed are they which are called...to the marriage feast of the Lamb." That marriage feast of heaven is for us. We are the object of Christ's affection. We are his bride. He wants to be in a relationship with us forever.

And so, when there was something not right about our relationship, that was threatening our marriage to Jesus, sin, Jesus took care of it. "Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy...to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless."

Since God wants perfection for entrance into heaven and we weren't able to give it, Jesus in his love gave that perfection to us. That's why he came to earth and lived a perfect life. That's why he went to the cross and suffered the torments of hell our sins deserve. That's why he rose triumphantly from the grave. It was all for his bride. It was all for you and me. It's all so that we will one day approach our heavenly Bridegroom as the perfect Bride, pure, holy, blameless. And we will be married to Jesus forever.

Everything about this marriage will be different. For starters, your name will be different. It won't be Mr. Strong or Mrs. Strong. My title in heaven is Jason, saved, forgiven, redeemed child of God. Your title is the same...child of God! Those who by God's gracious judgment are privileged to live in that age are simply called "God's children." That's the title we want!

What else is different? This marriage will never end. You see Jesus gives us assurance of our resurrection, that it will take place. He says, "Even Moses showed that the dead rise, for he calls the Lord 'the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' He is not the God of the dead, but of the living." Jesus tells us we will rise. Jesus tells us we will live forever. This marriage will never end.

And finally, in this marriage, in heaven, we will be like the angels. Notice Jesus doesn't say we will be angels, but like angels. That right there tells us how different this relationship will be because we often

associate being an angel with being perfect; in heaven, we will be. We often associated angels with the privilege of praising God; in heaven, we will sing eternal alleluias to our Savior!

That's a marriage to look forward to. That's a marriage that will last. So then now, how do we prepare ourselves for the wedding day? I mean, I'd like to think as our earthly lives as the engagement time, how we prepare ourselves for the big wedding day?

Well, the big day is coming soon. We're already robed in Jesus' righteousness and his forgiveness. It's like each of us is dressed in our white wedding garments. Just as a bride is not going to go and get her beautiful wedding dress stained, same here, I'm not going to live my life in a way that tarnishes, that gets smudges on my wedding dress. We are going to keep that wedding garment clean as we live righteous lives for Christ, so that we will, one day, present ourselves to our Bridegroom as the radiant Bride he sacrificed himself for so he could make us pure and clean.

"Til death do us part." "As long as we both shall live." Marriage here, it won't last forever. Our earthly lives will end in death. But on Saints Triumphant Sunday, we look forward to that day. That will be the greatest day of our lives. On that day, we will join the saints in heaven. On that day, a new marriage will begin. On that day, we'll be married to Jesus forever. And until that day, we rejoice over God's goodness with the saints in heaven. And until our Bridegroom returns, we keep ourselves pure for him because we know this marriage will last forever. Amen.