**A marriage made in heaven**

Text: Revelation 19:7-9

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**Scriptures:** Hosea 2:14-23; Ephesians 5:15-33; Revelation 19:1-10

**Songs Chosen:** [SttL] 103, 169, 440, 374, 275, 383, 209

**Series:** Occasional (Lord’s Supper)

**Theme:** Those who come to the wedding supper of the Lamb in the New Heavens and New Earth have been secured in Christ, are made ready in Christ and are invited by Christ

**Proposition:** Are you ready to meet the Lamb?

**Introduction**

Marriage is a binding covenant relationship between one man and one woman, for as long as they both shall live. Marriage is also a living reflection/representation/picture of the enduring covenant relationship between God and His people. The Lord expresses this truth through the prophesy of Hosea; as we have heard earlier: *"I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and in justice, In lovingkindness and in compassion, And I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness. Then you will know the LORD”* (Hosea 2:19-20).

God’s relationship to His chosen people is a divine betrothal. It is a binding engagement. God remains 100% true to His covenant promise in this relationship, but it is not a perfect betrothal because, brothers and sisters, it is broken by the unfaithfulness of Christians like you and me. God only keeps us in this relationship because of the faithfulness and sacrifice of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ

As a perfect man Jesus stands in our place as the Keeper of the covenant. As God in the person of the Son, He is the divine bridegroom. We, as the church are His bride. The Apostle Paul expresses this truth when He compares the sacrificial love of Christ for the church to that of a husband for his wife and the willingness of his wife to be led by her husband to the submission of the church to Christ.

In Biblical times a marriage involved two major events: the betrothal and the wedding. These were separated by a period of time during which the two individuals were considered to be husband and wife. During this period they were under obligations of faithfulness towards one another. On the wedding day the groom would come for his bride, take her back to his house for the marriage feast.

Brothers and sisters, believing congregation in our Lord, we are betrothed to Christ, awaiting the future wedding day after which we will have a perfect relationship with God forever. This day will come when Jesus, the heavenly bridegroom returns for his bride. Then He takes us to the home which he has prepared for us (John 14:3).

This morning in our text from Revelation 19, the perfect marriage between God and His people, the church, is finalised. The church is pictured both as the bride and as the guests who are invited to the wedding. This is a marriage supper for:

1. The secured
2. The prepared
3. The invited
4. **A supper for the secured**

A wedding is a happy occasion! It is a time to gather together. At a Christian wedding there is deep thankfulness to the Lord. Praise given for His great goodness in bringing together a man and a woman who both trust in Christ alone for their salvation. A groom and a bride who both belong body and soul to Jesus.

Similarly, but in far greater measure, at the wedding of Christ and His church there is great joy and praise. As we enter Revelation 19, we see the “four-fold Hallelujah” (Hallelujah means ‘praise God’:

* Firstly the great multitude in heaven. Hallelujah! Salvation & glory &power belong to our God.
* Then again rejoicing over the justice of God in destroying Babylon.
* Then 24 elders and 4 living creatures worship “Amen Hallelujah”.
* Then what has been called the ‘*roar of the redeemed*’: “*Hallelujah! For the Lord* ***our*** *God, the Almighty reigns*”.

Hear the joy expressed by the gathered multitude that the long-awaited day has finally come. This is the Day of Judgement. The enemies of God, embodied in the symbol of Babylon, the Great Prostitute, an image of unfaithfulness, have been held to account and the pain and death which they have inflicted on the bride of Christ has been avenged (Rev 19:2). The bride is **secure** because she has been preserved for and through this day. Her own rebellion against the Lord has been dealt with by the Heavenly Bridegroom who ‘*gave Himself up for her*’ (Eph 5:25). The period of betrothal is over, and the Bridegroom has come for His bride. *"Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come”.* Let us be exceedingly joyful. Super happy! Can you think back to the happiest day of your life? This will be like that only much more so! The great multitude is the universal church gathered to Christ at the end of this age. This will be the triumphant church, the completed church, the perfected church.

Today, we are not part of that final gathering as yet. Christ has won the victory at the cross, but Babylon has not yet fallen. The great corrupting prostitute is still ‘alive and kicking’. However, the day of judgement is coming. It is now one day closer than it was yesterday. There is another great feast in the future, not a marriage supper, but the fearsome judgement of God when, in the symbolic imagery of the book of Revelation, the birds of the air will feast on the flesh of kings, captains, mighty men, horses, their riders and all peoples (Rev 19:17-18) who are not invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Todaywe rejoice to worship our Great God, we are glad, however, our joy is mingled with a sombre reminder that Christ died for us. In the sacrament we proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes. There is sadness that Jesus had to die for us to have life. We’ll sing these words “*Who was the guilty, who brought this upon thee? Alas my treason, Jesus hath undone thee!*” However, there is also deep joy “…until He comes” – Christ will return. Then the marriage supper to which this Lord’s Supper points forward will come.

Today we are a glad people because our betrothal to God is an unbreakable covenant bond. It is good and right also to smile and to be visibly joyful at the Lord’s Supper table. To smile because as the Bride of Christ we are loved with a love beyond compare. Brothers and sisters, Christ assures us of our **security** in Him with these words: “*My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand*” (John 10:27-29). The sacrament reminds us of our security in Christ. This is a supper for the secured. Those protected from the wrath to come by the blood of the Lamb. Those who have prepared to meet their Lord and Saviour, which brings us to our second point:

1. **A supper for the prepared**

On the morning of her wedding day, the bride carefully prepares for her wedding. She is clean, very presentable, she wears special clothes. She is at her most beautiful, her most radiant as she walks the aisle. She causes heads to turn. Her heart is also prepared; fully committed to the groom, ready to say her vows, to make lifelong promises of faithfulness to the one she loves. She is fully confident that the man she is about to marry is the one for her!

