

Sermon - January 14, 2018 - Epiphany 2,

An Epiphany Wedding

1 Corinthians 6:12–20

Introduction:

The brilliant glow of Christmas is slowly fading in the West. The candles and lights of the past season have been taken down and packed away. Almost forgotten are the wonderful times we've had as a family—children or grandchildren coming home, the house filled with light hearts and memories of old times—or perhaps new memories being made as a newly engaged couple visits one side of the family and then the other at Christmastime. Almost forgotten! Now the darkness of the world begins to shroud our lives, our families, and our community as we return to the normalcy of January. The winter with its shortened days has exhausted our supply of energy. The pressures of a new year pile up. We find ourselves, as St. Paul would say, in a world full of sin and darkness. The problems of our lives wear us down and possibly depress us and our families. But it's not too late for a wedding! A wedding?

The story of the brilliant Christ Child still enlightens our hearts this Epiphany season. If we close our eyes, we can still see the candlelight of Christmas Eve. We can still see the sanctuary decked out, the greenery, the glow of the tree and of a hundred flickering flames. What better setting—even now—for a wedding? An Epiphany wedding. Today, during this season in which we see the light of the Christ revealed,

We are gathered here in the sight of God for an Epiphany Wedding—to be joined to the Lord. That's the wedding I'm talking about! And how special it is as we this month the Sanctity of life is observed. Wedding—family—sanctity of life!

I. Shall we be joined to the works of darkness? Never! Well, maybe all too often.

As we gather this day, we ask ourselves, shall we be joined to the works of darkness? Never! Are you sure? Well, maybe all too often.

The toys of Christmas are broken and the batteries run down, and with those breakdowns are countless reminders of broken relationships.

“It’s my sister’s fault,” some child might say. The broken toy is worth more than another’s feelings. A fight breaks out between the two siblings. Quarrels always erupt among us. Why? Because we’ve joined ourselves to things. St. Paul, in his First Letter to the Corinthians, reminds us that the darkness of the world brings quarrels and dissensions.

It’s not just for little children that this season is dark and contentious. The bills of Christmas are coming. How did we spend so much money? “It’s all because you won’t limit the gifts to your family,” some husband might say. The fight is on. Our relationships are destroyed. Why? Because we’d rather be joined to our possessions than to the people the Lord has given us.

And all those New Year’s resolutions—they’re broken too. The new exercise program has fallen into disuse. The self-discipline of the new diet worked for a few days, but food is too good, and the addiction to our super-sized portions is too compelling (v 12).

Paul would say, “Food is meant for the stomach” (v 13a), but don’t let food control you. If you do, you’ve joined yourself to another thing.

Above all in this text, Paul reminds us that the marital relationship is not exempt from the fractured, quarrelsome darkness of the world (vv 13b–15).

The perils of our sexuality, of being chaste in the illicit world, cause us

sometimes to wonder if we are really Christian. Look at our sinful world. It's on our minds, on our televisions, in our music. The culture is full of vile and prostituting things. All one has to do is try to watch one evening of prime time television.

We don't want to think too much about our situation; after all, it's someone else's fault, certainly not ours. Why did you give me such a wife? It's not my fault. God, how can you say this lazy husband who's never attentive to my needs is fit for me?

Shall I be joined to a prostitute? Never! Except, well, in a manner of speaking, I am—we are—all the time, when our allegiance and loyalty with God is compromised. We're doomed, doomed, doomed.

Should we treasure life and help those who are dying because of somebody else's sin? Of course, but let somebody else do it... right?

II. But we have been joined to the Lord (v 17).

Christ came into the world of failures, brokenness, fights, and squabbles. He brought his peace, which surpasses our human understanding. He came to give a peace different from the world.

He appeared at Bethlehem, and those who are wise still come to see him and kneel at his side.

Christ came into the world to wash us in his precious blood, to dress us in his white garments, and to marry us as his beloved Bride.

He established marriage but not our painful marriages of today. Sin brought corruption of our marriages into the world.

Christ came to show us the ever-giving and other-serving love of a true Husband. He came to be faithful in every way.

Christ came into the world to do the things we could not do. He came to overcome the frailty of our sinful nature and to win for us the right to be

his.

We are not our own; we belong to him (v 19b). And since we are his, we can serve our fallen neighbor, those in relationship to us. We can joyfully be attentive to the needs of our wives, children, parents, and help those who are being killed and protect life, because our Bridegroom, the Lord Jesus, looks out for us, because we have been joined to the Lord.

III. And joined to the Lord, we are radiant in his glory.

Do you not know that you were bought with the price of the blood of the Christ Child (v 20)? Yes! You know that well! You know the price your Bridegroom paid for you—his suffering and death on the cross.

You know that "...Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her," held back nothing, "that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:25, 27).

You were like the new Bride. She bathes herself, scents herself, and then dresses in a beautiful white gown. She dons her jewels and slips her feet into golden slippers. She is now ready to be wed to the Prince of Peace. One might even say she is radiant. She, like Moses coming off the mount, reflects the glory of the Lord, the bright Morning Star.

But her mom and dad know that this little tomboy could at times be sweaty, grimy, and filthy. She can act out, yell, and scream. She could throw a temper like any impish brat.

With love our Father says, "My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin." [1 Jn. 2:1], but when you do sin, know that I have sent to you the Light of light and the King of kings. He is Jesus Christ, the great defender. He has driven the darkness away by being the light of the world."

When the word of Baptism came, you were united with Christ. Therefore, you may sing God's praises, for you have been given a new name. In our country, the beaming bride gets a new name. So it is when we are married in Baptism. We get a new name, the name of Christian. For the superior wisdom (1 Cor 2:1) of the Christ Child's Good News transforms our hearts to detest the sins, sins that Paul lists: divisiveness (quarreling), power-grabbing (litigation), and sexual immorality (incest or prostitution), and more, any other sins that the Holy Spirit convinces us of.

We listen to the Word of our Baptism. We are given a new name. "You are not your own" (1 Cor 6:19). The wonder of our Baptism is never seen but is the opening of heaven the greatest thing you shall fully know. The Christ Child came that we might know heaven has been opened to us.

Conclusion:

Even today, even in the fading glow of Christmas, the light of Epiphany illumines our wedding. Our baptisms, the new name we now bear. And even when you have sinned, the great King of kings has forgiven your sins and now says to you, "You are mine!"

While you were sinners, broken, in darkness, prostituting yourselves in so many ways, I married you, yes I did in the bond of your baptism. Taking you as my own!

Then he dressed you in the brilliant garments of a newly vested queen. You are his beloved Bride, loved now and loved forever.

In the name of the King of Kings, the groom, your God and Lord, Jesus Christ!

Amen.