

Subject: The Royal Wedding

Reading: Ephesians 5:22-33

Just as you thought you were safe from the Harry and Meghan's Wedding after months of media coverage, I want to talk about it this morning! You may or may not have been interested in it. You may have wanted to have been there in some way! To plan any wedding is a big enough project, but a Royal wedding, **10 clicks**] must have been a logistic nightmare. Thankfully, or not, there were more than a few couples involved in planning it since Harry and Meghan announced their engagement on 27th November last year! I want us to look at the Royal wedding and then compare it to a far greater Royal Wedding, The Royal Wedding of the King of Heaven and His Bride. Let's note just five things briefly:

1. The Bride and Groom

The focus on Harry and Meghan before the wedding was on the fact that he was royalty, at one time 3rd in line to the throne (now 6th) and that she was an American, a "commoner", a mixed-race (*bi-racial she terms herself*) commoner but a beautiful commoner! Her mother Doria is African-American, a social worker and yoga instructor, while Meghan's father, Thomas Markle, is Dutch-Irish and is a Daytime Emmy Award winning retired lighting director, who often took Meghan on set with him.

Much was made about their social differences and their relative standings in society. Harry and Meghan first made each other's acquaintance on a blind date in early July, 2016. She said "*We were introduced actually by a mutual friend,*". He was attracted to her and her beauty. . They announced their engagement last November and so they must have scrimped and saved to be able to get married within six months!! Meghan said she didn't have a lot of preconceived notions about who he was before they met. "*Because I'm from the States, you don't grow up with the same understanding of the royal family, I didn't know much about him, so the only thing that I had asked our mutual friend when she said that she wanted to set us up, was, 'Well is he nice?' Cause if he wasn't kind, it just didn't seem like it would make sense.*"

With the Royal Wedding that is spoken of in the Bible, the parties involved are incredibly different. The Groom is presented to us as awesome and glorious, because He is God the Son, the second person of the Godhead. God is presented to us as a tri-unity, the Trinity. This is not easy to understand or explain; but we have presented to us God the Father, God the Son, and God

the Holy Spirit. All fully, totally and equally God and yet distinguishable in person and working. The descriptions of the glory, the majesty, power and the person of God the Son show us that He is beyond understanding, He is perfectly pure and holy, totally and fully God and so has every divine attribute and power. This One is and always will be the centre of heaven's attention, because there's no One else like Him. No angel, no human being, no creature could ever understand Him or compare to His glory. The one He would take to Himself as His Bride must be a magnificent person, creature, being. We can give her a name, The Church - composed of men and women, boys and girls throughout all history and all nations.

Yet the Church is very much made up of the “wrong sort” of people - many of them commoners, mostly unknown, not many rich, not many influential, not many famous; but they all have one thing in common - they are all always short of the glory of the Son of God and are nothing like Him at all. These ones are taken from the whole mass of humanity and the Bible tells us quite clearly *"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,"* The Church is made up of sinners - that doesn't mean that they are all as bad as they could have been, but it means that they don't come up to God's standards and fall way short of His glorious perfection. In fact, this means that we are totally unattractive and unacceptable to God at all. There was no beauty in us that He should desire us, nothing about us that would attract Him to us. Yet this Royal Wedding is not one of duty, political expediency, but is one of total love on behalf of the Groom for His Bride!

It is quite staggering that this should be and really occur; the Bride was known before time began and God set His love upon her and gave her to His Son. She may have seemed as nothing compared to Him, but He loved her and would do everything to make her His bride, no matter what

2. The Cost

What was the cost of yesterday's Royal wedding? I should imagine it would be a lot more expensive than any of us could ever afford. The average UK wedding is about £18K!

As we'd imagine, or know, weddings can be expensive and a Royal wedding even more so. There were 600 guests invited to St George's Chapel at Windsor and to a lunchtime reception hosted at St George's Hall, with another 200 close friends being invited to the evening reception hosted by

Prince Charles at Frogmore House; there were also 2,640 members of the public invited to greet them in the grounds of Windsor castle! The cost of all the pomp and ceremony, the use of troops and the security services duty. These costs will soon mount up. We are not given the figures, but experts have calculated it would have been about £32 million (*William and Kate's wedding in 2011 only cost £20 million*) – most of the £32 million is the cost of security arrangements (*£30 million paid by taxpayers!*) I just hope for the Markle's sake that they were not going thirds on the costs! To think they could have come here and got married here for a lot less and we would have thrown in a good range of cakes too!

