

**A Witness To Christian Marriage**  
**Bailey Thompson and Hannah Gray**  
**Main Street UMC**  
**Saturday, December 14, 2013, 5:30pm**

I was seven years old in 1960 when I saw the movie version of H.G. Wells sci-fi novel *The Time Machine* one Saturday with my parents. By cranking up the whirring contraption in which he was seated, the scientist H. George Wells, played by Rod Taylor, could move through time in either direction for amazing adventures. The rapid change of scenery across the years won an Academy Award for special effects in 1961. I was fascinated with the idea of time travel after that, and I also confess a boyhood crush on the female lead, Yvette Mimieux, for which I have a sweet spot to this day. Thus far Lori has not agreed to dye her hair blond and adopt a French name. Oh the struggles of marriage!

Now why in the world do I start a wedding message with such an odd reflection on a fifty-three year old movie? Because at every Christian wedding this is precisely what happens, not through technology, but through the imagination of faith. Here we are on December 14, 2013 at Main Street Church with a bride named Hannah and a groom named Bailey as our departure point; but when Bailey caught his first glimpse of Hannah when the sanctuary doors opened, and when she glided down the aisle on Bill's left arm in all her magnificence to exalted music, we were transported back to the beginning, back to Eden itself to view the first man and woman, fresh from the hand of God, as they were joined by God in the first marriage. "Adam, this is your wife-to-be Eve, and you have my blessing to be fruitful and multiply, to fill the earth and subdue it, to share wise dominion over what I entrust to you. Build culture. Build homes. Expand your borders. Remember me and so guard and protect all that is good. Recall that I made you male and female for each other. I designed who you are physically and emotionally for creativity and companionship. Never lose your love for each other. You are the crown of creation, my image bearers wherever you go." That blessing and mandate have never been withdrawn or diminished. They are your marching orders.

I know this time travel back to Eden is possible because Jesus himself invoked it when challenged on the issue of divorce. He said, "But *from the beginning of creation*, 'God made them male and female....'" And in that moment they were again

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back in Eden before the world was broken and innocence spoiled. Why? Because God the Son was there when it happened. Every wedding is not just the next wedding down the line, but in every marriage we go back to the very beginning as if every couple was the next couple after Adam and Eve. So marriage is not just a copy of a copy of a copy. Every marriage is modeled on the original, crisp and clear, just as wondrous and exciting as the first man who kissed the first woman as a promise of the deeper intimacies soon to come, of which we still have a sign in the kiss at the end of the wedding service.

This has been a challenging year of losses and deployments, the stresses of a first year teacher about to marry a man who straps on bullet-proof vest and a sidearm every day. Teacher Gray and Officer Thompson: theirs is a marriage grounded in the best of public service to children and the maintenance of peace and public order. When they come home at night there will be stories of children and adults who've misbehaved, but with different consequences- time-out versus Miranda rights. There will be tearful stories of a child without a meal at night and of a homeless man who was helped. These two will live close to real needs every day, and they will need each other to double the joys and halve the sorrows of the noble vocations to which God has called them. They will offer solace and safety to each other and each night thank God for bringing them together in this holy, and possibly even happy, institution of marriage which is for our good and for the good of any children who are the fruit of this union. These two are making a contribution to our common life and the common good and the general welfare from day one as Christian citizens.

And into the recent troubles have come aunts and uncles, surrogate parents and Sunday School classes to help with the planning and make sure no detail is left unattended. That is what family and friends and sisters and churches are for. To step up and help out when reality intrudes. Seeing this network come together has been good for me because it tells me that Hannah and Bailey have a team around them, a thick social network that will walk with them and watch over them and come to their aid, and in this sense they are much already richer and wealthy than any balance sheet can reflect.

For the gospel lesson they've chosen a passage from John, and in the technical sense it's not a passage about marriage at all, and that is probably it's strength. Jesus is soon to depart from his disciples in a horrible death and a glorious resurrection and ascension, and when the time is short you repeat only the basics. They are to love one

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another as he loved them, but this is not a love grounded in pleasant feelings but a desire to keep Jesus' commandments as a sign of loyalty. This is a love willing to suffer, willing to lay down its life for friends, and Bailey and Hannah I remind you that one of the richest joys ahead is that you become good friends and fine neighbors to one another and that you treat each other with the little dignities and courtesies that remind you both that you are number one on the other's agenda. People will notice and want what you have. Be a gentleman, Bailey; and Hannah, be a lady of dignity and strength. Never forget where you were this day, in God's church, and what you said this day in these exalted vows *to love and to cherish until we are parted by death*.

Jesus Christ and his people rejoice with you this day, and we look forward to you taking your place among us as husband and wife.

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