

THE MIRACLE OF MARRIAGE
The Wedding at Cana

10-4-2015
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Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I want to begin my message today by confessing a few embarrassing truths about myself. Now hold onto your hats please. I know this might surprise you. After all, we've gotten to know each other a little bit through the years. So, I'm sure you are going to hardly be able to believe this. But I am not the easiest person in the world to live with. Can you believe it? Pick your jaws up off the floor. Fact is, I am a little messy, a little opinionated, a little cranky at times. I'm not the greatest at expressing my feelings, I like to control the remote for the TV, and on Sunday afternoons, when I can, I like to stare mindlessly at a screen watching eleven guys driving down a field trying to get a little ball over a little white line.

My wife and I are very different. I like to watch flicks with fighting and bloodshed – she likes to watch movies where people are from different eras and cultures. I like to decide to do things at the last minute – she prefers a plan of action. She likes to read. I like to write. She is an optimist. I am a pessimist.

But 29 years ago, a man that looks a lot like I do now stood before my betrothed and I, who were looking a lot like some of the couples that come before me for marriage -- young, energetic, wide-eyed, idealistic -- and said, "Philip, will you take this woman to be your wife. To have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish until death do you part?" And I said yes. And even more surprising, in response to the similar vow spoken to my wife, she also said yes. We had to be crazy, didn't we? Did we know what we were getting into? Maybe, maybe not.

But I want to tell you, a miracle happened that day. And I'm not talking about the fact that she was willing to take me. I'm talking about the fact that God brought together two people of very different temperaments, very different abilities, very different backgrounds, very different families, and made us one. He joined us together so that we serve Him as a unit – as a mosaic, --despite our differences – despite the ways that we might clash or have a mixture of opinions or feelings or reactions. He has made us husband and wife.

And I want to tell you what a wonderful thing it is. I am so glad to have a companion – a soulmate to share my life with. I am so glad to have someone who sets aside time for me, who wants to make plans and dream dreams with me, who committed herself to building a home and a family with me. We may have our differences. But the God who joined us has helped us learn to give and forgive, to sacrifice and surrender, to serve and to share.

You see, by nature we all have an inborn tendency to close out other people – and to live for ourselves. It was the first sin that Adam and Eve faced. “You can be God,” the Serpent said to them. And ever since, man and woman have yearned to be God. They’ve sought power, wealth, fame, popularity, land, stature, and the like. There have been wars and feuds and battles because countries, nations, and peoples have wanted the upper hand. Every Adam out there, deep inside, is no different than that first Adam. There’s a side of you that wants to think only about you and your needs. And lest we be unfair, all you Eve’s out there, the same is true for you.

Marriage, however, is, practically by definition, just the opposite of that. When you get married, you invite someone else into your “space” – into your “world” and declare publicly that you do not want to live for yourself – that despite your different personalities, backgrounds, temperaments, abilities – despite your different opinions, feelings, and experiences, that you want to become One Flesh – that you want to live as a team – that you want to let somebody else into your fortress and share even your most embarrassing weaknesses and humbling vulnerabilities with them.

So marriage is a miracle. It really is. Cause that stuff doesn’t come by nature. That cranky, selfish, messy guy is with me every day. But God helps me to cast him aside and be the kind of husband I should be. Sometimes. Not always. I’m still growing, and I still need to grow. And I still need forgiveness, every single day. But I believe the miracle. He has made us one.

It’s not a whole lot different than what happened at Cana in our text so many years ago. Water and wine are two radically different things. One can never be the other. One is clear, one is colored. One has an odor. The other does not. But bring Jesus into the mixture, and all of a sudden the water and wine are brought together by Him and serve the purpose for which He intended. What looked like a troublesome situation of embarrassment for one of Jesus’ friends,

became, instead, a cause for great rejoicing. So good was that wine, in fact, that the master steward declares "This is the best yet." Put Jesus in the middle, and miracles happen.

It also happens to bread and wine right here at this altar. Left to themselves they are just simple bread and wine. But put Jesus into the picture, and all of a sudden, -- a miracle -- God joins with that bread and wine the very body and blood His Son for the forgiveness of our sins.

Or over there at that font, it happens again. A little baby is brought, a little water splashed, a few words spoken. It all seems ordinary. Not a lot different than the daily bath, but not nearly as effective with no soap and scrubbing. But put Jesus in the middle and all of a sudden that water, connected with God's Word, conveys to that child the gift of the Holy Spirit and of faith.

Put Jesus in the middle of five loaves and two fish and you got thousands fed. Put Jesus in the middle of a boat nearly swamped by a furious squall, and there is peace and calm waters. Put Jesus in the middle of a young girls room, and her lifeless body stands up and declares His praise.

That's the key. Jesus in the middle.

There we were, dead in our transgressions and sins – lost and condemned creatures, destined for an awful end. But God put Jesus in the middle. Between two thieves His crucified body hung lifeless. But God declared His sacrifice the key that would save us. He paid the price for our sin and rose from the grave in glorious triumph having won the battle with sin, death, and the devil.

Now that's a miracle. God took that which was lost and brought salvation, that which was dead and brought life, that which was hopeless and gave us a future. Through Jesus Christ, He opened up the gates of heaven and connected you and me with all that He is. He broke down every barrier and blockade and said, "Lean on me, and I will be with you. I will help you love each other. I will help you make decisions. I will help you build a family. And one day, I will welcome you into my kingdom and we will rejoice together in the life you have had with one another."

Jesus in the middle means life. Jesus in the middle means miracles. And that is my word of encouragement to all families -- and to all people gathered here today. You are here in this church with a whole crowd of other people and a cross in the middle rising up between us. You want to see miracles in your life together? You want to find the true joy of His guidance and His wisdom and His strength and His love bonding you together for life? Then may the symbol that everyone sees today – the cross rising up between us – be the picture of God’s work in your life as husband and wife, as parent and child, as brother and sister, as friend and friend. May you come before Him, like Mary, with humility and faith, and lay your jars of water – that is your family, your home, your life together – into His hands. For when you do – miracles happen.

Let me share some striking statistics so you can see the power of the miracle. The average divorce rate of all marriages in America is approximately one in three. But, when husband and wife attend church together the number is reduced to one in eight. And guess what it is if they choose, as a couple, to attend not only the weekly church serve, but somehow get involved in a Bible Study together. You will be amazed to know that it becomes one in eight-hundred.

The water you bring before the throne of God today is made up of hydrogen and oxygen – molecules that when put together are bound by God into something that gives life and energy to all who drink it. Today that same God says, “let me be the glue that binds you together like I bind hydrogen and oxygen. And let me pour life and strength and hope and joy into your life as a family. For I am the God of miracles. And I will change your water into wine.