

Revelation 19:4-9

Dear Friends in Christ,

What is the best wedding ever? Your answer might depend on who is asking the question. If your spouse is asking the question, you probably should answer, "why, it was ours dear." If a group of women are talking with each other, someone might say that it was Lady Dianna's, or one of the other royal weddings with all their pomp and circumstance. But there is a wedding that will surpass every other wedding. It's a wedding that John tells us about in this portion of his Revelation. It's a wedding that is so greatly anticipated that when the angels and the saints in glory hear that it is about to take place they break forth in a cheer that **sounds like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder** all at once. It's the wedding of the Lamb, the one who was slain but is risen victorious and has come for his bride.

Who is invited to this wedding? Jesus has made it clear that he wants everyone to be invited. He wants his gospel invitation preached to all creation and to every nation. He wants his wedding banquet filled. He's not picky about who is there. As he pictured for us in his parables, when there is still room in his banquet hall he has his servants go out to **the highways and byways and invite the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame; the good and the bad.**

Unfortunately, some don't consider his invitation very important. They don't view his wedding as the best wedding ever. They think that they have more important, more pressing matters to attend to. Or maybe they hear that the poor and lame, the good and the bad have been invited and they don't think they want to be a part of that kind of crowd.

But, John sees that there are many who have humbly received the invitation to the Lamb's wedding supper. They are both **great and small**. They are little babies who have been brought to faith through baptism. They are people like the beggar Lazarus who the rich man and his brothers saw often, but tried to ignore; the lowly beggar who trusted God's promise of a savior and was taken to Abraham's bosom. They are great men like Daniel who served as an advisor to some of the most powerful kings who ever lived, and Joseph who was second in power only to Pharaoh. They are women like Mary who sat at Jesus' feet to listen to his word, or Esther who was a queen yet risked her position and her life because of the promise of the savior and to save her people. They are all those who no matter what their age, no matter how weak or powerful, have recognized that they were sinners wearied and burdened with the guilt of their sins so that they rejoiced when they heard Jesus invitation, **come to me and I will give you rest.** They are those who heard the good news that Jesus lived and died and rose again to be their Savior and couldn't help but say, **Amen! Hallelujah!** Thank you Lord for saving me!

Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb! Blessed are those who have heard the gospel invitation and who have been enabled by the Holy Spirit to receive it in humble faith, with joy and thanksgiving.

Who will be at this best wedding ever? All who believe that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. All who believe that Jesus is the Lamb who was slain for their sins and who has risen from the dead so that they too will live. All who have died trusting in Jesus and all of us who are still living and believing in Jesus; the Holy Christian Church, the Communion of Saints.

We know who the groom is, Jesus the Lamb. We know who is going to be at the greatest wedding ever. But who is the bride?

John tells us that the **bride has made herself ready**. She is like the wise virgins in Jesus' parable in our gospel reading. Here's where John's illustrations might get us a little mixed up, because, as is the case throughout the Bible, the bride represents the church, all those who believe in Jesus as their savior, so the bride and those invited to the wedding are really the same. The bride has been making herself ready by reading and studying the Scripture and receiving the Sacrament. She has studied the signs he has told her to watch for that will indicate that he will be coming soon. Although she doesn't know exactly when he is going to come to get her and escort her to the wedding banquet and the home he has prepared for her, she is ready by faith. She is not disheartened by those who tell her to give up hope; that he's never going to come to get her. She is not distracted by all the things the world has to offer; she is willing to leave it all behind. She is **sure of what she hopes for and certain of what she does not see**. She has rejected all other suitors and remained faithful to her betrothed.

The thing that has strengthened her to remain faithful while she waits is her beautiful dress. She didn't purchase it; she never could have afforded such a perfect gown. It was a gift given to her by her groom. John describes it for us as **fine linen, bright and clean**. He explains that fine linen stands for the **righteous acts of the saints**, or a better translation is the righteousness or acquittal of the saints. It's the gown that Isaiah describes when he says, **I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels**. It's what Paul describes when he says, **Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless**. It's a sin-stained robe that has been washed and made bright and clean in the blood of the lamb who was slain.

You are the bride of Christ. Whenever you are bothered by the thought that you are not worthy to be his bride; whenever you are tempted to think that because of the ugliness of your sins and shortcomings he should leave you standing at the altar; stop and take a look at your dress. Remember he has given you a garment to wear to the best wedding ever. It covers the ugliness of your sins so that you look bright and clean. He has given you his righteousness so that you have the perfection that you need to be his bride and to live in God's presence for all eternity.

Why is this the best wedding ever? There's nothing that can spoil the honeymoon, it's truly "happily ever after."

The day of the greatest wedding ever will not come until every enemy is destroyed. In the previous chapters of Revelation John has seen that the beasts and the false prophets have been destroyed. The beasts represent those in the church and in the government who have persecuted the bride, the true believers. They are gone. The Antichrist has been revealed. Satan himself is defeated and thrown into the lake of burning sulfur. And now, the last enemy, death, is defeated for when the bridegroom comes to get his bride, the **trumpet will sound and all the dead will be raised**. He will bring with him all who have died in trusting in him and all those still alive will be changed in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, and will join those he has brought with him for a joyous reunion in the air. That's why John hears all the saints and angels shouting Hallelujah—because every enemy has been defeated, the time for the wedding has

come and there will be a true happily ever after. **No more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things**, ruled by sin and Satan, is gone for good.

As we think of what Jesus has done for us; as we think of what our fellow believers who have died in faith are already enjoying; we can't help but say, **Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God. Praise our God all you his servants you who fear him both small and great! Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!**