

Part 3: The Groom and His Bride

Tyler Velin | Isaiah 62:1-5

April 19, 2020

"Dearly beloved, we are assembled together today in the presence of God to unite this man and this woman in marriage, which is instituted by God, regulated by his commandment, established perfectly in our Lord Jesus Christ, and to be held in honor among all men. It is into this relationship that these two parties wish to enter."

Or to put it another way, "Marriage is what brings us together today."

I'm sure you've heard something like this before either at a wedding ceremony or in watching a movie like the Princess Bride.

I find it interesting that in our western world where it seems like marriage itself has lost its value, there is still immense importance surrounding a wedding ceremony. It dominates Instagram feeds and consumes budgets. For what I imagine is the first time in history, there is an economy of places that exist just to host weddings. These ceremonies have moved out of the church or courthouse and moved to the most beautiful places in our communities.

Why? Because we understand that marriages create a type of ecosystem that we want the ceremony to create and foster. There is beauty, friendship, family, food, drinking, dancing, needs are met, love is cherished, and celebration is offered openly.

The hope is that this ecosystem will carry into the new life which is forged together at the wedding for the bride and groom.

Yet we also know that there is a darker side of these ceremonies. There's jealousy, there's broken marriages, the pain of singleness or the death of a spouse. I've started to see pictures of weddings during the COVID-19 era, of simply a bride and groom, standing in an empty park with only a handful of people around. We know how vulnerable this cherished gift can be and how quickly marriage itself can show us the weaknesses and wants of our own hearts.

My hope for each of us today is that we would find marriage to be everything we've ever wanted, but at the same time, something that never fully satisfies. This might seem like an odd tension, yet it is a tension that stands at the heart of the story of the Bible and makes sense only when we understand the role that Jesus plays.

That's what we've been doing this Easter season. We've been tracing select themes from the beginning of the Bible through the end and seeing how the person of work of Jesus is not only the key to understanding all of scripture, but all of our lives.

My goal today is that all of you would leave here married. This might sound cliché, but it is possible in whatever context you are in to leave here married to Jesus Christ, through his work on the cross. The whole ecosystem you long for, the whole ecosystem which might exist either in wonderful glimpses or

painful absences in your own marriage, are meant to point to the love and relationship that the gospel unites us to in Jesus.

Today we are going to look at the story of scripture, and the story of all our hearts and see this: Jesus is the faithful husband who redeems his wife for her own joy.

In looking at Jesus as the faithful husband, we are going to break up the story of scripture into four parts all of which show an aspect of marriage. First we are going to see **Marriage and our world**, then we are going to look at **Marriage and our longings**, after that we will turn to Jesus' role and see **Marriage and "The One,"** and lastly we will apply this by looking at **Marriage and the church**.

I don't want to assume that everyone listening to this has emotion towards marriage. But biblically speaking to understand marriage is to understand something of far greater significance than romance. For example did you know that the Bible begins with a wedding ceremony and ends with a wedding ceremony?

God created it, God wrote his story with it, and we should pay attention to it. It's actually in understanding the nature of the first wedding that we begin to understand the world itself. This is our first point today: **Marriage and our world**.

Read with me **Genesis 2:5-9,15**. So here we see two things that are important to note, the first is the physical reality of the Garden of Eden. Moses explains that as a whole, the earth was a barren desert, for those of you who have seen pictures of the Middle East, this isn't new information to you.

And in the middle of this barren land, God created a garden, and in the garden he caused to spring up all the things you'd expect in a garden, all the trees and plants which were good for food and pleasant to the sight.

And concurrent with the creation of this garden, God created man for a purpose. We saw earlier that God created Adam in his own image, and part of that image bearing include carrying on the task of God himself. God gave Adam a garden and his job was to keep the garden and expand it. You see as Adam expanded the garden into the desert which was outside the garden, he was expanding the experience of God's grace. The bigger the garden, the more people could experience the God of the garden.

To put it simply, Adam's role was to work for the glory of God. That was his greatest joy, and his singular purpose. But the story continues in **Genesis 2:18-25**.

So here we have the creation of Eve, and Eve was married to Adam by God himself, the two became one flesh. There was deep intimacy between Adam and Eve reflected in the unashamed nature of their relationships. But there was also a purpose for their marriage which made sense of their love, Eve was to help Adam.

