

PSALM 45: A WEDDING MEDITATION

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Brandon and Bethany, you have granted me a satisfying task of sharing a brief biblical message at your wedding. My message comes from Psalm 45, which is the only psalm titled “a love song.” The psalmist says, “My heart overflows with a pleasing theme; I address my verses to the king; my tongue is like the pen of a ready scribe” (Ps. 45:1). This love song is a pleasing word because celebrating the duty and beauty of marriage is a good thing that honors the Lord. But the psalm is also pleasing because it foreshadows the ultimate relationship between Christ the king and his bride the Church.¹

The book of Hebrews in the NT cites vv. 6–7 of this very psalm and declares in 1:8–9, “Of the Son he [God] says, ‘Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.’” The eternally reigning king in our psalm is here called “God,” yet this king has a “God,” who has anointed him, namely the Father. And if the king is here a portrait of the divine Son Jesus, that means the queen in this text supplies a picture of his bride, the Church. So, Psalm 45 portrays a model for human marriage by depicting the more ultimate relationship. As Paul would later say in Ephesians 5: “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her” (Eph 5:25). Brandon and Bethany, I want to walk through parts of this psalm from two perspectives—the first celebrating the relationship depicted between king Jesus and his bride, and the second considering the psalm as a model for your marriage.

The psalmist offers two calls with commentary, the first to the king and then to his queen. I am going to focus only on the charges, due to our time. For the king the call is to provide and protect; for the queen the call is to cleave and respect.

The psalmist, living in darkness, predictively urges his future, hoped-for Messiah, “Gird your sword on your thigh, O mighty one, in your splendor and majesty! In your majesty ride out victoriously” (45:3–4a). The call is two-fold: prepare and prevail. Christ is here portrayed as a

¹ There are two other reasons I chose this psalm: (1) It is the only “love song” in the entire Psalter, which makes it stand out. (2) The psalm celebrates a royal marriage, and ever since the Garden of Eden where Adam as head (Gen. 2:15) and Eve as helper (2:18) were called to subdue and have dominion (1:28), royal marriages have been a model for God’s people.

warrior, who must put on his armor (cf. Isa 11:5; 59:17) and then succeed in battle. And you don't want to be this king's enemy, because his arrows are sharp, and they pierce enemy hearts, so that they fall under him (Ps 45:5). The king goes forth in "splendor and majesty," which are qualities characterizing Yahweh (96:6; 104:1; 111:3), qualities that God has bestowed on the king (21:5). In a very real sense, Christ was the ultimate image-bearer, reflecting, resembling, and representing God on the earth. To see the king in his beauty is to see a portrait of God himself (John 14:9).

And what we learn is that Jesus came to earth to provide and protect. To provide, he came to "ride for the cause of truth and meekness and righteousness" (Ps 45:4b). To protect, he would overcome all enemies that would threaten his kingdom (45:5). There is both a great hope in this text and a great call. First, the hope....

Since Adam and Eve, every human marriage on this planet has been between two sinners who desperately need what Jesus alone supplies. The two of you, along with all the others of us in this room, when left to ourselves, have dispositions toward falsehood, pride, and disorder. We don't pursue truth, meekness, and righteousness, and because of this, from conception we are God's enemy rather than his friend. But God sent Jesus to redeem sinners, to heal and help marriages, and to overcome every falsehood, every bit of arrogance, and every evidence of disorder in our hearts. Jesus embodied the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6). He took the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men, and he humbled himself by becoming obedient unto death for those he came to save (Phil 2:7-8). God counted all our sins to Christ and punished him in our stead, and God counted all of Jesus's righteousness to us, crediting it to our account (2 Cor 5:21). And in justifying us by his blood, he allows us to be saved from his wrath (Rom 5:9).

Brandon and Bethany, you stand here today as sinners in deep need of Jesus. Neither of you are going to be a perfect spouse. But the hope of this text is that the one who has perfectly worked truth and meekness and righteousness has come and made a way for God to be 100% for us. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Rom 5:8), and if you are trusting in Jesus alone as your Lord, Savior, and Treasure, you enter into your marriage today able to rest in a God who has worked amazing good for you in Christ. He has reconciled you with God and has purchased all that you need for life and godliness (2 Pet 1:3). He has also decisively conquered the enemy that would seek to destroy your marriage (Col 2:15).

