

A Curry Flavored Gospel

It wasn't exactly what people were expecting at a Royal Wedding. A small, African-American man, with an infectious smile, dressed in the robes of an Episcopal bishop, stepped up and laid the Gospel on the world.

People expected to be tweeting about the choice of the bridal designer or the music or the celebrity sightings during the wedding of Prince Harry to Megan Markle. They did not expect to be talking about a sermon, such as the one preached by Michael Curry, Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church in America.

The congregation seemed a bit stunned; even Elton John looked a bit put off by Curry's preaching, but the rest of the world was electrified. You know you've made a dent in the public consciousness when Saturday Night Live spoofs you on Weekend Update, just ten hours after you preached.

Why was Curry's sermon so compelling? There was no power point illustration, no music to underscore his message. There was just the Gospel, preached by a man in love with Jesus, who wanted the rest of the world to know the love of God. The simple Gospel that God is love is still compelling; it is still good news, especially when we feel surrounded by so much darkness.

Curry said, "Jesus began the most revolutionary movement in all of human history. A movement grounded in the unconditional love of God and for the

world...a movement mandating people to live and love, and in so doing, to change not only their lives, but the very life of the world itself. I'm talking about power, real power to change the world."

He wasn't sentimentalizing love, which is so easy to do and even more easily dismissed. Curry was asking us to think of God's amazing power of love to transform and I think that is what people found so captivating.

Curry said, "Think and imagine a world where love is the way. Imagine our homes and families, where love is the way. Imagine neighborhoods and communities where love is the way. Imagine governments and nations where love is the way. Imagine business and commerce when love is the way."

"Imagine this tired old world when love is the way ... unselfish, sacrificial, redemptive... When love is the way we will let justice roll down like a mighty stream and righteousness like an ever-flowing brook."

As is typical of Bishop Curry, he evoked the words of an old spiritual, "There is a Balm in Gilead." Apparently, there was confusion about the word "balm" as the BBC reportedly transcribed the hymn, "There is a Bomb in Gilead." Curry and the BBC are both right. When the love of Jesus is unleashed in the world, it is an explosive force that can rock us to our core and change us.

“There is a balm in Gilead, To make the wounded whole; There is a balm in Gilead, to heal the sin-sick soul. Sometimes I feel discouraged, And think my work’s in vain, But then the Holy Spirit, Revives my soul again. If you cannot sing like angels, if you can’t preach like Paul, You can tell the love of Jesus, And say He died for all.”

This is the power of love. Curry concluded his sermon with these words by Teilhard de Chardin, “Someday, after mastering the winds, the waves, the tides and gravity, we shall harness for God the energies of love, and then, for a second time in the history of the world, man will have discovered fire.”

And those were the Gospel words that set the world on fire last Saturday in a chapel in Windsor, England. Let the fire come.