

How Jesus Gets a Bride

Trust, Submission, Holiness

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Bible Text: Ephesians 5:22-33

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The following sermon was delivered on Sunday evening, February 28, 2010 at Trinity Baptist Church in Montville, NJ.

Now I understand from my interaction with your pastors, for I do keep in constant touch with them, that in recent weeks you had a couple of weddings, to one degree or another have occurred in this place. And I would be very surprised if in conjunction with those weddings that Ephesians chapter five was not read and if not only read, at least briefly expounded.

And I want you to turn with me tonight to that passage in the Word of God and my purpose will become plain in a few minutes. But I want to begin by reading the familiar words of Ephesians chapter five beginning at verse 22.

Wives, be in subjection unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, being himself the saviour of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives also be to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it; that he might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. Even so ought husbands also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his own wife loveth himself: for no man ever hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as Christ also the church; because we are members of his body. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is great: but I speak in regard of Christ and of the church. Nevertheless do ye also severally love each one his own wife even as himself; and let the wife see that she fear [or reverence] her husband.¹

¹ Ephesians 5:22-33.

Now we are going to come to this passage tonight not to consider primarily the human relationship of a husband and a wife, but we are going to look at the passage in order to discover together how Jesus gets a bride. Because, in a very real sense, the Scriptures tell us that the rescue mission of Christ, his mission to seek and to save sinners is really a mission in which Christ is seeking for himself a bride. He is the bridegroom and he calls out of the mass of lost and hell deserving humanity, a vast multitude who no man can number out of every kindred, tribe and tongue and nation and he constitutes them his bride. And so we want to come to this passage in order to see what it tells us about what Christ does in order to get to himself a bride.

Now two relationships are obviously addressed in this passage. The addressing of Paul to real husbands and real wives is very clear. If you count the number of times the word “husbands” or “husband,” singular, “wife” or “wives” are used, there are nine explicit references to the wife or to wives. There are six explicit references to husband or husbands, plural. So if you desire to know something about the will of God for you as a husband, here is where you park. If you want to know the will of God for you as a wife, here is where you park. God is explicitly addressing real husbands and real wives in real marriages and telling them that their relationship is to take all of its contours and all of its shape from fundamental gospel realities.

In other words, the gospel is to shape your life as a husband and the gospel is to shape your life as a wife.

But then there is another relationship equally patent in this passage and it is the relationship of Christ and his Church. The word “the Lord” or “Christ” is used no fewer than six times and the word “Church” is used no fewer than six times. And though Paul has been addressing husbands and wives, by the time he gets to verse 32 it is almost like he acknowledges, “By the way, I have changed my subject from husbands and wives to Christ and his Church.”

Look at verse 32.

“This mystery is great.”²

That is, the mystery of a man leaving father and mother, joined to his wife, the two become one flesh.

“This mystery is great: but I speak in regard of Christ and of the church.”³

Well, I thought you were speaking in regard of husbands and wives.

Paul says, “I was. But I am also speaking with equal authority of Christ and of his Church.”

² Ephesians 5:32.

³ Ibid.

So not only in this passage are we given directives for a God honoring, Christ exalting, Gospel illustrating and fulfilling marital relationship, but we are given a wonderful picture of what a true Christian is. A Christian is someone who has been incorporated into the bride of Christ. A Christian is one united to Jesus Christ. As a wife is united to her husband we become united to Christ.

And so we are going to park in the passage and discover together three things that answer the question: How does Jesus get a bride?

And I want us to study it not for mere detached academic interest, but study it with this end in view. Do I have biblical grounds to believe that I am part of the bride of Christ? For if I am not, I am a lost sinner under the wrath of almighty God. Sitting here tonight you are either united to Christ and part of his bride or you are yet in Adam a child of wrath and under the judgment of almighty God.

So let's take up our study. How does Christ get a bride? Well, the first thing we learn from the passage is this. Christ woos and wins his bride by bringing her to trust in his sacrificial death on her behalf. Christ does not win his bride by performing deeds of heroism. He wins his bride by laying down his life as a sacrificial victim on her behalf.