And out of such hope, comes the call. Brandon, in the way human marriage supplies a parable of the relationship between Christ and his church, you, like Jesus, bear the primary responsibility of providing and protecting in your home. By God's grace, he has given you help in a woman filled with strengths and wisdom, and you will need to learn to utilize her talents and giftedness, as it is part of God's gift to your home operating smoothly and rightly. But before the Lord, you still bear the primary responsibility of leading the fight for truth, meekness, and righteousness in your marriage and in warding off all that is evil.

The devil is "the father of lies"; "he was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him" (John 8:44). There will be times, Brandon, where you will be tempted to engage in secret sins or to not tell the whole truth to your wife. Truth is about light; deceit is about darkness. When the rays of truth shine in your home—through your life and through your words, this garden-gift called Bethany will grow and flourish, and your home will be a safe place that reflects the beauties of Christ's love for his Church. But when deceit characterizes your words and witness, your garden will wilt. So I urge you, work and war for truth. Guard your heart; guard your eyes; guard your lips. Live in the light, and lead your home for the cause of truth.

And then remember that Jesus also came for the cause of meekness and righteousness. These two traits go together, for righteousness is about right order in God's world, wherein we recognize God as supreme and value his image in other. Right order demands that we not have an elevated view of ourselves or seek to consider ourselves better than others, for at the cross, we are all needy. Biblical meekness is not about timidity or self-deprecation; meekness is about a humility that magnifies Christ; it's about God-dependence rather than self-reliance; it's about submission to Christ as Lord and Savior and Treasure. Meekness is mindful trust in the God who "opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble" (1 Pet 5:5). When tensions rise in your marriage, you will be tempted to elevate yourself above Bethany rather than to humble yourself before her. I urge you, "Let your speech always be gracious" (Col 4:6), and let your words work for good and not harm. Be quick to serve her and to humble yourself before her; be quick to ask for forgiveness; and be quick to forgive. Jesus came for the cause of seeing meekness and righteousness characterize your home. And as you lead your home in this way, Christ will be honored and displayed, and you will fulfill your God-given role as a husband.

Now, in the psalm, at the king's "right hand stands the queen in gold" (Ps. 45:9); she is radiant and beautiful. The psalmist charges her, "Hear, O daughter, and consider, and incline your ear: forget your people and your father's house, and the king will desire your beauty. Since he is your lord, bow to him" (45:10–11). Christ has saved his bride from wrath and enslavement, and the Church's right response to all that Jesus has won for her is to switch her primary allegiance and loyalty from things in this world to Christ and to worship him. In the same way that Christ set his heart on his bride, and the Church submits to Christ, so too the bride is here called upon to cleave and respect her man. Bethany, today you do not diminish your love and care for your grandparents, your parents, and Ben and Madi, but your principle loyalties do switch to Brandon. To him you must cleave (cf. Gen 2:24). He is taking the place of your father as your primary provider and protector. And as he serves you in this way, you need to serve him by loving him, building him up in private and in public, submitting to him in trust as he submits to the Lord. Paul's word for this helper role is "respect." "Let the wife see that she respects her husband" (Eph 5:32). And in so far as you allow your heart to treasure Brandon, respect Brandon, and use your skills and words and wisdom and life to build him up and nurture this one-flesh bond, the text says "the king [your king] will desire your beauty" (45:11).

So, in summary, today, Brandon, the Lord is calling you to provide and protect, and Bethany, he calling you to cleave and respect. Neither of you will do this perfectly, but God today is making two sinners one in order that together you may put on display the love between Christ and his Church. And rest with joy, knowing that Christ has already worked for the cause of truth and meekness and righteousness in your lives and in your marriage. May he bless your home, and may he give you great joy and peace, perseverance and dependence for his glory and your good.