In Ephesians chapter 5:22-33 the Apostle Paul identifies Christian marriage as a living picture of the holy relationship between Christ and His church. A relationship in which the husband gives himself up for his wife, loving her as Christ did when He gave His all for His bride. In the future, at the appointed time, when Christ returns, He will be visibly united to the church, the whole congregation of God’s people who will be ready for that day. This is what we see in verse 7: *The marriage of the Lamb has come, and His bride has made herself ready* (Rev 19:7).

How has she been prepared for this heavenly union? *It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.* Here the church is a well-dressed bride, ready for her Bridegroom. Here are the twin truths about the preparation of Christ’s bride:

1. “It was given to her” is passive. She has been given righteous clothing. By His own blood Christ has purchased this bride for himself, just as Hosea was called by God to "*Go again, love a woman who is loved by another man and is an adulteress, even as the LORD loves the children of Israel*” (Hosea 3:1).
2. The bride has also prepared herself. The good works for which Christ has saved His people are the evidence that they truly belong to Him. The fruit of obedience in our lives shows the reality of their salvation by grace alone, through faith alone in Christ alone. The righteous acts of the saints are possible by the power of God’s regenerating Spirit (Eph 2:10).

In Revelation 19 the betrothed bride is ready for marriage. But we, the church today are **not yet** ready. Christ is now continuing to prepare His bride, the church: *“that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless”.* (Eph 5:27) Brothers and sisters, we are still being prepared, we are still to bepreparing, there is still more growth which needs to come. The Apostle Paul puts it this way in Philippians 2:12-13 “*So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure*”.

We heard words of the Lord’s Supper form today: *Those who do not trust in Jesus for their salvation and have not repented of their sin, but live in disobedience to the Lord, are warned not to take part in the Lord’s Supper, lest they eat and drink judgment on themselves.*

Today as a church, as individual Christians we are not yet prefect, we are not yet ready, not yet fit to come, but if we are humble of heart, repentant, trusting upon the perfect garments of Christ, we should come, we must come, we are called to come. This truth is expressed in the words of the same form: *Nevertheless, this warning is not designed to keep the humble and contrite from the table of the Lord, as if the supper were for those who are free from sin. On the contrary, we come as guilty sinners. We confess that we are dependent for pardon on the sacrifice of Christ and base our hope of eternal life on his perfect obedience and righteousness. We come resolved to deny ourselves, crucify our old nature, and follow Christ as is fitting for those who bear his name.*

The marriage supper of the Lamb is for the prepared, it is also for those who have been invited, which brings us to our 3rd point:

1. **A Supper for the invited**

Many wedding ceremonies are public events; anyone can turn up and attend, particularly if the event is held at a park or on the beach. However, almost all wedding receptions/breakfasts /banquets are by invitation only. Special cards are sent out to a carefully chosen list of names.

Similarly, the Marriage Supper of the Lamb is a wedding banquet, **by invitation only**. Look in verse 9: *Then he said to me, "Write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'" And he said to me, "These are true words of God."* Notice that the word “invited” is in the ‘passive’. This means that the guests don’t invite themselves. The verb tense in the original language here (perfect passive) also indicates that once the invitation has been given, it is never retracted. Once a person is truly saved in Christ they are always saved! The saints ‘persevere’ in their salvation, because Christ faithfully perseveres for them. God’s people are blessed to be invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

The invitation to this feast goes out to anyone who will listen. *"God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent”* (Acts 17:30b)*. "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest”* (Matthew 11:28). Many are called, but few are chosen (Mat 22:14). Perhaps you are wondering today if you are one of God’s chosen people. Are you someone who has been elected to salvation from before the beginning of time?

You can answer this question with certainty today. Have you come? If you have come to Christ, you are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb, you are part of the Bride of Christ. If you have not come to the Lord Jesus as yet, today is the day to do so. There are only two future feasts at the end of this age: the marriage supper of the Lamb and the feast of the birds who will eat the flesh of the enemies of God. “*Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him*” (John 3:36).

All are invited to come to Christ. As the Apostle Paul wrote: “*Today I am Christ's ambassador, as though God were making his appeal through me. I implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God*” (from 2 Cor 5:20). All are invited to come to Christ as the general gospel call is issued. The invitation to the Lord’s Supper table today is different. This is not a gathering of the church universal, but local celebration by invitation only, at the invitation of the Elders. There will be some here today who will be invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb, but will not attend the table today: for example, children and young people, and perhaps others who have true faith, but have not yet professed their faith. Don’t be offended if not invited to the supper table today. Do not interpret this as this local church saying that you do not love the Lord. When the heavenly bridegroom returns for His church, every single one of His people will be invited to the wedding. Every one of His people will forever enjoy a perfect marriage, a perfect relationship with Jesus their Lord and Saviour.

In the celebration of Lord’s Supper, we look back and remember the death of our Lord Jesus Christ and look forward to the day when He comes again to fully perfect us so that we as a church universal will be without sin: the spots and wrinkles (which we now have), but holy and blameless in the sight of our glorious Heavenly Bridegroom.

Are you secure in Christ today? Are you prepared to meet Him today? Have you responded to His invitation to come to Him today?

AMEN