Opinion



The Most Rev. Bishop Michael Curry, presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church, left, chats with the Rev. Jim Wallis, president of Sojourners, before leading an interfaith vigil titled "Reclaiming the Integrity of Faith During Political and Moral Crisis" May 24 in Washington. (CNS/Reuters/Jonathan Ernst)



by Mariam Williams

View Author Profile

Follow on Twitter at @missmariamw

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

May 29, 2018
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

I was in a mountain cabin with no television and limited internet access the day Meghan Markle married Prince Harry, so I missed live broadcasts of the wedding ceremony. I'm not a royal watcher or a fan of the English monarchy. I think of each member of the British royal family as a friend of mine once described William and Kate's firstborn child: "a permanent vacationer" whose life has nothing to do with mine, beyond the broadest ways in which all human beings are connected to one another. I don't even share interest in most of their charitable causes.

But Markle, now the Duchess of Sussex, is a woman I relate to in some ways. She's an American-born woman one year younger than I am who would check "Black/African American" among her census boxes, who has a Black mother (mine was even a social worker for several years, too) and who is a self-identified feminist.

Also, I enjoy fashion. So I wanted to see the ceremony.

When I returned to civilization and Googled "royal wedding" to view the pictures and video, I was surprised to find the wedding sermon topping the search results. Social media friends also were mentioning a Black preacher talking about slavery and civil rights. *What kind of wedding ceremony includes a sermon?* I thought (although I have attended one in which the officiant's message to the couple of how to let God fill their lives despite tying their lives to one another clearly was a message to all of us not to allow anything or anyone to take God's place). So I clicked on a link to a transcript of the sermon.

I'm accustomed to preaching that centers African American experiences, so I didn't find The Most Rev. Michael B. Curry's message remarkable, but in the context of which he delivered it, it was quite stunning. In Windsor Castle, his audience the Queen of England, her descendants — people made wealthy in large part through the transatlantic slave trade and the colonization of African countries — and citizens who voted two years ago to leave a European Union burgeoning with immigrants of

color, Rev. Curry delivered a sermon praising the love of a member of the British royal family and a woman most likely descended from enslaved African people.

(Also daring, given England's wars with France, the Anglican Church's terrorism against Irish Catholics, and the same church's legendary stodginess, was Curry's hat-tip to Jesuit Roman Catholic priest and mystic Pierre Teilhard de Chardin.)

Advertisement

The Duke and Duchess of Sussex could not have arrived at the altar without love and its power, as Curry said, "to lift up and liberate when nothing else will" and "to transform." Meghan and Harry love each other despite a literal and metaphorical ocean's divide, and Black Americans, Black British citizens and women perhaps around the world see a window for change.

Curry linked the couple's love to Christ's "unselfish, sacrificial, redemptive love" that "can change the world." I don't believe the latest royal marriage will stop racism, sexism, misogyny, or the increasing wealth divide. I don't believe it will end territorial wars or make violence against people of color, homosexuals and transgender people unacceptable. One could even justifiably say there is nothing "unselfish, sacrificial or redemptive," about the love of two young, attractive, wealthy, famous people. But there is something hopeful about the way their histories have come together for something beautiful and purposeful.

May love's power lead us all.

[Mariam Williams is a Kentucky writer living in Philadelphia. She holds a Master of Fine Arts degree in creative writing and certificate in public history from Rutgers University-Camden. She is a contributor to the anthology Faithfully Feminist and blogs at MariamWilliams.com. Follow her on Twitter: @missmariamw.]

Editor's note: Don't miss Mariam Williams' column, At the Intersection. We can send you an email every time a new one is posted. Click on this page and sign up.