Look at the text of Scripture verse 25.

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it.”⁴

And squeezed into those words “loved” and “gave himself up for it” is the full, rich doctrine of Christ's substitutionary, sacrificial death under the wrath of God on behalf of his people. He loved the Church when it yet lay under the wrath and the curse of God. When that which comprises his bride was yet in union with our first father Adam, Christ loved the Church.

And I shall never forget when some months ago I read this statement. If we are in Christ, we have been loved as long as God has been God. How long has God been God? From everlasting to everlasting you are God. No wonder the prophet could say, “You have loved us with an everlasting love.”

As long as God has been God, in the mystery of the trinity of his being, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, his heart has gone out in love to that which would constitute the bride of Christ. Christ loved the Church and in his love for that Church he gave himself up for it.

In the language of Romans 8:32, speaking of the Father, “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all,”⁵ the Father delivered him up to the hands of wicked men. The Father delivered him up to the powers of darkness. The Father delivered him up to

⁴ Ephesians 5:25.

⁵ Romans 8:32.

his own pure and righteous and holy wrath so that Paul can write, “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law being made a cruse for us.”

Christ, in his infinite, eternal love embraces his unique position as the only appointed substitute and sacrifice for sinners and he gives himself up for us. The Father gives him over. The Son gives himself over.

So the same apostle can write in Galatians 2:20, “The Son of God, who loved me, and [what?] gave himself for me.”⁶

And when Christ is going forth to get a bride, how does he woo and win that bride? He does so by revealing through the Word and by the Spirit that in his own death is the only hope for guilty, hell deserving sinners and that by his triumphant resurrection God has forever validated that he has paid the price for sinners and that in Jesus Christ there is full and free forgiveness. And the wooing power of Christ is the wooing power of his cross.

The Lord Jesus tells us that in John chapter 12. Turn there for a moment, John chapter 12 and notice verse 32. We can back up to verse 31. Our Lord is speaking.

“Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.”⁷

Our Lord is conscious on the eve of his crucifixion he is going to engage the powers of darkness in some form of hand to hand combat. And the prince of this world will be cast out.

Now notice.

“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself.”⁸

Of this text is used and we pray, “Lord, bless the preacher as he lifts up Christ and draw men.”

That is a good prayer, but that is not what this verse is talking about. Look what follows.

And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself. But this he said, signifying by what manner of death he should die.⁹

It was in Christ lifted up upon the cross in the horrible mystery of forsakenness when God blackened the heavens in those dark hour from the third to the sixth, from the sixth to the ninth hour. And toward the end of which our Lord cries out in that mysterious cry, “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?”

⁶ Galatians 2:20.

⁷ John 12:31.

⁸ John 12:32.

⁹ John 12:32-33.

And it is in the giving up of himself to be the sacrificial Lamb on behalf of his bride, his bride that lay under the wrath and curse of God and standing in their room instead, he absorbs into himself all of the fierceness of the unleashed fury of the wrath of God. And being lifted up it is in his cross that there is the power of his wooing and winning his bride.

“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself.”¹⁰

And this is why when we turn to the New Testament the gospel which is the power of God unto salvation, Romans 1:16, it has a synonym in Romans 1:18. It is called the word of the cross.

And the apostle goes on to say in 1 Corinthians chapter one it is in the preaching of Christ crucified, that message which is offensive to the Jew and a stumbling block to the Greek, but he says this Christ preached as Christ crucified becomes the power and the wisdom of God to all whom God calls.

So when God is working to bring people into that body called his bride, it is the proclamation of Christ crucified. This is why the apostle coming to Corinth said, “For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”¹¹ Because he was out to be in that enterprise of gathering Christ’s bride and he knew that Christ woos and he wins by the power of his sacrificial death on behalf of sinners.

