

WEDDING HOMILY FOR
JONATHAN TRUE & ALYSSA GALLAGHER
KENTON SPRATT
YEP KANUM PARK, COLVILLE, WA
A.D. AUGUST 27, 2011



Jonathan and Alyssa, it is a genuine honor for me to be here with your family and friends and to oversee your exchange of vows this morning. But, I think, we may have to offer an apology to our society for what's happening today (and I don't mean saying sorry).

Alyssa, you just vowed to enter into covenant with Jonathan and said that you would *obey* him – and this word is in your vows not out of empty tradition, but because you believe that word ought to be in your vows. And not only that, but you cut off any possibility of escape by vowing to do this for as long as you live (not the convenient, “for as long as you love,” but the truly confining, “as long as you live”). The question must be asked: Are you in your right mind? Many would question your sanity. There are many in our culture who would say that this is not just silly, not just an outmoded, quaint, tradition, but who would say that this is a positive evil, that it is sexist, and that it is demeaning to you.

And it is for this reason that I wish to offer a brief apology to the trousered apes of our culture who would oppose your actions and your vows. And I am not engaging in name calling here. The fact is: either you stand before me as man and woman made in the image of God and living under His authority or you stand before me as cercopithecoids who happened to evolve opposable thumbs. If you are merely genetic overachievers you can do as you please, you can mate when you please (with or without anyone's consent), you can behave toward one another how you please, and you can leave each other when you please. It's, literally, a monkey house. There are no posted rules for the animals in the zoo. And therefore anything goes.

But if you are man and woman, made in the image of God, then you were made for Him – to love and obey Him. You cannot do as you please, you cannot mate when you please, you cannot behave toward one another how you please, and you cannot leave when you please. There are house rules that must be obeyed for the blessing of man and woman and also the honor of God. And in these house rules we find our freedom.

And so you stand before me as man and woman. And that is why you, Allysa, uttered the unutterable “O” word and made permanent vows to Jonathan. You come to this wedding as Jonathan's equal and take these vows of obedience and submission willingly. You find nothing demeaning in doing this because your Lord Jesus Christ, as God the Father's equal, voluntarily submitted himself to obedience. This is the path to blessing and joy, however counter-intuitive it might be. Grasping is always a death grip. And dying to yourself brings life.

Our death-grip culture gasps at Alyssa's vows, but it really ought to give more attention to the vows that Jonathan is making. When Alyssa vows to obey Jonathan, Jonathan is committing to be the one obeyed. In other words, Jonathan is the one committing to take all the responsibility for the welfare and

wellbeing of Alyssa and God-willing their family. Jonathan can never opt out of making decisions and taking responsibility for them. Jonathan cannot blame his wife for the state of their marriage and home.

In addition to all this Jonathan has vowed to love Alyssa. He's vowed to forsake all others, and to love this woman alone. And when Jonathan vows to love this woman, he's not making the pathetic pledge to merely have certain positive feelings or emotions toward Alyssa. The standard and example of the love that Jonathan is vowing to give Alyssa is that of the Lord Jesus Christ who when he took the church as His bride, died for her in order to make her glorious and beautiful. Jonathan's vow is based on God's command: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,..."

And Jonathan too has vowed to take on this commitment permanently, under any circumstance that might arise. What's more, and here is the kicker, Jonathan will be held to this commitment and have to answer not only for himself (like Alyssa has to do for herself), but also for Alyssa and his family. And Jonathan will have to answer not just to you (as witnesses to these vows), and not just to his elders in the church (and all of his elders are more than willing to dog-pile on him if he goes wobbly on his vows - and one of them is 6'4" and 300 lbs. when he is dieting). But Jonathan will ultimately have to answer to His God for the responsibilities he is taking on. The living God takes a very dim view of those who abuse their authority, and He has promised to be the protector and avenger of those who are harmed by those who abuse their authority: "It is, as the Scriptures say, a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

And this, I think brings us to the real reason for our modern disdain for these vows. These vows are not beneath us. They are above us. They are not beneath our dignity, they are so far above us that we look for the backdoor; we look for the exit sign. But when we retreat like this, we retreat from any possibility of true love. As Chesterton says: "They have invented a phrase, a phrase that is a black and white contradiction in two words - 'free-love' - as if a lover ever had been, or ever could be, free." When Christ set his love on his people, he bound himself to them by an indissoluble covenant. Our culture wants to have the "splendor of offering themselves without the peril of committing themselves." I tell you, and the Scriptures tell you, and the tragic story of all death-grip cultures tell you, it cannot work.

And so we need vows that burn the bridge behind us and cut off all possibility of retreat, and we also need sexist vows - that is we need vows that distinguish between the sexes. Death and difference are essential. You cannot have marriage without death and you cannot have marriage without difference. Marriage is about the joining together of two very different entities: a man and a woman. Both men and women were made in the image of God, but each was created with a different makeup and different functions in mind. The modern mythology has it that the difference is limited to certain anatomical superficialities. The mistake is that when you peel off the exterior of a man or woman what you find is something called a human - you find the same thing. But the reality is when you peel back the layers of a woman you find woman all the way down; and when you peel back the layers of man you find man right to the core. We are made male and female, and apart from the rib, there are no interchangeable parts. Women today have been duped by cowardly and pathetic men who are joined by damaged and jaded women into thinking that that the measure of a woman is man: that you measure the value of

teacup by the specifications of a hammer or the value of a butterfly by its ability to reproduce the sounds of a bull-frog. But in marriage the difference is the point.

Men and women were designed to dance. And even celebrities, who cannot figure out how to make their own marriages last a year, know that on the dance floor someone's got to take the lead. Without acknowledging the difference you can't even begin to learn how to dance. And without a proper lead you are perpetually condemned to looking ridiculous and pathetic. Apes don't know the first thing about dancing. But God designed marriages for man and woman. God designed marriages for the dance. And if you want to learn this exotic and beautiful dance of love called the covenant of marriage, you're going to have to let Jesus and His church teach you the steps. And when you do this you will discover that it cannot be done without this difference. And it cannot be done without death.

Jonathan and Alyssa, are you ready to begin learning this dance? Then, please face one another and join hands.