



new life fellowship

Sermon Title: Church: The Church as the Bride of Christ

Speaker: Jacqueline Snape, Executive Pastor

Scripture: John 2:1, 6-11

On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there.

Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.

Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim.

Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet."

They did so, and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside and said, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now."

What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

John 2:1, 6-11(NIV)

Sermon Outline:

In this passage of scripture, John talks about the church, the bride, belonging to the bridegroom. When John wrote this, marriage was a cultural event which had huge value. It was a symbol of continuity, people needed to know their family would continue. To be a bride was to be a gift to a family. There was a certain hope for children, hope that your family would continue from generation to generation. Everybody knew the importance of a wedding.

For us today, this bridal imagery can feel a little outdated. The church is not about being married, not about being single and not about any individual. The Church, the Bride of Christ, is a **beloved** community called to mirror God in the giving and receiving of love for the sake of the world.

The church is not an event, a location, a product or an experience. The Church is God's passion, His Beloved. The Church is the Bride of Christ.

Sometimes we don't experience a feeling of being God's beloved and we struggle with the way God's sees us. Maybe you are struggling during this pandemic and social distancing is creating another layer to keep you away from other people. Are you afraid for your own health and dealing with financial uncertainty? Are you experiencing feelings of despair and struggling to see how you are His **beloved**? At times it is much easier for us to see our family, friends and neighbors as the beloved, than it is to see ourselves as beloved.

At times we can fall for a false or counterfeit identity. Some brides are **given**, doing what was in their family's best interest, having no say or choice and feeling a sense of powerlessness. Some brides are **offered** to fulfill a debt, becoming part of a transaction for the benefit of their father and family, existing only as a commodity.

We are not forced into a relationship with Jesus Christ, nor are we being used to fulfill a debt. Jesus Christ fulfilled the debt. The Church of Jesus Christ is the **beloved** – we are **chosen** and rescued by the infinite and extravagant love of God.

We belong to Christ as he belongs to the Trinity. It is sealed by the giving and exchanging of love, which is free and freeing for us. God lives in the vulnerability we offer Him. When you open yourself up and become vulnerable, you have the opportunity for God come in and transform your life.

Some steps you can take moving forward:

- Be in community of trusted people. If you are not already part of a small group, look to join one.
- Find growth opportunities. Look for and attend upcoming classes and workshops.
- Step out in service. When you accept you are Chosen and God's beloved, you can serve others.

Sermon Summary:

This Sunday Executive Pastor Jackie Snape continues our summer sermon series Church: Being a Community of Jesus Followers. Today Pastor Jackie's sermon focuses on the church as the Bride of Christ and what it means for us today.

Sermon Questions:

1. How does this scripture connect for you the topic that was discussed today? What words resonate with you? Why?
2. In your family of origin how were weddings celebrated, what was expected, who was the focus on? What issues did you see arise at these events?
3. When you first became a Christian, what were your expectations of the Church, what did you view it as? How was that changed?
4. What, if any, difficulties do you have in seeing yourself as the bride of Christ? How does that view play out in your role/commitment to your church? Do you ever feel offered/given, forced into something as opposed to being chosen?
5. How are you living and where have you allowed yourself to be seen as less than? Are you living like a given bride – where you have no choices and are living by your family scripts? Or are you living like an offered bride – where you are in bondage because of the decisions of others?
6. What ways are you ready to manifest the truth that you are the Beloved of Christ? Joining a small group of trusted believers to remain accountable? Seek out enriching programs to deepen your love for Christ? Finding ways to serve in order to mirror God's love to the world?