

The Christian Wedding of Kim Kliver and Bradley Lanning

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St. Matthew's Lutheran Church, Danube MN

Ruth 1:16,17. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. ¹⁷ Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me.

So, let's see here... She wasn't going to take "no" for an answer. No matter how much the other party hesitated, this is how it was going to be. There was no turning back and they were going to spend their lives together; she was convinced of it.... Hmm... I wonder why you guys, picked *this* bible lesson.

All kidding aside. These words from the book of Ruth are words of love and devotion and are a very fitting choice for your wedding day. These are words which speak of life-long dedication. These are words that give high priority to God and family, two things that are very important to you. More than just words, these are words that are filled and then followed with genuine faithfulness that flows from a connection to the LORD.

This is a wonderful reminder on a day like today. As a Christian, husband and wife, your faithfulness flows from your connection to the LORD.

This is a day that we all saw coming from a long way off. Way back to the days of multi-colored hair we knew that Kimmy had found her guy, because under that ever-present hat was a quality young man who cared for her deeply. God has blessed your relationship for about ten years, now. And through that time, you have experienced a fair share of ups and downs, of tears and laughter. You've been at each other's side for many family gatherings, special occasions, and whole lot of ordinary days and nights in between. If you add it all up you two have been at each other's side, for a few months short of a *decade*.

Now, normally, to say it that way would make it sound like a long time, but today as we stand here, you are about to make lifelong promises to each other. ***I promise to be faithful to you as long as we both shall live.*** No matter how long you've known each other these are words that are some of the most meaningful words that you will ever speak. They are, of course, never to be taken lightly; and therefore, if we are honest, these words can be more than a little bit intimidating. You know your own weaknesses, by now you certainly know each other's faults, how could you ever be sure enough, certain enough to make such promises. Well, this is what makes our setting here today so reassuring, so special. As you stand here today you do not make these promises alone. You stand here together and you stand here with God.

As we are gathered here with all these dearly loved family and friends packed into this building, we not only celebrate your love for each other we celebrate God's eternal and steadfast love for you. We are gathered here in God's house, to celebrate, and to rejoice in the fact that God is here with you. God's presence in your life, at your wedding, in your marriage makes all the difference. For today you are not only saying that your people will be my people, but you are saying, that *your God will be my God*. On this special occasion, this day of your wedding, you are calling on God's presence and his guidance, and his direction and his love, to give strength and stability and blessing to your marriage. Your faithfulness, as a Christian husband and wife, flows from His faithfulness. And therefore, these words that you chose for

today, are certainly fitting. ***Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God.***

These words from the book of Ruth, not only reveal the kind of character Ruth must have had, but it reveals the character and quality of our God. In these powerful words of commitment Ruth refers to the special name of God. In the last half of verse 17 she calls him the LORD. She calls him Yahweh the special name of God that denotes his faithfulness. Ruth was willing to take on this lifelong commitment because she had come to know the LORD, who is, by his very nature, faithful. Her God, our God, is the LORD, the God of free and faithful grace. He is the great I AM, he is the covenant God of steadfast love, who makes and keeps all his promises.

From Scripture, we know the rest of Ruth's story. These passionate words would not fall to the ground as empty word. But with the LORD's help, these words were filled up and followed with a life of faithfulness to her family and to her God. During a time of great unfaithfulness to God she was a beautiful example of faithful love. She overcame difficulty and strife and challenge after challenge all the while trusting in God and showing devotion to her family. From the LORD's great faithfulness would flow her faithfulness. From Scripture, we also know how Ruth's story extended into our story. We know that God would also fulfill his most important promise to us through Ruth and her family line, as the promised Savior would be a descendant of this woman. Yes, these words that you chose for today have to do with faithfulness, and family, and devotion; most wonderfully they also have to do with God's faithfulness and devotion to us his dear children.

Our God is faithful. Our God is so faithful that in his great love he became one of us. Jesus lived that perfect life of love that we could not, and died to wipe away all of our sin. In his faithful love, he reached out to us with his word and through the power of baptism he made us to be his own dear children. He was determined that he would be a part of our lives, that we would live with him now and forever in heaven. He was determined that this is how it was going to be. Our God is faithful and steadfast in his love for us, in his love for you. This is who our God is. This who our God reveals himself to be. And that will be a key ingredient to your marriage.