And it is when the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the Word of God opens our eyes to see that Jesus crucified for sinners is just exactly the kind of Savior I need and that there is no cause in me for God to forgive me and accept me and turn away his wrath, all of the cause is in Christ, that our hearts go out in trust and confidence in his sacrificial death on our behalf and we are incorporated into that people that are called his bride.

Christ woos and wins his bride by bringing her to trust in his sacrificial death on her behalf.

Has that happened to you? Has the preaching of Christ crucified become the very instrument of divine power to loose you from your attachment to your self righteousness, your attachment to I will make it on my own religion? Has it loosed you from all silly notions that you can build ladders to heaven with the rungs of your own efforts? And have you come saying in the language of the hymn writer, “Nothing, nothing in my hands I bring, simply to thy cross I cling. Foul, foul I to the fountain fly. Wash my, Savior, or I die”?

If you are part of Christ’s bride, you have been wooed and you have been won to trust in his sacrificial death on your behalf. And if that message has not wooed you and won you and brought you into a love relationship with Christ, you are lost as the devil. And the

¹⁰ John 12:32.

¹¹ 1 Corinthians 2:2.

sooner you face it the better. Has it wooed you? Has it won you and brought you into a trusting love relationship with Jesus?

But then, secondly, Christ secures the voluntary submission of his bride by an act of sovereign power. He not only woos and wins her by bringing her to trust in his sacrificial death, Christ secures the voluntary submission of his bride by an act of sovereign power.

Look at verses 23 and 24 of Ephesians chapter five.

“For the husband is the head of the wife.”¹² Now notice. “As Christ also is...”¹³ Not will be, should be, may be. “As Christ also is the head of the church, being himself the saviour of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives also be their husbands in everything.”¹⁴

These two texts make it unmistakably clear that everyone who belongs to Christ’s church in reality—and, remember, the Church is his bride that he is out to woo and to win—the text says the Church is subject to Christ.

Now does the Church collectively get subject to Christ? When every single individual who is incorporated into it by the mighty working of the Holy Spirit is brought to voluntarily, cheerfully submit to Jesus Christ as his or her sovereign unrivaled Lord and master.

You see that in the text? How does the Church get subject to Christ collectively? When every individual brought into that Church is brought in with bowed knee and submissive heart.

When Christ goes out to win a bride, he is not going to have a contentious, rebellious, self-willed witch for his bride. When he goes out to get a bride, he woos her and wins her to trust in his sacrificial death and by the power of his Spirit he secures her voluntary submission by an act of sovereign power.

Notice, again, wherever he is Savior, verse 23, he is also head. Wherever he is head, he is Savior. Look at the language.

“As Christ also is the head of the church, being himself the saviour of the body.”¹⁵

Where he is head he is savior. Where he is savior he is head.

If there were no other text in the Bible to smash this notion, you can trust Christ and his sacrificial death and be ready to go to heaven, but not submit to Christ as Lord and

¹² Ephesians 5:23.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ephesians 5:23-24.

¹⁵ Ephesians 5:23.

therefore not be ready to live. This text alone smashes it. Where he is Savior he is head and where he is truly head he is also Savior.

Now how does that come to pass? If we know anything of our Bibles we know it doesn't come to pass because we flip some switch in ourselves. The Bible's picture of our native condition in relationship to the government and authority of God in Christ is not a pretty one.

“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to [what?] his own way.”¹⁶

We are all committed to a course of self will, self fulfillment, self government. I want to do my own thing my own way. I want to dance to my own tune. I want to march to the beat of my own drum. Who is the Lord that I should obey him? The language of Pharaoh.

Again, the Scripture says in Romans 8:7, the carnal mind, that is the mindset with which you were born and I was born, devoid of the Holy Spirit, “The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.”¹⁷

When my kids were young and they would come up and say, “Daddy, can I do this?”

I would say, “Yes, you look like you have the physical ability.”

And they would start to run off.

“But where are you going?”

“Well you told me I could do that.”

I said, “No, no. You said, ‘Can I?’ And I said, ‘Yes, you seem to have the ability.’”

