

The Basis of Marriage - Complete Service

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

Now, brothers and sisters I would really encourage you to take part in the conversation with me, and we'll just trust the Holy Spirit to show me when to stop talking, and when to let us have questions, and go back and forward a little. I say that because, we in this society, have been so brain washed with wrong concepts of marriage, that it is very important that I don't just try to brain wash you with another concept, but that we have a real opportunity to interact with each other on the whole subject, so that we really are convinced of what God's plan is.

I'd start off by making this statement, that the basis of marriage is not love. The basis of marriage is not love. The basis of marriage is God's will. Now I think the Holy Spirit will show you a modification of that as we go on, but I think that's the first truth for us to receive into our hearts. And I know all your happy little hearts are rebelling like mad against it. But loved ones, the basis of marriage is not love, as we so often think of love. The basis of marriage is God's will, and that's the truth you have stated clearly in that Old Testament scripture, and it's the truth that is taught repeatedly through the Bible in regard to marriage.

Abraham, when he required a son, a wife for his son, did not tell Isaac to go out and put a telescope on the girls going to the well, and notice the one with blonde with hair, or the one that walked especially attractively, or the one that looked as if he could live with her satisfactorily for life. Abraham did not do that. Abraham's first concern was, "What is God's choice for my son?" And that is the whole basis of the story loved ones, and it's even the basis on which the in-laws agree to it. If you like to look at it, it's Genesis 24:50, and Rebekah's father treats it that way. Genesis 24:50, "Then Laban and Bethuel answered, "The thing comes from the LORD; we cannot speak to you bad or good. Behold, Rebekah is before you, take her and go, and let her be the wife of your master's son, as the LORD has spoken." Now that's the only basis for a good marriage, that God wills for two people to be husband and wife.

The basis for marriage is not that you look at the girl, or you look at the guy and you think, "Yeah, I'd love to live with her for life," because let me tell you a secret, and I'm only 15 years married, but a secret that many people here who are 20, 30 years married could also tell you, you don't know what they're going turn out like. You don't. You don't, you just haven't a notion. You may look and you may think, "Awe, she's going to be just wonderful," and you may look at him and say, "Awe, he's just going be the most steady fella that you could imagine." You cannot tell what we're going turn out like. You can't, you just cannot tell. Especially, of course when you marry early on, but even if you marry towards 30 you still can't really tell how a person will behave how a person under all the strains and under all the pressures of life, and especially under all the advantages that they will begin to experience as life gets steadier and more stable.

So loved ones, it is madness to look at a guy, or girl and try to judge from your own point of view of your foresight, and you're guessing what they're going to be like, it's madness to try to judge will they be suitable for you. The only way to start a marriage is to know that God wants this person for your wife, and God wants this person as your husband, and that's the only basis for marriage. That's why the wedding service has those words in it, "I take thee to be my lawful wedded wife to live together according to the law of God in the holiest state of matrimony. I undertake to love her, keep her, and then I plight thee my troth. There to, I plight thee my troth."

And plight is the old English word 'I make', and troth is the old word for 'covenant'. And there to I make a covenant with you. And that's the basis of the wedding, that because God has indicated that you should be husband and wife you make a covenant that, that's it. "Lord, I don't care what she does; I don't care what he does. Lord God, you've indicated that we're to be man and wife, I make a covenant here in the presence of this congregation, and in the presence of the angels, and arch angels, and all the company of heaven, and I make it in the name of Jesus, your only begotten Son, and I call heaven to witness that I make an agreement with this women, that I stay with her till death us do part." Why? "Because I think she's going to turn out right, because I like the look of her, because I like being with her?" No, no. All those things are uncertain, and none of them may obtain, but because you have indicated Lord God, that we should be husband, and wife together.

Now loved ones that's the greatest reason for being husband and wife in the world. And you dear wives are saying, "Oh, would you shut up? I want him to love me more than everybody else in the world." It can't be, it can't be, it can't be. He can love you differently from everybody else in the world. He can express that love to you in a unique way because your husband and wife. She can express that love to you in a unique way you're her husband, but it can't be because you love each other more than anybody else in the world, because at least the children are going to have as much love from you. But if you're in Jesus, you're going to be called upon to love many other people with the same degree of love, though you'll express it in a different way. So it can't be that loved ones.