As sweet and as lovely as wonderful as everything today is, there will be time when things go sour. Instead of showing love to each other and submitting to each other you will act on the urge and impulse put yourself first. Feelings will get hurt, there will be disagreements and difficulties. There will be work frustrations, cupcake drama, and cake disasters that will put stress on the two of you and your marriage. There will be times of sickness and perhaps financial and in home challenges. There will be times that he doesn't open up and talk to you as much as you want him to, there will be times that you jump to conclusions and you will get a little crazy, attempts at humor will taste a little too much like bitterness, and it will appear at time like your love is going stale. When such trouble and uncertainty comes, when your imperfections cause trouble and strife, take a deep breath and know and remember that Jesus is in the mix. That his presence renews and refreshes, strengthens, and sweetens your relationship. Look to the one who is with you wherever you go. Look to the cross of Jesus and his faithful love that renews and revives your love for each other.

From little on you have known that Jesus loves you; that God is your faithful Lord. God has blessed you both with Christian parents who raised you up in this training and instruction of the Lord. Today is a special opportunity to grow in that knowledge of your LORD. In his Word God tells us that Christ is the groom, we are his bride. Maybe that seemed like an odd picture

when you were younger, but today that picture is filled with unforgettable meaning. Today it becomes, so brilliantly clear, why God uses this as a powerful picture to describe who he is.

The love that you feel for your bride right now, just moments after seeing her walk down the aisle, this is now a vibrant description of how much God loves you. What an honor what a special privilege that Jesus would call you his bride. Grow in your knowledge of his love for you, and as you do you will grow in your love for each other.

With this picture in mind the bible commands a husband to love his wife as Christ loves the church. This is a high calling, Brad. One in which we as husbands often fall miserably short. Confess your shortcomings, and knowing that Christ forgives and strengthens you selflessly give of your time, your gifts, your love, yourself to your wife. Be there for her. On many occasions throughout the years, Brad, you have been that reliable source of love that Kim has needed. Continue to be a reflection of the faithful love of Christ. Let Christ be seen in the way that you faithfully love your wife. And as Christ is the head of the Church, Brad, you are now being called to lead and care for your wife. Lead her, lead your marriage, your family, putting family on high priority, but God on even higher priority. Lead yourself, your wife, your family to God by being in his Word, by learning more and more of his love and faithfulness. Your faithfulness will flow from his faithfulness and your relationship will be strengthened and blessed by God's presence in your marriage.

Kim, love your husband pick him up and support him in this and everything. Show him love and respect. Treat him as the blessing, as the husband that God has given you. Love each other as Christ has loved you. Rely on him, and his faithfulness, as you carry out what he has called you to be: a Christian husband, a Christian wife. This is a high calling, a big commitment, but there is great strength for your marriage in him, your faithful Lord. His presence, is today and will be forever a tremendous source of strength and love in your life together.

Today if finally here, I pray that you would hold onto and remember this special day often, that you would daily consider yourself blessed by God that you have found what is good in finding such a lovely wife, that you have found a wonderful blessing in a faithful husband. Remember this day as you take this lovely keepsake that you will create into your home and know that your LORD and Savior is right there with, that his presence is essential, as he brings his goodness, his strength, and his faithful love that touches and impacts and strengthens every aspect of your life together. And as you remember the words of your chosen wedding text, rejoice in these words of love and devotion that you expressed for each other, and know that the LORD is with you wherever you are, wherever you go. He is in the mix and he will bless and increase your love for one another, he will sweeten and strengthen your marriage.

Throughout all the days of life together, may the Lord lead you to learn more of his love, that you would run to him often, that you would rely on him always. Dear Brad and Dear Kimmy, as you go from here and live out your life together as husband and wife always know that your LORD loves you with his faithful love and he will help you to fulfill and follow the words of your marriage vows with a lifetime of faithful love. The LORD will be with you wherever you go. Amen.