

The Heavenly Marriage

A Sermon by Rev. Joel Christian Glenn

19 October 2025

Children's Talk:

Today we are going to talk about marriage. What is a marriage? A marriage is when a man and a woman who love each other deeply decide to promise to love each other forever.

Marriage is a lot bigger than that too though. Anytime you have two things that work together in a partnership that is like a marriage. The Lord has filled all of His creation with these kinds of marriages.

Let's look at a few of the partnership in the Lord's creation. The most important partnership of all is between these two: the Lord and us.

Listen to this passage from the book of Revelation:

Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." (Revelation 21:2-4)

The holy city is like a bride that is getting married to the Lord. And that city stands for us, the church. The Lord wants to work with us as partners. He doesn't want us to be alone or feel lonely. He also doesn't want to do everything for us: He wants us to do our part too, just like in a marriage: both partners have to be working together.

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Our topic for this week is the heavenly marriage. Whether you are married or not though this sermon is for you. Because even though when we talk about marriage we usually mean when a man and a woman make an eternal commitment to each other, we're going to talk about something much broader this week. In fact, for a sermon that is all about marriage we will spend surprisingly little time talking about the relationship between men and women. So if you're worried that there won't be much for you this week, don't be. There will still be a great deal for you to take away and apply to your own life.

Over and over again the Word uses the image of marriage to express deeper truths. In the beginning Adam and Eve are paired together and told to multiply and grow. Jehovah presents His relationship to Israel as that of a loving husband to a wife, sometimes faithful, sometimes not. The Lord compared Himself to a bridegroom and the church to His bride. In parables He compared the kingdom of heaven to the celebration of a wedding to which all are invited. This imagery is not restricted to the Word. The reality is that the entire universe is founded on principles of marriage. Nothing could exist without some kind of reciprocal marriage relationship: a push and a pull, action and reaction, cause and effect, and so on. Even in physics one of the most fundamental laws is that for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction, without which the universe as we know it would be vastly different. These examples from the Word and from the physical world are not random. They reflect a fundamental spiritual reality, a reality that is important for how we understand ourselves, our world, and our relationship with the Lord. The teachings for the New Church explain this concept in context of the creation of men

and woman. A man and wife in a marriage represents a marriage of goodness and truth. We read,

'Man and wife' means that truths were joined to goods. This is clear from the meaning of 'man' as truth which belongs to the understanding, and from the meaning of 'wife' as good which belongs to the will, both dealt with already. This consequently means that with people neither the smallest area of thought nor the smallest area of affection or activity has any existence at all unless it contains some marriage of understanding and will. In the absence of such a marriage nothing ever comes forth or is produced....

The source and origin of these enduring marriages lies in the heavenly marriage by means of which also the idea of the Lord's kingdom is stamped on everything in the whole realm of nature, both on animate beings and on inanimate. (*Apocalypse Revealed* §718)

If we fail to understand this concept that all things exist in a marriage relationship we will be out of balance and will fail to thrive in our relationships and in our communities. When we neglect to temper judgment with mercy for example, we fall into harsh and destructive judgments. Yet when we neglect to temper mercy with proper judgment we fail to hold people to account and are taken advantage of. It is only when mercy and judgment are married as equals that justice can function. On a personal level, when we throw ourselves at work non-stop we burn out. And when we focus only on enjoying life and nothing else, life drains of all meaning. But when work and pleasure are balanced we find purpose and happiness. These are just two simple examples that illustrate the point: a balanced marriage is the bedrock of all we experience in life.

The most powerful marriage that we experience comes in our relationship with the Lord. As already mentioned, the Word presents God's relationship with humanity in terms of a marriage: He is the groom or the husband, while the church, or us, is the bride and wife. As an aside: There's an old idea in Christianity that somehow the husband is in charge in a marriage, and that is utterly false. As we have seen, any kind of relationship that mirrors marriage has to have balance. In the relationship

between a husband and wife that balance can only exist when both partners are equal. Even though in the marriage between the Lord and the church the Lord is obviously the one in charge that doesn't translate into our earthly marriages.

