

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O G-d, our Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer.

Did you watch the Royal wedding yesterday? It was quite the event! All the TV networks sent practically all their correspondents to Windsor to cover it and preempted Saturday's usual programs to show not only the service, but background on Harry and Meghan's lives.

As a church geek, I love Anglican worship services. They're high church liturgy done with restraint and excellent style, and this wedding did not disappoint ... do you find it rather ironic that for a people who rebelled against the monarchy to win independence, we Americans sure love the British royals?

... anyway, it came as something of a surprise that in many ways it echoed the spirit of Pentecost, which we often refer to as the 'birth of the church.' In fact, a couple of my clergy friends were tempted to just preach the Episcopal Presiding Bishop Michael Curry's powerful message today. We agreed that wouldn't be exactly kosher, so you're spared my attempt, though I am inspired by his words as I share with you now. I'm inspired too by the inclusive and—for some—unconventional, nature of the service.

That first Pentecost was marked by wild wind and tongues of fire; with men and women telling the story of G-d's unconditional love made flesh in Jesus of Nazareth so as to be understood by people of every nation, speaking every language and so inspired that people thought they were drunk. In essence, it's celebrating the fact that G-d, the Creator of the universe, is loose in the world—a dangerous and challenging presence among humankind.

We tend to like what's familiar. Jesus got in to quite a bit of trouble by challenging deeply entrenched attitudes about purity, about human value. In Jesus, G-d was making clear that no matter how much human beings tried to define and control G-d, G-d just wasn't going to conform. G-d is G-d, and we are not.

An American bride introduces an uncomfortable note into the traditional and staid British way of doing things. A bi-racial American bride disturbs deeply entrenched ways of seeing the world and who is in and who is out; not to mention the swing of gospel music was unlike the lovely but staid music usually heard in the churches in Great Britain. The ladies' hats were, of course, spectacular, adding their own wild and crazy note to the solemn occasion.

The sight of Bishop Curry, a descendent of slaves, preaching the gospel of G-d's inclusive love in a setting built by the very empire-builders who wrested Bishop Curry's ancestors from Africa, was affecting and spoke loudly of the shocking power of G-d's love to heal and reconcile those who have been separated by sin.

Bishop Curry reminded us that Jesus claims, "*The truth is, ... we all were created by the same God. And that God created us because, as the Bible says, God is love.*"ⁱ In a world often divided, where worth is determined by one's money, social position, race, sexual orientation, age, religion, ability, Jesus affirms G-d's delight in every single person, 'just the way they are', as Mr. Rogers used to say. G-d is G-d, and we are not!

Naturally, at a wedding love was mentioned quite a few times. No surprise there!

In the spirit of Pentecost the untamable flame of Holy Spirit power swept through us all as Bishop Curry described the active, sacrificial love demonstrated by Jesus. Not a nice, safe, comfortable sentiment, but something so powerful it challenges and calls us to take the risky leap of faith to love G-d with all our heart and soul and mind and strength; and to love our neighbor as our self. It's a love that can transform the world.

Bishop Curry proclaimed that, *'When love is the way, no child will go to bed hungry in this world ever again. When love is the way, poverty will become history. When love is the way, there's room for all of God's children.*

Because when love is the way, we actually treat each other like family.'

This is what the whole creation has been groaning for; and when it seems as if there just isn't any hope for healing, for reconciliation, then the Spirit prays on our behalf 'with sighs too deep for words.' When we don't know what to say or do, G-d is there with us, helping us to cope, to dream, to place our hope in the One who made us and who loves us with reckless abandon.

G-d is indeed loose in the world. I used to think about the Spirit who came upon those followers of Jesus all those years ago as having been there and gone, back to heaven. Now I've come to understand that the miracle of Pentecost is that the Spirit remains with us always. We're never alone, we're always connected to the powerful love of G-d no matter what our circumstances are.

The verse that comes after today's reading in Romans assures us that, '... G-d makes everything work together for the good of those who love G-d ...'

Through trials and tribulations, in good times and in bad, for better or worse, richer or poorer, in sickness and in health, G-d remains with us, giving us strength and patience and courage so that, even when we can't begin to see it for ourselves, G-d knows what we need and gives it to us so that, placing our trust in the One Who Loves us, we are filled with joy and hope.

So maybe we've never even met a royal prince much less married one, but we have been baptized into the royal family of the Prince of Peace.

May the Spirit of this Pentecost, G-d loose in the world and living in our hearts and minds, fill you with the healing, transforming power of the unending love of G-d. Amen.

With Children

The Spirit prays for us! How cool is that? When we don't have the words, the Holy Spirit steps in and helps out. When we're so sad, we can't find the words, or when we're so hurt and upset, and can't speak at all—God's Spirit is right there with us to help us connect with God in prayer. Yes, that invisible gift we received in our baptism, does invisible but very important work all throughout our lives. *Take children to the font, and encourage them to dip their fingers in the water and make the sign of the cross.* Doing this helps to remind us that God is with us, that Jesus loves us, and the Spirit is always there working with us. *Finish with a simple prayer.*

ⁱ - Presiding Bishop Michael B. Curry, speaking alongside Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby at a press event ahead of tomorrow's #RoyalWedding