With what? If you're a female in here this might seem like menial subordination, but the call to which Eve was to help Adam was not to pander to Adam's whimsy, but a partner in the expansion of God's glory. God commissioned this joint relationship to be fruitful and multiply, to fill the earth and subdue it.

In other words the first marriage existed to display the glory of God more broadly through their work, and also to invite others into that glory by producing children who also would work and enjoy the glory of the garden.

This doesn't mean that if you want to glorify God in life you must be married. For it was necessary for the first male and female to be married and to produce offspring in a unique way. Jesus himself and Paul were not married. It is no crime against God's glory to not be married, but it is a crime against God's glory in either marriage or singleness to fail to work for God's glory.

And that's what put a kink in this beautiful romance of the garden. The serpent crept in and ruined the ecosystem of marriage. They had the best work, the sweetest love, the most uninhibited relationships and it was all lost.

How so? Well, Satan deceived Eve and therefore Adam that their greatest good was not in serving and enjoying the glory of God, their greatest good would be in being glorified as a god. They lost sight of the purpose of their own marriage.

Eve failed to help Adam, and Adam failed to protect Eve. In the midst of their temptation neither of them helped each other. Because to lose sight of God's call for you is to also lose sight of what love looks like.

And the result of this sin was that the whole ecosystem of the world's most Instagramable marriage was lost. They were removed from the Garden and the immediate glory of God, their purpose was complicated. God also cursed Adam and said that the ground would now bear thorns and thistles and he would sweat out his days in toil. Adam's work was complicated by sin.

Eve also was told that she would have pain in childbirth and that there would be a tension between her call as a helpmate and her desire to not be ruled by her husband. Eve's work as a partner in both childbearing and garden keeping was complicated.

It all went wrong almost as quickly as it went right. The husband failed to protect his wife and kill the serpent. The wife failed to serve her husband and report the snake as a threat to their kingdom calling.

The result was judgement by being removed from God's presence and the ideal nature of Eden. Yet when Adam and Eve found themselves outside the garden they were still married. All the longings and hopes which accompanied life inside the garden remained, but marriage as a means to enjoy it was complicated by the presence of sin.

This is where we begin to see these issues compounded all the more when we turn to the second part of scripture: **Marriage and Our Longings.**

As the rest of Genesis continues we see that the marriages of man didn't lead to the expansion of God's glory, but it lead to more people who sinned against God and against others. We read about the wickedness at the flood and the cooperative arrogance of Babel. The relationships of mankind didn't create garden caretakers, it created human wrecking balls.

In Genesis 12 we see God intervene again. Up until Genesis 12, offspring of a marriage often did terrible things, but in Genesis 12, God promises Abraham that his offspring will work again to magnify the glory of God. A new family line would be made: **Genesis 12:1-3**.

God by grace was going to rebuild what was lost in Eden, God was going to create a family which would bless people, it would once again expand the glory of God so that others might enjoy it.

But we don't see this right away, though the promise remains, we don't see blessing through marriage, in fact we often see the opposite.

When the biblical authors speak of marriage, it is synonymous with belonging and care. While it may sound offensive in our modern world, during biblical times it was universal that a woman was most cared for and protected in society when they were married.

To lose a husband, or to be unmarried was to be in a very vulnerable position. One means of grace which God gave to his people was something called a kinsman redeemer. The kinsman redeemer was this law which said that if a wife's husband died, the next closest, unmarried, relative would marry that woman and care for her as his wife.

But in reading the Old Testament we see many instances where those potential redeemers were too selfish to actually do this. They knew it would cost them to care for these women so they selfishly refused to care for them. This leads to cringe worthy stories like that of Judah and Tamar.

We see indwelling selfishness of husbands.

But we also see the failure of faithful wives, and God makes this most clear not on a personal level, but a corporate one. God often spoke of his people as his wife. A wife whom he covenanted to in Abraham. They were to be his people, he was to be their God just like a husband and a wife.

Look at how God spoke of this relationship in **Jeremiah 2:1-3**.

God is saying to his people, when I moved towards you with the covenant of grace, we became married. You were to be my people, I was to be your God, just as a husband loves his wife.

Just as it was for Adam and Eve, this meant Israel should have been true to the person of God and the purpose of God. He is constantly reminding them of what a privilege this is. Look here: **Jeremiah 2:20-22**.