That our relationship with the Lord is like a marriage is made clear in the last few chapters of the Book of Revelation as John describes seeing the New Jerusalem, or the New Church, descending to the earth as a bride. We already read one for the children's talk. I'd like to read a couple more:

"Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'" (Revelation 19:7-9)

The last passage, the second to last verse in the entire Word, expresses the Lord's eagerness to be with the church in a spiritual marriage, and the church's eagerness as well (cf. *Apocalypse Revealed* §960):

He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly."
Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus! (Revelation 22:20)

Notice that in those passages that talk about the marriage of the Lord and His bride it speaks of blessings, gladness and rejoicing, the intimate presence of God, the wiping away of tears and sorrow, the absence of death and pain. We can receive all these things through our relationship with the Lord.

This being the case we need to understand how that relationship works and how to balance it. The marriage of the Lord and His church is described in detail in the Teachings of the New Church:

...where there is the marriage of the Lord and the Church, there is also the marriage of good and truth, for the latter comes from the former. For when the Church, or a Church person, is principled in truths, the Lord then enters into his truths with goodness, and makes them live; or what is the same, when the Church, or a Church person, is in intelligence by means of truths, the Lord then enters his intelligence through the goodness of love and charity, and thus infuses life into it. (*Doctrine of the Sacred Scripture* §82)

At first this probably seems very abstract: what does any of that mean? The marriage of good and truth comes from the marriage of the Lord and the Church? When someone has truth the Lord enters with goodness? He makes our truth live and infuses life into our intelligence? How is that a marriage? In simple terms, when we know something true, it still lacks something: as long as it is sitting in our memories it has no life of its own. The truth that we know only comes alive when we find the motivation from within to put it into action and apply it to becoming a loving person. That inner motivation can come from no one else but the Lord. So when we learn truth, and the Lord motivates us to act on it, we create a deep partnership, or marriage, with the Lord.

Hopefully this will become clearer through examples. Anyone who puts his mind to it can learn truth, but it takes something more to actually put what we know into service, to live what we have learned, to turn our intelligence away from serving ourselves and apply it to serving others. We could never do these things if we did not have a partnership with the Lord. Consider the worker who knows his job perfectly but has given up trying; or the husband and wife who know marital counseling backwards and forwards but no longer put effort into their marriage; or the young man has known his faith from childhood but can't be bothered to commit to it.

The only thing that can pull us out of these states is a relationship with the Lord. We cannot simply will ourselves into being better; we need the strength of a higher power. How many times have you known exactly how to get what you want, have felt a deep caring for that thing, and yet for some inexplicable reason, you didn't manage to achieve it? Knowing and feeling strongly about something is not enough. We need the Lord's love. The Lord's love is not a feeling but an impetus or push to action. It is that which from within motivates you to apply what you know to

serving others. If you have the wisdom to see what you need to do in your life but no motivation to do it, that means that you need to marry what you know more strongly to the Lord's love.

But how do we do that? We've already seen that just wanting something is not enough, nor can we just think ourselves into being motivated. There are certain steps we can take to make it easier: prayer, asking the Lord for help, going through repentance. But at its core we experience and draw on the Lord's love when we act to do what is right *without waiting for the motivation to do so*. The irony is that if we wait for His love to force us into action we will be waiting forever. If we act, as if we were fully in charge of our lives, as if it was we alone who were making the choices, *that* is when we know that we have the Lord's love within us, because without His love motivating us from within we could not even lift one finger. The Lord is most fully with us when, without feeling any impetus from within, without any feeling of motivation, we still *choose* to act in line with His love, guided by His wisdom. When we do this we not only find ourselves married to the Lord, but what we want and what we think also become united in a marriage and produce results.

When we create a marriage between ourselves and the Lord, between our knowledge and our ability to do His will, between what we think and what we love, between intelligence and caring for others, we will find a spiritual balance that produces blessings in our lives. Think again of the description in the book of Revelation about what will happen when the church as wife becomes married to the Lord as husband:

Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes;

there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." (Revelation 21:2-4)

Amen.