

Jesu Juva

“Built on the Rock”

Text: Luke 6:46-49; Ephesians 5:20-33; Proverbs 31:10-31

(Note: The couple wanted to use Divine Service Setting Three as the liturgy within which their wedding would take place. Hence the references below to the liturgy.)

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Grace and Scott,

You've set quite a tone for your marriage today. You invited all these people here to celebrate this joyous day, this day your mothers (and maybe your fathers) have been waiting for a long time now, your being joined as one as husband and wife, you Grace all beautiful and radiant, and you Scott all handsome and debonair, and a big party planned afterward . . . and so you wanted this day, this joy, this service started out with these words: *Let us confess our sins. . . . I, a poor, miserable sinner.* Who does that?

But I cannot think of more appropriate words. Because these are words that are not just for the *beginning* of your lives together, but for every day of your lives together. For if there is one thing you will need every day of your lives as husband and wife, it is not love - it is more than that - it is forgiveness. Love is what most people think is the foundation of marriage, and that's why so many marriages crumble and fall apart. For trying to hold onto the feelings of love that you feel today - the thumping in your chest when you first saw Grace in her dress, or when you speak your vows to one another - trying to hold onto those feelings is like trying to hold onto sand; it just runs through your fingers. But when your marriage is built on forgiveness, then you are built on that rock we heard of today in St. Luke. The rock of Christ. And then your marriage is about His love, not your love. Then it's about what He does, not what you do. For what you do will not last, but what He does will.

Let us confess our sins. . . . I, a poor, miserable sinner.

When you said those words today, you were agreeing with the words of Jesus we heard from St. Luke, when Jesus said: ***Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' but not do what I tell you?*** And since today is about marriage, we'll focus on what Jesus told you in the reading from Ephesians: ***Wives, submit to your husbands, as to the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.*** In just a few moments you will, in fact, promise to do those very things. Before all these people and before your Lord you're going to say: *Yes, I will!* And I do not doubt your sincerity at all. Not one little bit. But I know this too: *you won't.* For you can't. Oh, there will be good

times and times when you do. But there will also be those times when your selfish, sinful nature drags you down and as much as you want to, you're going to lash out instead. You'll let each other down. You'll expect too much from the other and want to give too little of yourself. You will *be* that *poor, miserable sinner*.

But these verses in Ephesians speak something else for you today, too. Another reality. For what Paul is really talking about there is not "Marriage 101," but forgiveness. For **why** did Christ come and give Himself for His bride? **To forgive her**. Or in Paul's words: ***To sanctify her, to wash and cleanse her, that she might be without spot or wrinkle or any such thing***. And why does the church submit to Christ? **To receive that forgiveness**. For when we all spoke those words together earlier: *I, a poor, miserable sinner*, what were we doing? **Submitting to Christ**. And what did we hear in return? *I forgive you all your sins*.

Just as we as Christians cannot hear that enough, so you too, as husband and wife, cannot speak that enough and cannot hear that enough. And so here is true headship in the family for you Scott. To be the first to repent and the first to forgive, and Grace submits by following your lead in repenting and forgiving. No lordship here. You have a Lord, who laid down His life for you on the cross. Now it is ***submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ***. That as we just sang (LSB #575), the *hope* for your marriage *is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness*.

And in talking about that, the house built upon the rock of Christ, St. Luke used the word *flood* - ***when a flood arose against that house***. And even if you've never been in or experienced a flood, our televisions are often filled with pictures of them and their devastation. *And sometimes marriages get flooded* - when richer becomes poorer, when health turns to sickness, and when struggles and trials and difficulties make for a whole lotta worse and not a whole lotta better.

But at just such times, remember that *other* flood that claimed you each first - the flood of your baptism. That day when the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit gave you a life that nothing in this world can take away. When Christ took you as His bride and washed you clean in His blood and forgiveness and said *you are mine*. That heavenly flood is more powerful than any flood this world can bring against you or your marriage. And so it is appropriate that in this place where the new life of baptism is given, your new life as husband and wife also begin here - on that rock that no flood can wash away.

But not only *begin* here, but your new life as husband and wife be sustained here, receiving again and again that forgiveness of Christ you so desperately need, and that you will give to each other; and receiving again and again, side by side, the Body and Blood of Christ. That you be not alone in this. That it be not up to you. But that your marriage be *built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness*.

And so today we rejoice that the God who baptized you into His Son is the God who has brought you together and is uniting you as one flesh, to stand on that rock together. Gift after gift after wonderful gift.

And while I know a lot of women who do not want those verses from Proverbs read in their wedding because they seem like an impossible standard to live up to, you Grace are and *will be* such a wife to Scott. Not because you're perfect or will do all those things spoken of there, but because the Lord gave you to him and you are his bride, *cleansed by Christ and radiant, without any spot or wrinkle*. Perfect for Him and He for you. Built on the rock of Christ and His forgiveness. And on that foundation, you cannot be moved.

Let us confess our sins. . . . I, a poor, miserable sinner.

Say those words to each other every night before you go to bed, and you'll remember not only this day and its joy, and speak the joy of forgiveness to one another, you'll remember the even greater joy that awaits both of you - the marriage feast of your Saviour, in heaven, which will never end. The vows you will speak today are *until death parts you*. But the vow your Saviour made to you was *to smash death under His feet, for you*. And He did, rising from the dead. That not even death be able to part you from Him. Ever.

That's the confidence and life you have as Christians. That's the confidence and life you have as husband and wife. That confidence and life of that Rock that cannot be moved.

So I guess we should get on with it! But know this: that joy that is yours today is nothing compared to the joy Christ your Saviour has in you as His Bride. That joy He gives and shares with you now, and has stored up for you forever. So God bless you now as you begin your life together in Christ, on Christ, and with Christ.

In the Name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.