

Holy Matrimony ~ June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2021  
Emily Siobhan Crowley ~ Hayden Alexander Ramsay

What will Emily become? We know what she is today. Today, Emily is the embodiment of elegance. Young Miss Crowley is a radiant bride who is full of life, her dream wedding is unfolding with regal charm and her soul is buoyant with joy. What will Emily become? What will Emily be as this day passes, after she writes a go-zillion thank-you cards, after she has at least a couple of little soccer players of her own? What will Emily be when little lines begin to appear around her mouth, at the corners of her eyes and on that now wrinkle-free forehead? Love will tell the tale. What Emily will become has Hayden Alexander in view. What Emily will become has Hayden Alexander's love in view.

What will Hayden become? We know what this young lad is today. Hayden will gladly tell you that he is the most blessed man on the planet today. He would tell you this for an hour if you would give it to him, and I would, if I had a beer in my hand but there's no alcohol, other than communion wine, on this campus. What will Hayden become? We know that he's on top of the world. No package under the tree compares to this gift, this bride. Hayden is fulfilled this day. Elation, the realization of his highest hope, is breaking into this moment. But what will he become? After the buzz of the day dissipates, when life becomes more mundane, when responsibilities grow and being the head of the household hits him between the eyes, what will Hayden be? Love will tell the tale. What Hayden will become has Emily Siobhan in view. What Hayden will become has Emily Siobhan's love in view.

We all know that Emily can dance. I'd never seen it with my own eyes until I went to see "My Fair Lady" at the LifeHouse Theater. The good lady wife told me that I'd be sitting next to Emily's new boyfriend who recently got in a motorcycle accident. My sceptic radar was somewhere between 99 and 100% when I heard the words "boyfriend" and "motorcycle" united with Emily's name. This youngster better measure up. He could barely move. I introduced myself cheerfully but inside I was watching. Sweat was beading up on his upper lip. It wasn't warm in the theater. Pain was screaming from multiple locations but a smile was on his face. Hayden was well-mannered to the old-guy who had put him on trial in his old-guy mind – but the smile was for the dancer. Love brought him to the LifeHouse; pain was part of the deal.

What is love? I reckon most of you think that you know. Marriage is what brings us together today – the marvelous union of man and glorious bride. Love is in view; great love. In Paradise, God created man from the dust of the earth, but Adam was alone. It was not good for the man to be alone, so God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep. God opened up a place in Adam's side and then constructed the last thing that He made, that sixth day of Creation. She was beautiful. She was strong. She was smart. But the best thing about Eve was that she was holy – God made her that way. The man was no longer alone. "At last," said the exhilarated man. This is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman for she was taken out of man. He loved her. She, Eve, loved him. What is love? How do you know it? To be sure, it is something you experience. God has made each of you in such a way to experience this gift, this treasure, this delight. Love means a lot to Him.

The Scriptures say that “We love because God first loved us” (1 John 4:19). He is the Giver. We are the recipients. Love is what He gives. His Son is what He gives. God created Adam and Eve in the way that He did because He had something to say about love. Some of the most sublime words this world has ever known are these: “Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her.” Jesus is the second, greater Adam. Jesus is the premier man who came in search of a bride. Humanity was not fit for Him. There was no holy bone of His bones; no pure flesh of His flesh. Contrary to this picturesque assembly, contrary to the radiance of this remarkable bride, humanity was soiled, filthy, profane – mired in sin – full of lust, greed, deceit, pride, hate. What is elegant about sin? Whatever it is that would make you turn your head in disgust – that is sinful man, sinful humanity.

And the love of Christ, the divine love that is Christ, gave Himself up for us. God the Father caused His Son to fall into a deep sleep, the sleep of death upon a cross. God, by way of a Roman soldier, opened up a place in His Son’s side, piercing Love itself with a lance. In death, out from Jesus’ side in death, came flowing blood and water. Christ’s bride came flowing from His side – sinful humanity is washed in baptism and made holy. The blood of Christ is in the water of baptism – blood which was shed in sacrificial love for those who are unlovely but treasured. Jesus died to save us from death, to wash us, to make us holy – that we might be united to Him, that we might be one flesh with Him. The church is the bride of Christ and she is radiant. The church is radiant because of the love that she has received, received from the Giver, the Author of love, the source and fount of love. Listen to those sublime words again: “Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word” (Ephesians 5:25).

I asked Hayden, “why Emily?” Why this girl, this particular young lass? What about her has captured you, what about Emily commands your heart, your admiration, your respect? It’s a standard marriage question and I often receive standard answers – not insincere, mind you, but not particularly deep. Hayden replied with a very personal description of an encounter with grace (through Emily), being loved by one who truly knows how to give, whose very nature inspires, showering him with the undeserved richness of herself. That’s what Emily gives to Hayden. What will Hayden become? As he matures, as years pass and he matures as Emily’s husband, as the one whom Emily loves, Hayden will become strong, composed, confident, content, prepared to serve, prepared to endure difficulty, prepared to overcome, prepared to forgive – that’s what Emily’s love will affect in him. He knows that she loves him like Christ loves him.

I asked Emily the same question. Why Hayden, why this goofy kid? One attribute of hers came soaring out of her reply, an attribute awakened by Hayden’s manner, his obvious devotion. She trusts him with her whole heart; trusts him to defend her, bless her, love her, lead her, sacrifice for her. What will Emily become? As the years pass by, she will become strong, composed, confident, content, prepared to serve, prepared to endure difficulty, prepared to overcome, prepared to forgive – that’s what Hayden’s love will affect in her. She knows that Hayden loves her like Christ loves her. Hayden loves because Christ first loved Him. Emily loves because Christ first loved her.

Marriage brings us all together this evening – the union of Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay. But it is the union of Christ and His bride that bring us to this LifeHouse. The Lord Christ rendered up His life for His bride. Love put Him on the Holy Cross. Pain seared His person but He loved us throughout. Love wills to give. It is that love which animates the hearts of these two people. No sweeter reality could be more happily celebrated.