“Oh, you know what I mean, dad. May I?”

I said, “Well, then use the right word.”

Can and may mean two different things. And when the Scripture says the carnal mind is enmity against God it is not subject to the law of God neither indeed it can it be, it means there is nothing within the carnal mind itself that can change its disposition of rebellion. That is our state.

2 Corinthians 5:15. “That they that live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him who for their sakes died and rose again.”¹⁸

¹⁶ Isaiah 53:6.

¹⁷ Romans 8:7.

¹⁸ 2 Corinthians 5:15.

We want to be our own head, our own master, our own Lord. And when Christ is out to get a bride, what does he do? He not only woos and he wins out of the mass of lost, helpless, hell deserving humanity a people who come to see the beauty and the glory of his sacrificial death on their behalf, but the Holy Spirit subdues that native rebellion and brings them into fellowship with Christ's death, burial and resurrection in such a way that they die to the dominion of sin. They die to a self willed, self governing life.

The Scripture makes it abundantly clear that when Christ wins people to himself to make them part of his bride, he secures their voluntary submission to his government by an act of sovereign power.

Now where is that clearly taught in the Scripture? Well, you remember on the eve of the Lord's death he instituted the Lord's Supper and he said, "This is the new covenant in my blood. I shed my blood to effect and bring to pass the blessings promised in the new covenant."

And what are they? Well, let's turn to Ezekiel 36 just briefly to see one of the central blessings of the new covenant. Ezekiel chapter 36. And look at verses 26 and 27.

A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep mine ordinances, and do them.¹⁹

God says when he brings the blessings of the new covenant to us he not only cleanses away all of our sins and says, "Their sins and iniquities I will remember no more," he said, "I will give them a heart transplant." And the characteristic of that heart of flesh is this. I will put my spirit within that heart and cause you to walk in my statutes. I will give you a powerful internal delight in obeying me. I will give you an inclination to plant your feet in my precepts. I will give you a delight in following me. Yes, there still will be remaining sin and there will be a wily devil and a seductive world. But if I have given you the blessings of the new covenant, I am causing you to delight in my statutes, to keep my judgments, to be one of my obedient subjects."

That is why Jesus could say in John 10:27:

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they [are following] me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand.²⁰

What is the two fold mark of his sheep? They have open ears to the voice of Christ and they have obedient feet to the Word of Christ.

¹⁹ Ezekiel 36:26-27.

²⁰ John 10:27-28.

They hear my voice and they are following me.

As the Church is subject to Christ, that subjection is not theoretical. It is not positional. It is just as real when you put your feet on the floor tomorrow morning. Whose will are you going to follow, the will of the one you say is your Savior or your own stinking notion of what life is all about?

That is why John could say, “And hereby we do know that we know him, if we [are keeping] his commandments.”²¹

Hebrews 5:8. Being made perfect he, Jesus, became the author of eternal salvation unto all that are obeying him.

And in Hebrews eight and Hebrews 10 the writer quotes the new covenant passages out of the Old Testament and he weaves together those two realities, the full pardon of sin and a heart committed to walk in the ways of God.

So I ask you. Are you part of Christ’s bride? Christ’s bride is made up of a people who has not only been won and wooed to trust in Christ’s sacrificial death, but by the Holy Spirit they have voluntarily come to a place of submission to Christ as their Lord and as their master and their lives demonstrate that that submission is real.

Is that you? Is that you? If that is not you, you are not part of his bride. He doesn’t have a self-willed, bossy—I could use a lot of other words—bride. But he has got a bride that is subject to him.

As the Church is subject to Christ he is head and savior. And if he is not your head, he is not your Savior.

But then, thirdly, if Christ is out to get a bride, he not only woos and wins his bride by bringing her to trust in his sacrificial death, he not only secures the voluntary submission of his bride by an act of sovereign power, but look at our passage. Christ makes his bride suitable for marriage to himself by making his bride holy like himself.

