

The Marriage Supper of the Lamb

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Date: 22 August 2021

Preacher: Malcolm Macdonald

- [0 : 00] Let us join in the worship of God. We're going to begin with the singing of Psalm 89.
Psalm 89, reading from verse 15. And the last verse of the psalm, verse 52.
O greatly blessed the people are.
O greatly blessed the people are.
The joyful song that wrote. In Christ's love, Christ's love, O Lord.
- [1 : 58] May there ever one shall come. In my name shall all the day rejoice exceedingly.
And in my eyes shall rest away.
And in my heart shall rest away. Because the glory of the strength, the holy sand in thee.
And in my faith shall rest away.
For God is our defense. And he to us the safety bring.
- [3 : 36] The holy one of Israel.
Is our almighty King. O blessed in the Lord.
O blessed in the Lord. Let me, God, try the land. Amen. Amen. Amen.
Amen. Amen. Let us come before God in prayer.
Let us pray. Lord our God. Lord our God, as we have been engaged in singing of your praises, we give thanks that the psalmist recognise the praise that you have in the eyes of your people.
- [5 : 02] that you are worthy to receive the praise and the glory that they can offer to you as the God and saviour of your people.
We give thanks that we are able to sing of your mercy and to make known your faithfulness in every generation.
We would ask that every one of us would be amongst them and that we would exercise our privilege and our duty in magnifying your name.
We pray that you would bless your people today as they engage in worship wherever they are made together, be it in public or in private, be it remote from one another or gather together in congregations of varying descriptions and sizes throughout the world.
We give thanks that you are able to hear their prayers and be at the heart of their worship. We pray that you are able to hear your people. We pray that you would bless the word that is your word to us this day.
- [6 : 21] That it is a word in season at whatever point we hear it read. That it is what is appropriate to our circumstances, whatever they may be.
It can unto us discernment and recognition of the fact that your word is like no other. That it is the word of truth. And that it is a word that is forever in heaven settled fast.
And to all generations your faithfulness doth last. We give thanks that the psalmist, as he said so often, that he loves your word.

And he delights in contemplating and meditating upon it. For through it he gets wisdom and understanding.

We read and we sing so often, how sweet unto my taste, O Lord, are all thy words of truth. Yea I do find them sweeter far than honey to my mouth.

[7 : 32] We bless you and thank you that these words are words that remind us of the kind of God that you are.

That God's law is perfect and converts the soul in sin that lies. God's testimony is most sure and makes the simple wise.

May that be the end of this day's worship. That some amongst us would hear your word savingly.

May convert and convict whatever order is appropriate. May that they may come before you and bow the knee in your presence and seek mercy at your hand.

Remember all that we come to you with, our loved ones. May they be blessed by your hand. Remember any amongst us that may be unwell, we pray for our congregations.

[8 : 34] Those amongst us within these congregations that are in need of care. Under the hand of doctors and nurses we pray for them and ask that you would bring healing from your own hand.

For the sick and hospital care homes and hospices, those being minded at home, we pray that you would grant strength to those whose burden it is to minister to their needs.

Remember those who are affected by COVID. We know that great strides have been made in the deliverance from the effects of it.

And yet we still hear of those who are affected by it. We know that great strides have been made in the presence of the people. Whether it is the present situation that they are in or long COVID or whatever.

And some grieving and sorrowing of what loved ones taken from them. Sanctify every situation that is ours to the glory of your name.

[9 : 45] Blessed of nation, those who govern us. Blessed of Queen and our family. Remember the nations of the earth, especially those that are in turmoil by reason of war, be it civil or nation against nation.

We would pray that you would in mercy visit all who are waiting upon you, your people, to administer to them the peace and the balm of your love.

The short time that we are together around your word, we know we pray that you would bless it to us as we read it and as we reflect on what it has to say to us.

Cleanse from every sin and go before us in the Redeemer's name. We ask all forgiveness of sin in him. Amen. We are going to hear the word of God as we have it in the New Testament Scriptures.

The book of the Revelation of St John the Divine. The book of the Revelation. And we shall read from chapter 19.

[10 : 59] I can read the whole chapter. And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven saying, Hallelujah!