Anyway, that's a very fickle basis for marriage, because there come days when he's not so sure if he loves you as much as he loved you before, and there come days when you're not so sure you love him as much as you loved him before, and love is a fickle thing from the point of view of human expression. And the only basis for solid marriage is God intended us to be together, husband and wife, and we have made an agreement that will prejudice our sole salvation if we break it.

Loved ones, that provides a security that is not like anything else in the world. That gives your loved one a security that no one else can give. That no declaration of your fickle feelings at that particular moment can improve on, and that's really the only basis for marriage. Loved ones, it just cannot be, "I want security," it can't be, no. The basis for marriage can't be, "I want security. I need somebody to look after me in my old age. I need somebody to provide for me. Well I'm tired working, I need somebody to earn the money so that I can have children, and I always like playing with dolls, and playing with homes, and I want to be free to do that, so I want somebody to provide for me while I do it." Loved ones, it can't be that, don't we see that? It can't be that he will give you, your security, because then you quake every time the poor fella loses the job. You quake every time the recession hits. You drive him crazy every time he doesn't seem to be giving you what you think you should have, materially.

It can't be security. It can't be dear brothers, it can't be, "I'll marry her so that I'll feel some significance, so that I'll have children, and I'll at least be able to reproduce myself, and make a little bigger splash in the world, or maybe I'll have somebody that will look up to me when I come home, and get my slippers out, and make things right for me." Loved ones, it can't be that. You can't marry the poor dear, because you expect her to give you the significance that maybe nobody else gives you at work. And it'll just fall apart, if you continue to look to her for that significance.

It can't even be for happiness, loved ones, it really can't. It can't be marrying so that she'll

give you a happy life, or marrying so that he'll give you a happy life, because I would imagine most husbands and wives here will agree, there are many times when it is not happy, happy, happiness, it just isn't. There are hard times. There are times when the greatest thing that you have is that dear one, who just stays with you through it all, but she can't give you much happiness at the time and you can't marry for happiness.

Now loved ones, that's the difference between a Christian marriage and a non-Christian marriage. And it's stated there in 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8. "For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from unchastity; that each one of you know how to take a wife for himself in holiness and honor." That's because God wants you. "Not in the passion of lust like heathen who do not know God; that no man transgress, and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we solemnly forewarned you. For God has not called us for uncleanness, but in holiness. Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you." And the point of the whole statement is that each one of you know how to take a wife for himself in holiness and honor, not on the passion of lust like heathen.

So for the great mass of us who married because she looked good, or married because we thought she would give us emotionally, or physically the satisfaction that we felt we deserved, or for those sisters here who married for that reason that you thought he would give you the emotional satisfaction, or the physical satisfaction that you wanted out of marriage, do you see that, that's what the heathen do? That there is little difference between the heathen and the animal kingdom, that they all marry because of the sexual satisfaction that they will get from each other. And loved ones, it can't be the basis of marriage.

And every husband and wife here who are married even more than five years will attest to that that you can't live on physical lust and physical excitement. That there comes a time when you can no longer, if you even like to put it as bluntly as this, you cannot work out enough permutations of physical interaction with each other to keep you interested in each other. You can't, loved ones. There's a certain limit to how much excitement you can get from each other's bodies. And I think everyone of us who are married even more than four or five years would say that has faded. That whole thing has faded into the background.

It's certainly an element in our marriage, but a rare element; it's not the basis of our marriage. Besides loved ones, even us wonderful guys who remain continually young and handsome while those poor old wives get so dowdy looking, even we do not remain continually attractive, and that's pretty obvious. You just don't loved ones; you're dear to each other because you're precious to each other. So all of us who have wives here this morning, think of those wives as the most beautiful women in the whole world, but it's because of what we see in their hearts. It's because we've traveled with them a long time, and they're dear and precious friends who have stuck by us through all kinds of experiences. That's what makes them beautiful. And so if you'd ask us, "Are they really beautiful?" We'd say, "Yeah, sure they are," because in our eyes they are really beautiful.

