

Sermon Notes

St Mark's Anglican Church
South Hurstville

Wedding

Preacher

26 May 2007

The Reverend Chris Albany
Rector

Readings: 1 Corinthians 13. 1-13; *Why Marriage* by Mari Nichols

Why Marriage

We have had a reminder this week, if we needed it that marriage is between two equal individuals, who each bring their unique gifts and talent to the relationship. I refer of course to the events surrounding Kevin Rudd and his wife Therese Rein and Mr Rudd's comments about professional women not just being the appendages of middle aged men. Heidi I am sure you are glad to know that you are not just becoming an appendage of Steve. Steve, nor are you losing your freedom, as perhaps some of your friends may have tried to suggest in the last few days! Jackie Kelly the M.P. who has just announced she is leaving politics for family reasons, also had something helpful to say about marriage when being interviewed by Geraldine Doogue on ABC radio this morning. She said, "Marriage is not just about finding the right partner, it is about being the right partner." She went on to say that this takes work and it is not always easy. Indeed building a successful marriage is not easy – it requires commitment and love, the kind of love which St Paul talks about in the reading we have just heard (from Corinthians 13). Contrary to what we often are lead to believe love is not about feelings – about "being in love" or "falling in love", rather it is about actions and behaviour. Look at what St Paul says in that reading, "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres." It's about actions and behaviour rather than feelings. In some translations it in part says, "There is nothing love cannot face". It is about sharing the best and the worst that life brings. Love is shown when a person still acts on the best interests if another no matter what they are feeling. This is expressed in that delightful first reading *Why Marriage? by Mari Nichols* when it says, "who loves me when I am unlikeable....." Love is about what we do, not how we feel. It is a decision, a commitment which we need to make each and every day.

As I talk about this I am reminded of the story of the couple, lets call them Mary and Bill who had been married for 50 years. Everybody knew that Bill was a pretty cantankerous character and people had often marvelled how Mary had stuck with him all the years. So at the party to celebrate their Golden Wedding Anniversary, someone said to her, "Mary, we all know what a difficult man Bill must be to live with – how have you stuck it out for so many years? Haven't you ever been tempted to divorce him?" Mary paused for a moment and then with a smile said – "Divorce him? Murder, yes but divorce, no never!"

Now don't get me wrong, I'm not saying that people should put up with anything. There are some things that people should never be tolerated such as violence and abuse of any kind. Some relationships become so destructive that it is better to leave than to allow that to continue. I am saying that one shouldn't give up too easily – I am talking about accepting responsibility for one's share in making the relationship and marriage work.

Mari Nichols in the first reading talks about this when she says " ...I take half of the responsibility for my marriage..." Now that is true, in as far as it goes, though there is some danger in 50-50 thinking. It can lead to thinking that I've done my share, now I'll sit back and let my partner do his/hers. Rather than seeing it as a 50-50 relationship I prefer to think of marriage as a 100-100 relationship in which each partner continually seeks to give 100% of what it is they have to give to

the relationship at that time. Sometimes because of life's circumstances, perhaps the pressures and stresses of work, or because of sickness or injury one partner may only have a very little to give – perhaps only 5% of what the relationship needs and they well needed to be carried, supported by the other; then at other times it will be the other ways round. Each just needs to focus on giving all that they have it in them to give for the sake of the other and not worry about whether its half or more or less. Sometimes it will be much, much more sometimes less.

In thinking about this let me finish by sharing with you the 10 commandments of love and marriage in the hope they will help you build a relationship that lasts and endures and grows richer and deeper, moment by moment, year by year.

1. Love thrives in the face of all life's hazards save one: Neglect
2. Love treats your partner with worth and dignity when you don't feel like it and they don't deserve it.
3. Love acknowledges that the one who forgives first wins. !
4. Love throws away the parachute. In a marriage there's no baling out. Work through the issues. Love hangs in.
5. Love means that we may not always be right. !
6. Love says that the secret of success in conversation is to be able to disagree without being disagreeable.
7. Love means we can try to praise our spouse even if they do get a little frightened at first.
8. Love says fight fairly; don't dump on the other; if we throw dirt all we do is lose ground.
9. Love means we never let a generous impulse pass.
10. It's just as hard to live with the person you love, as it is to love the person you live with but stick at it.

Love is a commitment, a continual decision to act for what is in the best interests of the other-a daily decision to be there for the other through the ups and downs of life-to be sheltered, nurtured, encouraged-sometimes carrying the other sometimes being carried.

Finally remember that this wedding is happening in church for a reason – it is Christian marriage you are embarking upon as such there are three, not just two of you involved. God is the third in this relationship. At the end of the 4th chapter of the Book of Ecclesiastes written about 2,300 years ago are these words, “A threefold cord is not quickly broken”. Heidi and Steve you in a sense are two of those *strands* and God is the third. GOD IS LOVE the New Testament reminds us, the kind of love I have been alluding to – the one who is constantly present to guide, encourage strengthen us through all that life brings our way. Always with us and for us, never over against us. In as much as you are open to God in your lives and relationship, there will be that extra strength to keep you together that the ancient Hebrew writer alludes to.

May God constantly enable you to grow in love together so that you discover your love grows and deepens day by day, year by year.