You got that? Christ makes his bride suitable for marriage to himself by making her holy like himself.

Look at the passage again, verse 25.

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it.”²²

Now notice three “thats.”

²¹ 1 John 2:3.

²² Ephesians 5:25.

In order that, why did he give up himself for the Church? The emphasis here falls not upon his death turning away the wrath of God, his propitiation for sin turning away the wrath of God. That is taught in many places, but it is not the emphasis here. Christ gave himself up for it to what end? In order that he might sanctify it having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word, in order that he might present the Church, his bride to himself a glorious church not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but in order that it should be holy and without blemish.

Look at those words. In order that he might sanctify, cleanse, wash, present it to himself without spot or blemish.

Think for a moment. What was the condition of his bride when he loved her and gave himself for her? She was besmirched, defiled, filthy, unfit to be his bride. If ever there would be an unequal yoke, it is the holy Son of God uniting himself to the likes of you and me.

God says to us, “ Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers: for what fellowship have righteousness and iniquity? or what communion hath light with darkness?”²³

Think of it. How can Christ take us into his intimate love relationship as his bride when we are defiled and filthy and besmirched with our sins? Because he died to do something about that condition. He gave himself up for us to sanctify, to cleanse, to wash. And when he is done, what will we look like?

Look at the passage. That it should be holy and without blemish, no spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

Where did this words occur earlier in the epistle? Well, look in chapter one and verse four.

“Even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish before him in love.”²⁴

He chose us with the intention that when he was done his work for us and in us, we would be nothing less than replicas of the moral perfection of Jesus.

“For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.”²⁵

So when we come in Revelation 19 to that picture of the marriage supper of the Lamb, there the Lord has a bride that he can enter into the consummate delight of his spiritual intimacy with them because they have been made just like him.

²³ 2 Corinthians 6:14.

²⁴ Ephesians 1:4.

²⁵ Romans 8:29.

“Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is.”²⁶

Now listen carefully. Though God completes that work when he gives us resurrected bodies and if we pass through the door of death we will join the company of spirits of just men made perfect, but listen to me carefully. When God is preparing that bride for his Son that will look perfectly like his Son at the marriage supper of the Lamb, he doesn't wait to begin the work when they die. He starts it when he saves them so that in every genuine work of grace the dominion of sin is broken and the heart of the truly converted man or woman, boy or girl, is set upon being holy as he is holy. And when the dominion of sin is broken and we are put, as it were, into the narrow way of gospel holiness, we then progress in the pursuit of that way as you heard so clearly and biblically in recent days in that four message series on sanctification and with those who are in the way God promises that he will complete the work. For many of us half of it when our spirits pass into his presence through the door of death, the other half when the Lord returns and raises our bodies and gives us bodies like unto the body of his glory.

I want you to turn to Romans six and verse 22 to show how all of this is compacted into one verse.

“But now,” speaking to Roman Christians, “[having been] made free from sin and become [slaves] to God...”²⁷ That is a description of their conversion. He says, “When you were converted you were made free from the dominion of sin. You were made free from the willful, deliberate servitude to sin and you became what? Bond slaves to God. You acknowledged that God owns me. He bought me with the blood of his Son. He has every right to govern my thought, my words, my relationships, my entertainment, how I spend my money, where I go, where I don't go. I am a slave of the living God.

He says that is true of every true Christian. And if you are not a slave of God in Christ you are not part of the body of Christ. You are still a rebel standing out in defiance of the living God.

But now if the change is real, look at the text.

“But now being made free from sin, and become [slaves] to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness,”²⁸ or sanctification.

The drift and the tenor and the whole pattern of your life is a life unto sanctification. Yes, you still sin. There are days of coldness. There are periods of barrenness. Yes. But the overall pattern is what? You are having your fruit unto holiness and the end, eternal life for whom? Those that are having their fruit unto holiness. And the only ones that can have their fruit unto holiness are those who have been made free from sin and become the

²⁶ 1 John 3:2.

²⁷ Romans 6:22.