How would we estimate the cost of the Royal Wedding of heaven? In OT and NT times it was customary to pay a dowry, the bride price, as it still is in many parts of the world. The value of the bride was determined by the status of her family, her beauty, the desirability of this union to the joining of important families and of the political benefits that may follow. The Bride of the Lord Jesus could not expect a great price to be paid for her - she was of the family of Adam and they are all rebels and enemies of the God of heaven, her beauty was spoiled by the defacing effects of sin, the holy God of heaven could not be joined with those polluted and spoiled by sin and this union would be of no benefit to Him in any way at all. In fact, it would not be a desirable union and marriage in any way, shape, or form!

Yet the bride price, the dowry that was paid is immeasurable. God paid for us a price that could not be measured, God gave the most and best He had - His beloved Son of God. He wasn't just an example in every area of His living, but in His death, He paid the price for us, the price we could never pay to get right with God. Peter wrote in 1 Peter 1:18- 19 *"For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect."* People think they just need to clean themselves up a little bit to be acceptable to God; just do their best to impress and they will be ok and God would see them all right and ignore their weaknesses and failures. People fail to realise how polluted and disgusting we are before God and we don't need just a bit of tidying up, but we need to be cleaned up and out completely, so much so it is like we are reborn - born-again. There's absolutely nothing in us that God could ever find attractive.

The price was ultimately paid there on Calvary as God the Son took all our failures, our sins, our guilt and punishment on Himself. He paid the debt He did not owe, so that we who owed it, could have the debt cancelled. We need to honestly look at our lives and realise we're not worth the price that was paid, but then pause and thank God He viewed us so precious that the Son of God gave Himself for the likes of you and me. Yet the cost to Him also involved a supernatural beauty treatment for us because all our ugliness and repulsiveness to Him has been transformed. The prophet Isaiah spoke some eight centuries before the Lord Jesus about Jesus' mission, work and message and said it was to achieve and declare a great hope, part of which is Isaiah 61: 3 *"To give them beauty for ashes, The oil of joy for mourning, The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness;"* This change occurs in our legal standing with and viewed by God and is ours for ever; all this has been purchased by the Groom on behalf of His Bride. Let's move on:

3. The Dress

Meghan's mother cried tears of joy as her daughter arrived in a dress designed by Clare Waight Keller, artistic director at French fashion house Givenchy. The pure white gown featured a five-metre long veil, made from silk tulle with hand-embroidered flowers from each of the 53 Commonwealth countries. It took hundreds of hours to sew the designs, with experts washing their hands every half an hour to keep the material pristine. The dress was made from a special silk with soft matt lustre. The colour was chosen by Meghan and the designer to bring a "fresh modernity", Kensington Palace said.

The result was that she looked lovely, absolutely gorgeous and no doubt there'll be many copies already in production and winging their way to different parts of the world! As we'd say in the valleys *"She scrubs up well!"*

What about the wedding dress of the Bride of the Groom of heaven? We have been given something far better than any earthly wedding dress, its designer and provider is God Himself in and through the Lord Jesus - it is the robe of Christ's own righteousness. This is given for ever to everyone who trusts the Lord Jesus as their Saviour and it never fades or spoils. This also was included in the price He paid for us and is secure for us all. His work of salvation not only beautifies us but adorns us with beauty too! Paul tells us how we are to be presented to Him in Ephesians 5:25-27 *"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to*

make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless." Then Paul goes on to tell husbands to love their wives in the same way - but that is different subject!

That is how we will be presented one day, but, by God's work in our lives when we trust the Lord Jesus as our Saviour, that is how we are viewed now. We are dressed in Jesus' righteousness and we can boldly lift up our lives, our hearts, our voices in prayer and praise to God at all times because we are forever justly and legally made and viewed as righteous in our relationship with Him. Do we realise that? Do we understand that when we trust the Lord Jesus Christ all our sin and guilt is removed from us for ever, we are made and credited with His righteousness for all eternity and that nothing can change it? What we have is far better than any designer clothing or the most expensive wedding dress ever!