Salvation and glory and honour and power unto the Lord our God. For true and righteous are his judgments. For he hath judged the great whoor which did corrupt the earth with her fornication and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.

And again they said, Hallelujah! And her smoke rose up for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne saying, Amen! Hallelujah!

And a voice came out of the throne saying, Praise our God all ye his servants and ye that fear him both small and great. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude and as the voice of many waters and as the voice of many mighty thunderings saying, Hallelujah!

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.

[12 : 25] 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. And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not.

I am thy fellow servant and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse. And he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True. And in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

His eyes were as a flame of fire, burning with brimstone and a remnant. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and his head were many crowns.

[13 : 30] And he had a name written that no man knew but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture, dipped in blood, and his name is called the Word of God.

And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron.

And he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

And I saw an angel standing in the sun. And he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God, that you may eat of the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, the flesh of all men, both free and bound, both small and great.

And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image.

[15 : 11] These both were cast alive into a lake of fire, burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth.

And all the fowls were filled with their flesh. Amen. And may the Lord add his blessing to this reading of his word, and to his name be the praise.

I'd like us now to turn for a short while to this passage that we have read together. We can read again at verse 7.

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.

[16 : 32] And so on. Occasionally we hear it said of a newly married couple that they were made for each other.

They are ideally suited. Rarely, if ever, is it spoken, whether it is thought or not, that they are unsuited.

Perhaps the question is, what did he see in her, or what did she see in him? Here in this passage we are presented with a marriage feast.

It is entitled, The Marriage of the Lamb. And of course, it is obvious that you cannot have a marriage if there are not two parties.

And usually we are familiar with the marriage being described as the marriage of a man and a woman.

[17 : 38] And their names are identified. The marriage of Mary and Donald or whatever. But the focus in this instance is on the Lamb.

And it is this beauty that grips attention. When we were considering the passage this morning, we saw how the focus of the psalmist in Psalm 45 was on the one who was the fairest of all men.

So the question, what does he see in her, may be a fair one. If he is so fair and the bride is in reality someone that is less so, what is true of her that makes her a suitable party to this union?

We notice that she has made herself ready. And it is hard for us to think of a marriage without our own customs being superimposed upon what we have here.

But let us begin by reminding ourselves of this picture that we have here, which is meant to convey to us the picture of the marriage supper of the Lord Jesus Christ and the church to which he has espoused himself.

[19 : 24] And it has been drawn against the background of a Hebrew wedding. In a Jewish marriage there are certain procedures and practices that need to be followed.

There might be a whole variety of details to that. William Hendrickson has a helpful passage in his commentary on this.

William Hendrickson says, Which is something similar to our own engagement that occurs between a couple.

But it is a more binding engagement. The terms of the marriage are accepted in the presence of witnesses.

And God's blessing is pronounced on the union. In truth at this point they are legally husband and wife. But then this is followed by a period of time between the betrothal and the marriage.

[20 : 31] And the dowry is usually paid during this time. And towards the end of this interval the bride prepares herself. And the groom and his friends make their way to the home of the bride.

He then usually takes her with him to his home for the marriage feast. And that is the background to the picture that we have here.

It symbolizes the return of Christ to claim his church as his own. He has already betrothed the church to himself. The dowry price has been paid.

As Hendrickson interprets it, In Christ the bride was chosen from eternity. The Son of God has taken our nature. The betrothal has taken place.

And the dowry was paid on Calvary. So we now await his coming. When we attend a wedding, Very often it is always the groom that takes the second place.

[21 : 49] All eyes tend to be on the bride. But as we suggested, Here the roles are reversed because of the importance of the groom.

There is an indescribable glory connected with the person of the Lamb. That brings forth the type of worship that we witness again and again within this revelation.

We remind ourselves of the words of verse 1. After these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven saying, Hallelujah!

Salvation and glory and honour and power unto the Lord our God. But there is significance in the name that he bears, And by which he is called again and again in this book.

He is the Lamb for a reason. John the Baptist of old spoke of him as the Lamb of God, Which taketh away the sin of the world.

[22 : 58] And what does it say to us? It speaks to us of not only the kind of passion that he was, As far as his gentleness and meekness was concerned, But also the nature of his sacrifice.

He was to be the great substitute for sinners, So that he would put away the sins of the world.