This is so important here to understand. Because God is saying this: I brought you out of Egypt, I broke your bonds of slavery, and yet you ran after other gods. You would not stay true to me.

God is making it clear that sin is spiritual adultery against God. You might think that sin is nothing in your heart, but to God it is as vile as your wife running away with another man repeatedly.

And to make matters worse, God liberated his bride, his people from slavery so that they might love him in freedom. But not only do they run off to false idols, but they do so and become enslaved to them. God's love brought freedom, but love misplaced brought slavery. And the people flocked to it.

Marriage stood for this entire system of belonging, care, purpose and acceptance and what kept people out of its joy was selfish husbands and unfaithful wives. There was an external and internal problem.

This is perfect metaphor for sin: internally we don't believe our husband-God to be able to satisfy, so we run to false husbands and idols. But externally these idols are unable to love us, or if they are they are too selfish to actually do it. They either can't or won't care for us like God would.

Not only was it a bad experience, but it was sinful adultery. So God was going to judge his faithless bride, and look at the language he uses in **Jeremiah 7:34, 16:9, 25:10**.

Isn't that interesting? Three times God predicts judgment on Israel and three times that judgment looks like the silencing of a wedding feast.

Why is that? Well it goes back to why we love weddings and why we turn to sin. We think that sin brings the joy of Eden's marriage back to us.

At weddings we are catered to. There is joy and celebration and love and food and wine and fun. It's the whole ecosystem that we think completes us. We think that like a good spouse, sin will give me belonging, identity, comfort, purpose, satisfaction and celebration.

And we are willing to run from God to find all those things because we don't think he's able to give them to us. There are more attractive gods, better idols, more gratifying partners.

So God says, you faithless wife, I'm going to remove the joy of the weddings from you. You will see that there is no wedding where there is no worship. All the joy you look for in false idols, I will take them away from you in exile. The point God is making here is that sin removes the promise of joy.

But then near the end of Jeremiah, God speaks of his covenant again. **Jeremiah 33:10-11**. Where judgement silenced the joy of a wedding, restoration reopens the chapel. Everything they looked for in sin, God was going to give them in grace.

This comes out so clearly in **Isaiah 62:1-5**.

For the sake of his bride, Israel, God was going to act. And here we see what that looks like. Just like it was supposed to be in the garden, just as it was promised to Abraham, God was going to cause the marriage of his people to be a witness to the nations. And how will it be changed? How is God going to marry his people? He is going to make them faithful.

That's what he's talking about when he talks about the righteousness of the bride. Righteousness is not an abstract principle, it's faithfulness to the God who marries us in grace. In Ezekiel 16, the prophet uses really explicit imagery of adultery when speaking of Israel's sin towards God, but in the end he says this: **Ezekiel 16:62-63**.

Israel had been a faithless wife who ran away from her husband. In so doing she ran away from everything she was actually looking for in marriage. But God was going to remember his covenant to her and he was going to bring her back by atoning for her sins. Through righteousness and atonement, the marriage would be restored.

The internal problem will be fixed, but what of the external, what of the faithful husband?

It not missed on us then that the first miracle Jesus performs in the gospel of John is at a wedding. Jesus and all his disciples go to a wedding, and the celebration comes to an immense stop as the wine has run out. But Jesus turns the water to wine and restores the celebration of a wedding feast run dry.

This is where we now turn to the next saga in scripture: **Marriage and The One.**

In working with college students for most of my ministry life, I've noticed a unique obsession with, "The One."

"The One" is the one who we are worried about missing out on in dating and marriage. Our hearts long to find "the one." Which means this, when we think we've found "The One," we are willing to subject ourselves to anything to not lose "The One." And as soon as we find out that there are flaws in "The One," we are devastated.

It's not hard to see that this isn't a problem only for the hopeless romantic. "The One," could be a politician, a job, a house, an adventure. Whatever we think will make us feel whole, complete, or add purpose to our lives.

But the weight of this burden will either leave us disappointed, or it will crush whatever we place that burden on. Nothing in this world can live up to it. But Jesus, is very much "The One." He was the one who was going to solve what was lost in Eden and bring us back to that completeness.