4. Changes

Meghan Markle's life has changed dramatically since the relationship began with Prince Harry. What she has done, said, worn have all been watched and analysed. Now she is married her status has been changed and she is Duchess of Sussex, addressed as her royal highness and now she will never be regarded as a commoner! There's been a change in her life, status and dignity. While she is still the same Meghan, her life has changed forever.

When we trust the Lord Jesus as our Saviour there are changes in our lives. They have to change because we also have been given a new life, status and dignity. No longer are we just sinners, part of Adam's family, but we are new creations, with a new life, new standing and status from and with God, we are sons and daughters of the God of heaven and in that sense, we are royal princes and princesses, we are joint heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ and so we are to live in the light of those privileges and honours upon us. This means our lives are to be affected in private and public, so we guard our thoughts, our desires, our motives as well as what we say and what we do - whether or not they are heard or seen.

The change that has been brought about when we become a Christian is to be more and more evidenced in and through our lives. Our Saviour expects us to live so that others will think the better of Him. We are His representatives where we live, work, study, in our relaxation times and our family times.

Being a Christian is to impact on and show in every area of our lives from the playground to the playing fields, the boardroom to the bedroom, with our families and our friends, with our money and our moments. There are to be no exclusion zones in our lives where the Lord Jesus does not rule, and reign. Being a Christian has implications every aspect for our lives.

5. The Wedding Reception

Imagine being one of the 600 guests at the lunchtime reception – wouldn't you feel special! How about being one of the additional 200 guests at the evening reception - then you'd feel even more special. To have been invited + would be thrilling, exciting, amazing and absolutely staggering if it had been received by you or me!

But what if we were invited to the wedding supper/reception of the Lord Jesus - termed in Revelation 19:9 "*the wedding supper of the Lamb*"? There is a fluid nature with the Bible's metaphors and pictures, as there the guests are also the Bride! As that verse says "*Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!*" The invitation is given often and to all whenever the gospel is declared, in fact I have given you the invitation this morning as I have spoken about having the Lord Jesus as your Saviour, for I can make the free offer of this invitation to whoever you are and whatever your age. It's all of God's free grace and it is an invitation to a wedding reception that none of us have ever been to its like before!

It will be the day of the glorious fulfilment of all God's purposes for all His people and His own glory. It will be the day when all the family of God will go home and be with the Saviour that they know and love. That will be a day of immense joy and of living "*happily ever after*" and unlike fairytales this will be real and the last for ever. Would you want to be there? The King of heaven Himself has commanded me to invite all whosoever would be there to accept His invitation by trusting the Lord Jesus as their own Saviour and your place will be reserved for you there and until then you will know His love and care all your life. The question is will you accept so great an invitation that is truly and freely given to you?

Let us leave this with a helpful but long quotation which Charles Spurgeon used in his sermon on Revelation 19:9: *'We dare not say that our Lord will love us more than He loves us now, but He will indulge His love for us more; He will manifest it more, we shall see more of it, we shall understand it better;*

it will appear to us as though He loves us more. He will lay open His whole heart and soul to us, with all its feelings, and secrets, and purposes, and allow us to know them, as far at least as we can understand them, and it will conduce to help bring about] our happiness to know them. The love of this hour will be the perfection of love. This marriage feast will be the feast, the triumph of love - the exalted Saviour showing to the whole universe that He loves us to the utmost bound love can go, and we loving Him with a fervour, a gratitude, an adoration, a delight, that are new even in heaven. The provisions made by Him for our enjoyment will astonish us... We shall find it a feast and a monarch's feast. It will have delights for us, of which we have no conception; and the pleasures we anticipate in it will be far higher and more abundant than our highest expectations have ever gone. We shall have a provision made for us, which will befit, not our rank and condition, but the rank and condition, the greatness, the magnificence, of a glorious God.'

All the glories and wonders of heaven as the heavenly Bridegroom and Bride are together forever in perfect bliss, happiness and unmeasured love and splendour and yet she, we will only have eyes for our glorious Bridegroom – who has done so much for us and He will be altogether lovely to us forever. Be there or lose out on unending joy and pleasure that you cannot imagine at this moment – all by accepting His invitation to take Him as your Saviour and Beloved.