He was the Lamb that was slain in the eternal covenant. He came to be numbered with the transgressors, As Paul puts it, He made him who knew no sin to be made sin for us, That we might become the righteousness of God in him.

But we must notice the Lamb's wife, And we can't but notice her because of who she is. And we are told that the beauty of the bride Should not distract us from observing that it really is the beauty and glory of the Lamb.

Her beauty is his beauty. She derives her beauty from him. And we read here in this passage of the rejoicing that takes place, Because of the readiness of the wife.

[24 : 38] She is prepared for him. 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 we are reading there of the preparation that has taken place with regard to who she is.

Surely the whole purpose of the marriage is in order that she become his wife. But in order for us to appreciate what is said, As we understood from the analogy that this is undergirded by, A betrothal was a binding commitment, a solid pledge.

And some of the divines speak of the contract that was made, And the relationship that was declared, And the time when that came to fullness and fruition.

The bride is made ready. She is prepared. And how has the bride come? How and what has the bride done to be ready?

[25 : 58] Well in reality, The only readiness or preparation she could do, Was by faith accepting him to be her saviour, her Lord.

Putting on the Lord by faith. Many different ways in which the scripture speak of it, But central to it is the experience of faith.

One of the older preachers speaks of the way the believer embraces by faith Jesus Christ. And if that does not happen, then he cannot be our saviour, He cannot be our husband.

John Fortnit, one of the theologians who has written a commentary on this passage, Writes all that she carries with her to heaven was given to her.

All that she wears, she brings nothing, nor wears nothing of her own. The garment she wears is the righteousness of the saints, An imputed righteousness, a perfect righteousness, But also a personal righteousness, wrought by her by God's grace, And by the hand of the Holy Spirit.

[27 : 23] We read that, that she is arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, For the fine linen is the righteousness of the 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.

No one appears of this marriage, but those who are there called of God to experience it. The Lord is directing us there to the time when the glory that is his will be revealed fully and finally.

The time when he will bring his own to be with him. His own people. Those who are his that he has bought with a price.

Those who are his by faith. Those who are his because his work has been accomplished.

[28 : 35] The Lamb of God is the Passover Lamb. He is the one who, by his shed blood, redeemed the saints to himself.

We know that when the people of God will ascend to glory to be with the Lord, There is much there that may be of interest to them in glory.

But nothing will be of greater interest to them than the Lord himself. I think it's Donald MacDonald, former minister, late minister of Greyfriars in Inverness, who dismissed from the thinking of any, any thoughts that they might have of the people that await them in glory.

The people that will experience redemption and salvation and ultimately glorification.

That once they experience that, that they will not be looking for any who are there because their attention will be fixed upon Christ.

[30 : 00] We know that God's people will put their amen to this. That the Lamb is all the glory in Emmanuel's land.

And we do not dismiss from our thinking thoughts of whatever else may be there.

But preeminent our thinking is the fact that Christ, Christ and Christ alone, is at the forefront of our thinking.

Let us be glad, he says, and rejoice. Give honour to him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come. Give honour to him.

Who else can we give honour to than the one who is there, as we read in this passage? He hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

[31 : 04] We give thanks to God for all who have this hope in them, that one day they will enjoy the pleasures and privileges of an eternal blessedness.

May God in his mercy bless these few thoughts to us. Let us again join in prayer. Lord, our God, there are many things that await your people at the end of their earthly sojourn.

Their thoughts may gravitate towards what lies beyond this world into the next. But there are glories that apply to the finished work of Christ, that they would wish to delve into and to dwell upon because of the mysteries surrounding them.

But they are persuaded that he is the one who will be the focus of their loving attention. So hear our prayers on behalf of those who are his.

Continue to watch over as each one. Keep us safe in the path of life. Keep our feet free from falling. Our eyes free from tears.

[32 : 20] Remember those who are on the brink of eternity. Whoever they may be, may your people be amongst them. We do not wish to hold them back from entering into that glory.

But do not allow any that we know of to go unprepared into the presence of the one who will have the last word concerning them.

May any such think much of what it means to take their leave of this world if they are not. May their peace with Christ hear our prayers, forgive our sins.

Go before us now. Now may grace, mercy and peace from God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you all now and always. Amen. Amen.