Jesus was the faithful husband who was not going to be scared away at the cost of redeeming his wife. The book of Hosea begins with God calling the prophet Hosea to marry a prostitute as a symbol of Israel's unfaithfulness to God. Hosea was to act as God, faithfully loving his faithless wife, and his wife represented the sinful heart of God's people.

But in Jesus, the metaphor was lost. Jesus came as God's faithful husband to marry, by the blood of his cross, his unfaithful wife. Jesus was not going to selfishly take from his wife, but instead he was going to give himself for her despite her sin, and in so doing he was going to cause the righteousness Isaiah spoke of to abound in full. Because he was the faithful husband, he was going to die for his unfaithful wife.

Look at how Paul ties the whole story of this together in **Ephesians 5:25-32.**

Jesus is the atonement for the adulterous heart that Ezekiel spoke of. Jesus' blood is the power which will wash away the sins of your heart and present you finally as pure to God himself. Jesus is the better Adam who saved his wife by crushing the head of the serpent.

Why does Jesus do all of this for you? Because he loves you. Because he knows that your heart runs to those things which promise love but only bring death. But in his death he promised to love us into life itself. Jesus restores everything we find so attractive about weddings and marriage because he restores us to himself as our true groom, the one who really can bring us purpose and identity because he restores us to the purpose and person of God himself.

This has application for us in a couple of ways. As the church, we are the bride of Christ. What has happened to us by faith in Jesus changes our lives. This is the last point today: **Marriage and the Church.**

Because Jesus is the one you've been waiting for, then male or female, married or single, it is this wedding which restores the joy of Eden, we have been given back a purpose in the person of Jesus.

This is the first way the church lives out its marriage: ***Fidelity to the Gospel.***

Look at how Paul describes this in **2 Corinthians 11:1-3**. Paul is speaking as a minister at a wedding here. He says that in the gospel he has married us to Jesus through faith. If you want access to this wedding you must come to Christ. It is not your works which make you Christian, it is the work of this groom to redeem out of immense love. We respond by faith and repentance. If you've never done that today I pray that you would.

Secondly, being wed to Jesus means that we ***Live for Our Forever Joy.***

Do you remember how Jeremiah spoke of punishment and redemption. Judgement was the silencing of the wedding feast, redemption was the restoration of it.

Well in the book of Revelation we get a glimpse into the final judgement. And Babylon, which stands as this representative nation of wickedness and sin is finally judged. And look at the language John uses, see if you can hear Jeremiah's voice in here: **Revelation 18:21-23**.

In the end, God will finally judge the wickedness that leads God's people away into spiritual adultery. And what will that look like for Babylon? The voice of the bridegroom and bride will be silenced. The whole joy of the wedding the entire ecosystem of fellowship and belonging will be forever silenced.

For those who turn from the God of scripture this too is your end. Everything you so desperately want will one day stop its siren call in judgement.

But for those who repent and believe, those who are saved by the blood of Jesus look what awaits you: **Revelation 19:6-9**.

In the end, it's those who are married to Christ who get the forever feast. It's those who are married to Jesus who have the ecosystem of Eden restored eternally. Jesus and Jesus alone is what gets us here!

Oh, to be at that table. This is the hope of us who are here, but this joy held out for us continues to compound even in our hearts today.

Look how Revelation closes: **Revelation 21:9-10, 22:1-2**. The bride is being presented, the garden for the nations has been restored. But what are we to do?

Revelation 22:16-17.

The promise of final joy calls the faithful bride to beckon to the thirsty: come.

If that's you today, I say, "Come."

As we go about our week may we be a people who says, "Come. Come to the husband who took his wife for her own joy."

This is the last application: ***Faithfulness in Mission.***

Look with me at **Matthew 28:18-20.**

Because the church is the bride of Jesus, the church is the new Eve who has been commissioned to help her husband with his work. The goal of the church is to win people to the husband, to expand the kingdom not physically but spiritually.

Being married to Jesus through faith makes sense out of the desert places in your life. Being married to Jesus means that we really can find purpose and meaning because we have been recommissioned as his helpmate wherever you are.

The church, as Jesus' bride, has been redeemed, repurposed and empowered by the Holy Spirit for the task of disciple making. Just as Eve was to help Adam expand the garden, we are called to proclaim the glory of God in our homes, our cities, our nation and to the world.

Where does this unique calling show up in your life? The unique call of the church is to bless the nations by inviting them into this marriage by displaying the wonder of our husband-king.