

To all those whose lives are being shaped by their love of Jesus,

SCRIPTURE:

Mark 10:9 (CEB) – Larger reading: Mark 10:1-12

“Therefore, humans must not pull apart what God has put together.”

STORY:

“What do people say when they get married, mother?” asked a small boy. “Why, they promise to love and be kind to each other,” his mother answered. “You’re not always married, are you, mother?” the boy protested.

OBSERVATION:

Marriage is a wonderful institution! But it is also probably the hardest thing that any two people are ever asked to do. Marriage can fulfill you and challenge you. It can cause you to laugh and turn you into tears in a second. It can provoke you to change and it can cause you to re-evaluate your path in life. Marriage is both a blessing and a curse.

A friend of mine, who was not a relative and was too soon taken from us because of a brain tumor, The Rev. O. Dean Martin, wrote a book many, many years ago entitled, *“Good Marriages Don’t Just Happen.”* It was so insightful that the University of Florida actually asked him to teach a course based on his understanding of the relationship that a husband and wife have with each other within the demands of marriage.

One of the things that I remember from the book and corresponding video series made using Dean as the teacher, was the line considering Dean’s marriage to Sandra. “We’ve been married 25 years it has been the best 22 years of my life! Now if you ask Sandra she probably will say that it was the best 19 years of her life.” And, that spoke to the reality of any relationship because there is a day here and a day there, a week here and a week there, and, sometimes, a month here and a month there that, according to Dean, *“You simply want to take your partner to the highest mountain, push them off and tell God that they slipped.”*

Dean also said: *“Nothing breaks God’s heart more than a broken marriage ... accept one that should be broken.”* Sobering words when faced with a difficult situation, but shouldn’t be used as a “get out of jail” free card.

Nobody can live with another human being and be “happy” all of the time ... that simply isn’t possible. Oh, I’ve attended my fair share of 50th Wedding Anniversary parties and have heard the couple talk about their bliss filled 50 years together. I’ve heard it said, at these celebrations, that *“we’ve been married 50 years and never had a cross word to say to each other.”* Now, my friends, either they are not telling the truth or somebody sure bites their tongue a lot.

One older gentleman shared, at his anniversary celebration, that he was determined that he would never say anything in anger to his wife. He decided that he would take a long walk every time they got into a disagreement in order to allow the situation to cool down. *"I must be approaching 10,000 miles by now,"* he said. That is the reality of being married.

Another way to look at this special relationship is what I call the "Half-glass syndrome." I can either consider the glass half-full or half-empty ... which when translated into marriage is that I can either look at our relationship and consider the good things about our relationship (the half-full concept) or I can concentrate on what is wrong with the relationship (the half-empty concept). One will bring happiness and fulfillment, the other will bring criticism and fault find ... and nothing but heartache. It is our choice.

I also believe in the Providence of God. In connection to marriage it means that God brought the two people together for marriage. God knew that this particular individual would complete you and cause you to become all that He had created you to be. Sometimes growth is difficult and sometimes it can test your resolve to stay together, but if you determine that love is the answer then you will always see the glass as half-full.

I write this as Margaret and I celebrate our 55th Wedding Anniversary today ... it was 55 years ago, at 8 PM that Margaret Marie Sever and James Wesley Martin stood before The Rev. Claude Thompson at Allapattah Methodist Church in Miami, Florida and made a commitment to be husband and wife ... for better or for worse. We are celebrating the "for better" part!

QUOTE:

"To keep your marriage brimming / With love in the loving cup / Whenever you're wrong, admit it / Whenever you're right, shut up!" - Ogden Nash

PRAYER: *(the prayer used in a traditional marriage ceremony)*

O God, you have so consecrated the covenant of Christian marriage that in it is represented the covenant between Christ and his Church. Send therefore your blessings upon this man and this woman, that they may surely keep their marriage covenant, and so grow in love and godliness together that their home may be a haven of blessing and a place of peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

And the faith journey continues, Pastor Jim

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