

Sermon for the Wedding of
Colleen Cobey and Roanna Brazier

This is a rather formal event for in some way being a formality. Neither does it quite fit the traditional definition of a shotgun wedding, though there's some element of that pressure and being under the gun here.

Which is to say that I've been reflecting on why we're here today, what we're doing, what this is about.

In the most basic regard, that might actually be a question about location. See, we know that you need to have a lawful signature on a piece of paper stored in a government building. We know that the previous way you'd been registered and officially partnered together is going away and so you need this new-fangled thing: a marriage license. Although for the question of why, we might first think to answer about insurance and legality. But for the simple sake of that signature, this could well have happened downtown in an office room. That it's here instead extends the why question also to involve "where."

As I told you Roanna and Colleen, I'd identify the central part of a wedding usually as the exchange of vows, those promises of love for each other. And though that captures some of the insurance sense of things with the standard promise of "in sickness and in health," still after seventeen years (or so?), it doesn't really seem like you two would *need* to do that formal promising. You've already been practicing those commitments and dedications of giving yourselves to each other in love for a long time, so this would seem like something not so new and doesn't seem like exchanging those words will really change your relationship.

I suppose I also have to concede that even though I define the vows as the central moment of a wedding day, there's probably at least as much validity in the popular notion that weddings are about parties, about getting the family and friends closets to you and dearest around to celebrate. So there's strength to that explanation for this day, since something like your love for each other is indeed deserves enjoyment and to be praised and enlivened with good music and your relationship is well worth toasting.

We could also do well to notice that festivities and celebrations were where Jesus hung out. Though we don't often think of him as a party animal, that was sort of the reputation he had in his own time, that he wasn't one to avoid a good time. Particularly, we could observe that the only story about him at a wedding wasn't to lecture on how to love or what is right or wrong, but simply as the beverage service to make sure the wine kept flowing. That Jesus!

While we're on that track, we could—and should!—say that a very worthwhile reason for this wedding is because this is exactly what God wants. God is pro-love. God is in favor of your love. God celebrates your love and nurtures and sustains your love and accentuates your love. God blesses your love for each other, Colleen and Roanna, and God enables your love with God's own love. As your Bible readings declare and proclaim for us, when we think of love, we're envisioning godliness and practicing what God's will is for our lives. You two bear God's presence for each other, and then also extend God's goodwill to our lives and to the world. The rest of us depend on your love as sharing God's love for us.

And though that's the message I am most eager to announce to you today, I feel it also needs to be paired with another word. As a straight white male and an official of the institutional church, I want to apologize. We or I must confess that part of the circumstance for this wedding and this moment here, once more on the "why" of today, is that places like this and people at least sort of like me for far too long have warped and controlled church and society to say your love was not right. I'm so sorry for that and am also very grateful, because you still asked me to be here today, because you are rightly faithful and you recognize and you continue to show us—through 17 years, in this moment, and on into the future—that you are engaged in the godly work of love, that your love is not only for each other but also makes our lives better, and, yes, God encourages your love, celebrates your love, and God blesses your love.

So thank you, Roanna and Colleen, and congratulations. Now let's get on with this formal stuff to the heart of the day so we can party.