

# The Great Wedding

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] So here we are in our series of the Psalms and this morning is people all over the UK, maybe you yourself, woke up this morning listening to Radio 2 and Steve Wright's Love Songs.

It's all about love and here we have this Psalm is written again very much as we would have heard this morning of people phoning in messages to say how much they love their loved ones, of how their life was going, all this loved up sense of sharing and this Psalm is written for just that.

It's written for a wedding and here we've got what is effectively a love song. Now I don't know whether anybody has written or ever written a love song for you. I was just thinking this morning as I listened to Steve Wright's Love Songs, I was wondering we'll do a bit of maybe, what's that thing, Popmaster isn't it that comes in, maybe you can think of the year of this one but who were these songs written for? I Will Always Love You by Whitney Houston. Any idea of a year?

85? Very close, 92. Well done. All of Me Loves All of You by John Legend. What a wonderful song. Any idea?

Sorry? Oh a bit up from that? 15. 13. Very close. And lastly, Because You Loved Me by Celine Dion.

[ 1 : 5 4 ] Takes me back. Anybody got a punt? No idea? 96. What were we doing in 96 when we were listening to Celine Dion? Because You Loved Me. Hugely romantic and people use these songs to engage with people. You remember that Elton John rewrote the lyrics for In Memory of Princess Diana of Wales, Goodbye English Rose, went to number one and not surprisingly some people pen lyrics and songs to express their love of an event or of a moment. Psalm 45 is that wedding song. It's all about love. And using a recognised tune. I think it was called Maskell, I think it was, sung by the songs of Korah. I think it must have been like an old age boy band that they'd put together to sing this for the king. And all these songs are often composed and recited over the couple, which is so sweet, isn't it?

It sort of emphasises the moment as this psalm does as we hear often in wedding speeches that we've sat through, where people remind the couple of how they should live their life together, of reminding them of all the things that they should do, of their responsibility and the commitments that marriage brings. Now having just experienced that myself, the wedding and our family, here's just a few pics to remind you of our day. There they are. The loved up couple on their way. But the van scrubbed up very well as well, as well as my son. That's great. Oh, isn't that just true love in there? Thanks very much.

Oh, and just leave him. It was, as anyone will know, anyone who has actually gone through that process, as you have, many people, and Nikki will be looking forward for that on Saturday as well. You think again, what can we say over people on their wedding day to encourage them, to empower them, to put God at the centre of their marriage? That moment, maybe this song was, I don't know when this song was sung over them in this psalm. Maybe it was for their first dance. You know that cringey moment where everybody gets in a big circle for the couple's first dance? And you know, it's their strictly moment, except probably they hadn't done all the rehearsal. But it works. And people just stand around lovingly clapping and smiling and sharing. But who was this wedding song actually for? We're not really sure. It could have been for Ahab, Jehu. It suggests it was for Solomon, maybe Jeroboam.

But again, no one really knows for sure. But what we know is that it was a song for a young king and his beautiful, beautiful consort that was getting ready to be married. And we hear that through this psalm of how beautiful it was. And these songs and psalms were recited over the couple to really encourage them and to encourage those that were listening to realise the importance of that moment. It's lovely listening to the comments after, as I'm sure we all have after a wedding, of hearing what people are saying in response to the wedding itself. How do you respond to that

moment?

[ 5 : 40 ] And this psalm is no different because it starts, my heart is stirred by a noble theme as I recite these verses to the king. My tongue is a pen of a skilful writer. I mean, whoever wrote this clearly doesn't lack confidence and clearly doesn't lack humility either. They're really confident in what they're writing. You are the most excellent of men and your lips have been anointed with grace since God has blessed you forever. I think this psalm is written by someone who is clearly out to impress. And from this gushing enthusiasm that we're hearing from the writer, I think certainly he may be looking for the king to finance his writing career as well. It's, note the strong reminders too in this psalm as we hear that, as you read it again this week, of the strong responsibilities that he's saying. You know, you are responsible. You are responsible not only to your wife, but you're responsible before God because you are a leader. And just reminding him of this moment as we do. You love righteousness. You hate wickedness. Therefore, God, your God has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy. And in these days when couples sort of pause after their wedding, if you've been there, for what can sometimes be quite a lengthy photographic shoot? Have you been in that position? You're thinking, I think I'm ready for a drink now.

