

TALKING POINT #24
LIFE'S TURNING POINTS #4: THE MARRYING CHURCH (PART 2)

KING & QUEEN FOR A DAY

There is a lot of work that goes into a wedding day (and a lot of stress with it!). Why do we give so much attention to the wedding itself? It is part of a tradition that regards the newly-married couple as royalty for the day. Indeed, some Christian traditions such as the Greek Orthodox and Coptic Churches still incorporate a “crowning ceremony” into their wedding services.

Ultimately, though, the reason we go to so much effort in weddings is that they celebrate the union of two people under God’s hand. So, what principles do we apply at Forest Lake Baptist Church?

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

The Bible has very little to say about the format of wedding ceremonies – it is not something about which the Bible is prescriptive. Rather, the Bible has more to say about the substance of the wedding and marriage. In other words, the Bible is more concerned about the promises that are made at a wedding and the “divine transaction” that occurs. If we understand the Biblical principles of the wedding, then a wedding will be something we want to celebrate vibrantly.

The Bible makes clear that when two people are married, it is more than simply a human contract. In fact, God Himself performed the first wedding in the Garden of Eden. In that wedding, Adam exclaims about the woman whom God had just formed from one of Adam’s ribs, “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman’, for she was taken out of man.” (Genesis 2:23). Matthew Henry wrote of this first wedding, “The woman was made out of Adam’s side. She was not made out of his head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be loved.”

More than that, Jesus blessed wedding ceremonies by making one in Cana the venue for his first public miracle. Later, He described what happens at a wedding, “So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.” (Matthew 19:6). A divine transaction occurs when God joins these two individuals in such a complete way that they become one person! In other words, marriage is not simply something humanity has designed and enters into. Rather, it is a divine institution that God gave to humanity to be honoured and celebrated. Ultimately, the wedding ceremony should reflect that bright and blessed day when Jesus shall be joined to His bride (the Church) for all eternity (Revelation 21:9-10).

NOW FOR US AT FOREST LAKE

So, weddings are celebrated for a number of reasons - for the love of the two people being married; for the promises the two people make before God; because “God Himself joins His “Yes” to ours” (Bonhoeffer); because they look towards the day when the Church will be joined to Christ forever.

CONCLUSION

It doesn’t really matter where the wedding ceremony occurs. The important things are that those being married acknowledge this great standard of marriage and that this is proclaimed at the service.

Next month, we’ll cover the third part of this series, “Supporting Marriages.”