

the wedding of seth and alexa, 6.20.04

PRELUDE (Andrew, Andrea, Erin)

Be Thou My Vision

Groomsmen, Seth, and Pastors assemble on-stage
Bridal party prepares for processional

WELCOME: *The Tale We're All Caught In* (Jerry)

Friends, we have been invited by Seth and Alexa not simply to be part of their wedding today, but to enter into the world of “Story,” realizing that this wedding is happening within a much bigger context, a context that gives meaning to this ceremony, a context that thinking “mythically” enables us to understand more clearly.

C.S. Lewis wrote that the value of great stories is that they restore a rich significance to the mundane things of life we're all-too-familiar with. The central belief of our times is that there is no overarching story. Our own small stories, the random days of our lives, are all we have. Tragedy still brings us to tears, heroism still lifts our hearts—weddings still stir us deeply—but there is no context for any of it.

But, as Frederick Buechner writes in *Telling the Truth: The Gospel as a Fairy Tale*: This is a world of magic and mystery, of deep darkness and flickering starlight. It is a world where terrible things happen and wonderful things too. It is a world where goodness is pitted against evil, love against hate, order against chaos, in a great struggle where often it is hard to be sure who belongs to which side because appearances are endlessly deceptive. Yet for all its confusion and wildness, it is a world where the battle goes ultimately to the good, who live happily ever after, and where in the long run everybody, good and evil alike, becomes known by his true name.

This is THE story. This is the story that not only happened “once upon a time” but has kept on happening ever since and is happening still. This is the story into which Seth and Alexa have been swept, *together*.

PROCESSIONAL (Andrew, Andrea, Erin)

Lion of Judah

Sam, Hannab, Bethany, Rachel, Marissa, Allie

Bí Thusa Mo Shúile

Alexa and Father

PRESENTATION OF THE BRIDE

Jeff: Who has prepared Alexa to journey faithfully beside Seth, wherever their road might lead?

Father: Her mother and I have. *Father is seated.*

CHARGE TO THE COUPLE (Jeff)

EXCHANGE OF VOWS

Jeff: Do you, Seth, take Alexa to be your wedded wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in good times and bad times, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death do you part, according to God's holy ordinance.

Seth: I do. Alexa, I love you, by the grace of God I love you, and I will love you all of my life.

Jeff: Do you, Alexa, take Seth to be your wedded husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in good times and bad times, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death do you part, according to God's holy ordinance?

Alexa: I do. Seth, I love you, by the grace of God I love you, and I will love you all of my life.

READING: *Created for Glory* (Jerry)

As characters within God’s story, there is more to you, Seth and Alexa, than meets the eye. You are bearers of God’s image, and in a most surprising place—in your gender. Remember Genesis 1:27: “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them.”

God wanted to show something of his strength. Is he not a great warrior? Has he not performed the daring rescue of his beloved? And this is why he gave us the sculpture that is man. Men bear the image of God in their dangerous, yet inviting strength.

Women, too, bear the image of God, but in a much different way. Is not God a being of great mystery and beauty? Is there not something tender and alluring about the essence of the Divine? And this is why he gave us the sculpture that is woman.

God endowed you with a glory when he created you, a glory so deep and mythic that the rest of creation pales in comparison. A glory unique to you, but marred by sin. Somewhere deep inside you’ve been looking for that glory ever since: A man wants to know that he is truly a man, that he could be brave; he longs to know that he is a warrior; and all his life he wonders, “Have I got what it takes?” A woman wants to know that she is truly a woman, that she is beautiful; she longs to know that she is captivating; and all her life she wonders, “Do I have a beauty to offer?” You remember faintly that you were once more than what you have become.

But your story didn’t start with sin, and it does not end with sin. It ends with glory restored. It is not prideful to embrace the truth that you are bearers of the image of God. Paul says it brings glory to God. You walk in humility because you know that it is a glory bestowed.

Seth and Alexa, do you remember the vision that first “being in love” gave you of each other?

You found no fault in the other. Is it blindness to see a sinful man or woman thus—the way Solomon saw his beloved, when he wrote,

“Behold, thou art fair, my love, there is no spot in thee?”

No, as Elisabeth Elliot wrote, instead consider this a special gift of vision, the power to see for a little while what God meant when He made that person. You’ll find, especially after marriage, that this person is in fact a sinner, and has flaws you never suspected. But try to remember then what the vision showed you. Thank God for it, and *treat each other with the sort of respect due one who will some day manifest most gloriously the image of God.*

EXCHANGE OF RINGS

Jeff: Seth, who is this woman? What is your pledge to her?