But they go on and on and on. They didn't have a photographer, but that's what the psalmist does is writes us this beautiful picture in words. And so we've got this, all your robes are fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia from palaces adorned with ivory. The music of the strings makes you glad. Daughters of kings are among your honoured women. And at your right hand is the royal bride in gold and ophir. You see, it's a pretty grand affair. We get the picture from this, of this is a special wedding. The bride is adorned in gold. There wasn't any old wedding outfit. This bride is beautiful and she is stunning, as all brides are on their wedding day. And then comes the line which stopped me in my tracks as I was thinking about this this morning. Let the king be enthralled by your beauty. Honour him, for he is your Lord. Throughout scripture, there are references made to the church being the bride of Christ. In Revelation, it says, let us rejoice and be God and give him glory. For the wedding of the Lamb has come and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given for her to wear. I can't tell you because you probably know how much energy goes into planning a wedding. How much prayer goes into that, into being prepared in ready for the great day.

[ 9 : 20 ] Pounds are shed. And also from parents' pockets. But again, we make ourselves ready and prepared.

And what I want to ask us as a church, at this moment in time, who is expectant of our bridegroom arriving, and that tradition is that they didn't know the exact time when he was going to arrive, but he will, are we ready? Are we ready as a church? Are we ready as the bride of Christ?

You see, because so often, if someone were to write about us, his church, his bride, as they do so oftenly, they do write about us, sometimes not very helpfully and not very kind.

But if they looked at us, what is it about our beauty that people should see? As us, the bride of Christ.

You see, in 1 Peter 3, 3, 5, it says, Don't be concerned about the outward beauty of fancy hairstyles, expensive jewellery, or beautiful clothes.

[ 10 : 44 ] You should clothe yourself instead with the beauty that comes from within. You should clothe yourselves with the beauty that comes from within.

The unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is so precious to God. This is how the holy women of old made themselves beautiful. They trusted God and accepted the authority of their husbands.

We accept that thing of God, that we want to be made beautiful for him. That is our purpose as his church. It comes from within.

And anyone who knows about getting married knows that it's as important as what's on the inside, as what's on the outside on your wedding day. The bride of Christ will be beautiful on the inside and on the out.

Which brings me back to my point of this moment in time. As we regather as a church, physically, and in many ways coming together again, spiritually in many cases, where we've all been separated, many people gathered with a shared faith mission and purpose.

[ 12 : 01 ] What would the writer of our song write about us when they look at us? As people re-evaluate their lives, as people over these past months maybe have been prompted to find something new to return to a faith congregation, what will they see in us?

Will we be beautiful? Not just on the outside, but beautiful on the inside as well. Will they be drawn to us? Will they speak well?

Will they see us speaking well of one another? Will they see us in kind words as we speak? Will they see us giving sound advice as we've heard in our psalm?

Will they see us as a community that exudes the love of a bride for her king, that exhorts us to speak well of him as he does of her?

Are we beautiful on the inside as well as outside? Do we display each and every one of us as a church, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit that is so precious to God?

[ 13 : 19 ] Does our bridegroom, does God look at us as so often our bridegrooms do on the day? As they turn around, the tears flow and they go, wow, wow.

Wow. I heard the words whispered, which moved me greatly. As often you do when you stand at the front and they arrive at the front, bride and groom, and you hear those whispered words, you are beautiful.

I pray that we hear those words of our Lord speaks to us and we reciprocate in that. And people, as we take time out this summer and we focus on our regathering, I pray that we would be prepared, we would be ready, we would make ourselves beautiful on the inside and on the outside and allow God to do that in us so that our modern day psalmist will not only praise our King Jesus, but he will also say of us, his bride, that we reflect that beauty too.

Let the King be enthralled by your beauty. Honour him, for he is your Lord and is our Lord. Shall we pray together?

Father God, as we prepare for your coming again, and we don't know when that is, may we be ready as your church. May we take a fresh look at ourselves and be ready.

[ 15 : 04 ] May those areas where we haven't been prepared, would you prepare us afresh? Would you prepare our hearts afresh as people join us and see in us something of a beauty that they've been looking for for a long time?

And in doing that, may they meet with you afresh, we pray. In Jesus' name. Amen.