

Matt Brown & Alexis Wilbers

Matt and Alexis fell in love the instant they met, yet it has taken an eternity to get to this wedding day. No one expected a pandemic to get in the way. Their love has survived physical distance, a threatening virus, and two chihuahuas. When love is strong, it forges a bond that is eternal. Nothing will get in the way.

Alexis met Matt at work—a work-sponsored event. Well, it was a Royals game, and although the local team does not always have a winning record, they did that day. They scored love. When the weather is beautiful, baseball and love work together, and perhaps that makes the first reading we heard for this wedding especially appropriate. It comes from a short book of the bible that we don't often encounter, the Song of Songs. It is a collection of love poetry from the Old Testament. You can imagine these words from that ancient book describing a tryst on a pleasant, sunny, baseball kind of day: The woman says, “[Here comes my lover,] springing across the mountains, leaping across the hills. My lover is like a gazelle.” That's in the bible. It's as if a future bride from Missouri beheld a future groom from Texas leaping across the Ozarks. Then, in the same reading of scripture, the man says to her, “Arise, my beloved, my dove, my beautiful one, and come!” It's as if the future groom knew that his future bride would accept his invitation without hesitation. The reading concludes with a declaration that everyone who's ever been in love and experienced the fire of its intensity can understand, “Deep waters cannot quench love, nor floods sweep it away.”

This book made its way into the bible because it reveals something even deeper about love, and that is the way that God loves us. If you have ever been enchanted when you fell in love with a person, then you can appreciate the enchantment God has from the moment of our conception when God falls in love with each one of us. God's love compelled him to rescue us from sin by sending us his Son. Jesus taught his disciples this message at the Last Supper: “I love you,” he said. “Love one another as I love you.” It's his commandment. Falling in love is Jesus' commandment. It's a joyful experience, but also a risky one. To love someone is not just to seek pleasure for oneself, but to seek pleasure for the beloved, and that requires sacrifice as Jesus commands.

Alexis and Matt, you picked a Saturday near the first day of winter to celebrate a love that first bloomed in a warmer time of year. You recognized the improbability of meeting each other as something beyond what you could have planned. You planned a wedding day that you then had to plan out all over again. But you did all this with the confidence that God was calling you to something more. We thank you for the witness of love that you give us because it helps us appreciate the love of God. It's our prayer that your love will grow so strong that you will feel compelled as God does to share it with others, to sacrifice for others.

My brothers and sisters, God loves each of us and expects us to share his love with others, to sacrifice for others. We won't love every person the instant we meet them, but we do need to love every person for eternity.

Saturday, December 11, 2021