Seth: You, Alexa, bear the image of God’s beauty. With this ring, I pledge to always affirm and to always look for that beauty, respecting you as one made in the image of God.

Jeff: Alexa, who is this man? What is your promise to him?

Alexa: You, Seth, bear the image of God’s strength. With this ring, I pledge to always affirm and to always trust in that strength, respecting you as one made in the image of God.

OFFICIAL PRONOUNCEMENT (Jeff)

Now, by the authority committed unto me as a Minister of the Gospel, I declare that Seth and Alexa are husband and wife, according to the ordinance of God and the law of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

May you shine with unveiled faces, reflecting the knowledge of Christ, for you are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory.

You may now kiss your bride’s unveiled face.

LIFTING OF VEIL AND KISS

Jeff: I now present to you Mr. and Mrs. Seth Andrzejewski.

LIGHTING OF THE UNITY CANDLE

When the Love is Right

READING: *A World at War* (Jerry)

Seth and Alexa, the world in which you will carry your love is a world at war.

You have an Enemy, the Enemy who rebelled against God and is set on destroying His works. This Enemy is determined to prevent you from becoming who God designed you to be. He is bent on destroying your trust in God's goodness. He would love to dash your big dreams and to prevent you from getting your hopes up. *And he would begin by blinding you altogether to the truth that this world is at war—for unless you recognize this war as the context of your days, you will misinterpret and misunderstand life, suffering, and God's ultimate, loving plan.*

So, as Ephesians 5:14-16 says, "Wake up... Be very careful how you live...because the days are evil." Keep watch, for there is a God-given glory to your lives and love that your Enemy fears, and he is hell-bent on destroying that glory before you act on it.

The Enemy fears you, Seth and Alexa. He fears what you may become.

CHARGE TO THE FELLOWSHIP (Jeff)

Jeff: But you cannot fight this battle alone. God *has* chosen you for one another. Evil *will* hunt you. *And so a fellowship must protect you.*

Who will go with Seth and Alexa? Who will fight for them?

Andrew: We will.

Rachel: Speaking on behalf of the bride and groom's friends and family...

Andrew: ...for as long as our part in their story lasts.

Jeff: Will you then please pray for the bride and the groom, on behalf of the fellowship gathered here?

PRAYER FOR THE NEWLYWEDS (Rachel and Andrew)

CLOSING WORDS: *The King Will Return* (Jerry)

A story is only as good as its ending. If for all practical purposes we believe that this life and even the greatness of earthly love is our best shot at happiness, we will place on this world a burden that it was never meant to bear.

This a world at war, and even the best human life is still full of unspeakable sadness. Even if we manage to escape some of the bigger tragedies (and few of us do), life rarely meets our expectations. When we do get a taste of what we really long for, it never lasts. Every vacation eventually comes to an end. Friends move away. Even the most blissful human love leaves the best of us wanting.

We go through life constantly reaching for something more. But it is this "reaching" that gives us hope, for, as C.S. Lewis writes, "Creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for those desires exists. If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world. Probably earthly pleasures were never meant to satisfy it, but only to arouse it, to suggest the real thing."

We long to be complete. We long for the war to be over. We long for a Happily Ever After. Our hearts reach for these, and God has promised all of them, saying, "Behold! I will make all things new." The ending is written on our hearts. And because we know the ending, we can be free to enjoy the story. Because we know the ending, we can truly live, today, free to enjoy this life and love for what it is. It is a shadow—and sometimes a beautiful one, but only a shadow—of something even greater and better that is yet to come.

So let today be, as God intended it to be, a shadow of the day our King returns, bringing the war to an end, and the "engagement" of Christ to the church to consummation. The setting for that day will be a great party—the wedding feast of the King.

There will be dancing. There will be feasting. It will be THE celebration.

BENEDICTION

Alexa: “The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!”

Seth: And let him who hears say, “Come!”

Jeff: He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming soon.” Amen.
Come, Lord Jesus.”

PRAYER AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

PHOTOGRAPH

CLOSING SONG AND RECEPTIONAL

God's Romance

Alexa and Seth

Rachel and Andrew

Bethany and Daniel

Sam and David

Hannah and Zach