²⁸ Ibid.

slaves of God. But if you have been made free from sin and become a slave of God, you are having your fruit unto holiness and the end will, indeed, be eternal life.

You sit here tonight and you say, “Oh, yes, I believe I am part of the bride of Christ.”

Let me ask you. Is there evidence that God, the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit are at work in you making you fit to be part of that bride that will have no spot and no wrinkle or any such thing?

You see, one of the marks of being truly converted is God stamps in your heart, when he saves you, a passion to be now what you will be then. And that is what is so frustrating because you want to be perfect.

You say, “But if I could only have one day when I didn’t sin that would be heaven on earth.”

Isn’t that true?

He stamps you with a passion to be now what you will be then. Well, he has not promised to give you the grace to be now what he will make you then. So as old rabbi Duncan said, “Nobody is perfect.” He says, “Those words are the pillow of the hypocrite. They are a bed of nails to a true Christian.”

I am not perfect, but God knows I want to be. And God giving me grace, I strive. Trusting Christ, looking constantly for the grace of the Holy Spirit, Christ is gathering a bride to himself not of people who are indifferent to the very purpose for which he died. He died in order that he might sanctify and cleanse and wash and present a bride to himself without spot or wrinkle. If that is not your passion, you are not part of the bride. Face it.

But the day of judgment will strip you of your shallow profession and your empty notions that you are a Christian.

How does Christ get a bride? We have looked at the passage. He gets that bride by wooing and winning her, by opening to the guilty sinner the glory of the meaning of his death that he, the sinless one, so loved us to lay down his life and to die under the wrath of almighty God that our sins might be justly pardoned and righteously forgiven. And that woos us and draws us to trust in this crucified, risen Savior.

And in that drawing the Holy Spirit does a second thing. He brings us to voluntary submission to our heavenly bridegroom. As the Church is subject to Christ he is head as well as Savior. And then he makes us suitable for marriage to Jesus by beginning to make us like Jesus. And that becomes the passion of our hearts. We grow in the knowledge of Christ, in conformity to Christ in the use of the means that Christ has given to us.

I ask you. That is how Christ gets a bride. Are you a part of that bride? Do you fit the description of those whom Ephesians five, whom the Holy Spirit describes as constituting Christ's bride? If not, I beg of you. Face your true condition. Go to God and cry for mercy. And for the number of you that I believe have solid grounds to sit here and say... and you have said it as I have preached.

"Oh God, that is what you did for me. I walked down in front of the cross for years and Christ crucified meant nothing to me. But by your grace the Holy Spirit opened my eyes to see my desperate need of that for which Christ's cross was the exact and suitable remedy. Thank you, Jesus, for wooing me, by showing me the meaning of your death."

And in that wooing you realized how stupid and how utterly irrational it was to run your own life. And you said, in principle, "Here, Lord, I give myself away. It is all that I can do."

And you sit here tonight gladly owning that Christ is your master. When you sing 294 I think it is, "Jesus, master whose I am, purchased thine alone to be by thy blood, oh spotless Lamb, shed so willing for me. Let my heart be all thine own."

That is where you are at. That is where you are at. And your greatest struggle is with your sin and with your dullness and with your waywardness and you long to be more like Christ day by day.

Take courage, my friend, you will be sitting with him at the marriage supper of the Lamb. That is the people he has won to himself and he is going to keep you. He keeps old 76 year old men. He keeps them by his grace. And one day we will sit down. Read it tonight before you go to bed, Revelation 19, the marriage supper of the Lamb. Not only dressed in robes of imputed righteousness, but it describes the beautiful dress of the saints as their righteous acts.

In other words, they were a people pursuing holiness and they are found at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Let's pray.

Oh Father, we thank you for your Word. Oh, how we praise you for the clarity of that Word. Seal it to every heart gathered here tonight. Thank you for helping your servant pray that the last day will reveal that that word did not return to you void, but prospered in that to which you sent it. Hear us in Jesus' name we plead. Amen.