

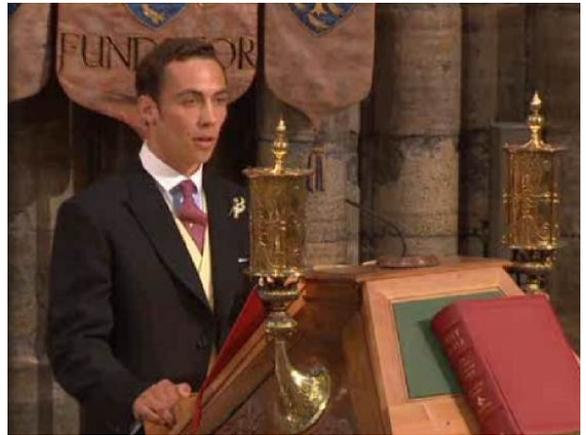
Romans 12:1,2 9-18

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God - this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honour one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.



The Marriage of Prince William and Catherine Middleton has brought together many strands of our society. Dignitaries and tourists from around the world have flocked to our capital city; Catherine's outfits have been trumpeted as a triumph for British design; our Royal family and senior politicians have been at the very centre of events; pop stars; footballers and local butchers sat side by side while the meticulously planned event unfolded before our eyes.

Yet at the very heart of it was a simple and timeless act of a young couple covenanting before God to live together in Holy matrimony.

God was celebrated as our creator, the source and example of the love which was being acknowledged, this was an unashamed and utterly appropriate act of Christian worship. Every aspect of our national life found place and expression not in a great palace, or a multi-billion pound business empire, but in an ancient Abbey church which has resounded with the prayers and praise of God's people for centuries.

This is the reality of the faith that we proclaim. There are many who want to privatise it; content that any individual should be free to believe and follow, provided they do so in a way that does not impinge on the lives of others. But ours is not a faith that will be so contained, it is a faith that declares itself as touching every aspect of human existence whether that be through the pageantry of a Royal Wedding or the language of the Scriptures.

It is a faith which, through the words of St Paul, so deliberately recited at the service by the bride's brother, James Middleton, invites us to offer the whole of ourselves as living sacrifices in worship of God. For our finest fashion designers to bring their intricate creations, for skilled technicians to create the best television coverage, musicians and composers; immaculately turned out soldiers, or the loyal spectator bedecked in banners and costumes; each bringing a part of themselves to this great event. These were of course contributions to a national and international spectacle, but one that is

above anything else an act of worship to our creator, making covenant in His presence, and imploring His blessing upon this expression of human love and commitment. As our future monarch knelt before his Creator, God was indeed declared to be the King of Kings.

“Let every aspect of your lives be transformed by the renewing of your minds” God’s Word continues. And amidst the Royal Wedding celebrations, people spoke of friendship, kindness, warmth community – a breaking with the usual cynicism and individualism that we all too easily conform to. This is a vision of work and society which ICF has sought to articulate for over a century, where we might indeed seek to build Jerusalem not only among the dark satanic mills, but also the glass and steel of corporate offices and the hi-tech development suites in our silicon valleys.

It is seldom that vision is so powerfully and tangibly thrust into the centre of our nation’s and indeed the world’s attention, but when it is we realise how inescapable a reality it is for anyone who seriously seeks to understand the nature of God’s Kingdom.

It is a vision which is no less articulated through the prayer which William and Catherine had written for the day, which includes the words:

“In the busyness of each day keep our eyes fixed on what is real and important in life and help us to be generous with our time and love and energy”

This is a prayer which any and every working Christian might take to their lips in the midst of their daily endeavours. In doing so, let us respond to the Bishop of London’s invitation to remember and pray for this particular couple as they engage in their life’s calling.

We join the thousands of well-wishers in offering our good wishes and prayers to this wonderful royal couple. And as we echo the prayers of the Abbey that God will bless their future, so we pray that the message of this day will not be quickly forgotten.

