

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her... (Ephesians 5:25)

People have many different expectations, assumptions, and plans when it comes to weddings and marriage. Part of that is local custom. But, I imagine that the biggest contributor to the wide and varied ideas and practices concerning marriage comes from our culture. What we see on television, read in books, and especially now are saturated with on social media have all contributed to the ever-changing look and feel of weddings – not to mention the constant increase in stress to make the day of the wedding ‘perfect’. This month, then, I would like to consider some important truths about weddings and marriage, sharing with you some nuggets from the *Lutheran Service Book Agenda* and, more importantly, some truth from Scripture, as we use June of our 150th year celebration to commemorate weddings!

1. Most people assume that weddings are something that should happen during the summer. There are practical reasons for this, of course – weather, summer break from school, etc. But, you may have noticed, if you pay attention to the prayers on Sunday morning, that every month of the calendar year includes at least one wedding anniversary in our congregation. That’s because **a couple can get married any time of the year!** Well, almost. “Because of the solemn character of Holy Week, it is inappropriate to schedule a marriage during that time.” Otherwise, it’s a good idea to get married as soon as the couple is ready to get married and not wait until it’s “most convenient.” In fact, if you ask Christians from generations past, you’ll find out that there are plenty of instances of couples simply coming to the parsonage to get married – and then going about the rest of their day of chores and work!

2. Believe it or not, the ceremony of Holy Matrimony does not have to be a separate event on a Friday or Saturday (though it can be any day of the week, of course). **The ceremony can be a part of the Divine Service on Sunday morning.** “If the rite is used at the beginning of the Divine Service, it comes before the Introit, Psalm, or Entrance Hymn.” This was, at one time, not unusual, even if it’s almost unheard of today. But, getting married is a community event, particularly for those in the Church, and having the ceremony during a Sunday service reinforces that fact very well!

3. Most people know that **marriage itself is a community contract** at its core, which means it can be done simply by going to the courthouse to see a government official. Some people, though, see this as unromantic and won’t give doing this a second thought. However, getting married first by a judge and then having a service of the Blessing of Civil Marriage in no way should take away from the day of the wedding being ‘special’. The Blessing service in the Church can look just like the service of Holy Matrimony with all the trappings, decorations, and dress, because the couple is still calling on God’s name and blessing!

4. A wedding is no ordinary gathering, raucous party, or sappy ceremony. **The Rites of Matrimony are worship services of the Church.** “As in all worship in the house of God, the rite of Holy Matrimony invokes the presence and blessing of God. Therefore, it should avoid triteness and empty sentimentality. Music selected for this rite should embody high standards of quality and...should reflect the praise of God and His steadfast love in Christ as the foundation and model for marriage.”

5. When many people think of marriage, they think of the wedding day. Flowers, venue, dresses, suits, food, music, photography, videography, registration, gifts, invitations – it’s all enough to give anyone a panic attack! But, weddings need not be like this. They can be simple and short, with far less planning (and far, far less money!) than most people expect. **Marriage, after all, is not ultimately about the wedding day**, but about the promise of the couple to live life together “until death parts us.” In fact, marriage isn’t ultimately about the couple at all, but it’s a reflection of Christ and the Church (Ephesians 5:22–33). Whether you’re planning to get married, are married, attending a wedding, or just a part of a Christian congregation, our actions in regards to wedding and marriage should always reflect this reality!

-Pastor Squire

“Make their love a living picture showing how You loved Your bride: when You gave Yourself to cleanse her, when for her You bled and died. Jesus, You have made her holy, pure and fair her radiant train; to Yourself, Your Church presenting, without wrinkle, spot, or stain.”

(“Gracious Savior, Grant Your Blessing” *LSB 860*, v. 4)