But that's where the beauty is. It's not in the physical satisfaction that comes from each other. And if there is any physical joy at all it comes because of the inner love you have for each other. It really does. And loved ones, if the older brothers and sisters will forgive me a little here, because I think we are under tremendous pressure in this generation to believe that unless the marriage is good in bed, it isn't good. That's foolishness, absolute foolishness. There are dozens of us here who will attest to the fact that what makes a good marriage is that you know God intended

you to be together, and you respect, and love each other, and you trust each other, and that's the basis of the marriage.

At times it's good in bed, at times it's bad in bed, and that's incidental and it doesn't matter. It has little to do with it. Now I press you on that, because I think a number of you have wild ideas about what marriage is. Loved ones, the physical fades into the background. In fact it's like this, shaking hands with a loved one, is a way to express friendship. Now that's all it is. Now sexual intercourse is a way to express friendship. Once the shaking hands becomes the center of everything, there's no longer any friendship, there's no longer any real relationship, there's no longer any right perspective or right balance left in the relationship. And loved ones, that's true, the shaking hands is precious because of the love in each heart, so it is with the sexual intercourse. But the thing itself has no meaning.

And so I press it upon you loved ones, and those of you who read all these books that are preoccupied with the nonessential side of marriage, and I press you on that, it is the nonessential side. There are many of us here this morning who have happy, and good, and satisfying marriages, and we're not preoccupied with the physical side of the marriage. There are many loved ones here who have been preoccupied with the physical side, and the thing has fallen apart. So loved ones, really the basis of marriage is, God's will for you to join your life to this other loved one, and your attitude of love and respect to that other loved one, and then what comes from that is beautiful and natural.

Now loved ones, there are many other topics and if you ask me questions regarding the other topics, will you let me postpone them until next Sunday, so that at least we could deal with that just up to this point? Because I think from the sound of this that it will maybe take us three or four Sundays to cover it. So now any questions loved ones, up to that point? So, if you guys and girls say, "Well then how do we choose our mate?" Well it's vital to come to the place where God's will is dearer to you than physical satisfaction. That's really the first step anyways.

Question from the audience:

Can you suggest any ways in which we could explain to non-Christian families, that God intends us to be together?

Reply from Pastor O'Neill:

Loved ones, I think I speak for most mums and dads here this morning, that parents are always impressed when there is a balance, and a restraint, and an exercise of discipline, and will power in a relationship. So if you are at the moment going with someone and you're sure that God wants you to be together with that someone, then your parents will be more easily convinced of that if your relationship expresses a balance, and a restraint, and a will power, and a self-discipline. I think parents are most concerned when you seem to be a wild fanatic convinced that, "I cannot live without this person, and the wedding has to be before this spring." I think parents always get nervous when that kind of thing operates, because loved ones, I would testify from our own experience that we knew that God wanted us together. We happened to be on scholarships to University in Ireland, and you'd simply lose your scholarship, and you can't work your way through school in Ireland, you need the scholarship money, we'd have lost the scholarship money if we'd married.

We married three and a half years later, but there was absolute contentment in our hearts. We knew

God wanted us together, we knew it was going to come about, we knew that it was going to happen, and there was no reason to rush or push. There was no feeling that you might lose each other if you didn't do it quickly. It seems that parents are especially impressed if there's that kind of patient, contentment and readiness to wait in the brother. I think sis that is one of the big things. If it's God's will it's going to come about anyway. And I find what a lot of you loved ones do is, you maybe are meant to be together, and you know that, and God does intend you be together, but then you run out of his will by the way you run the relationship. And you say, "Lord, this is your will so I am going to bring it about in my way." But it seems very important not only to know God's will but to have it done in God's way, and in God's time.

Question from the audience:

How do we know God's will?

Reply from Pastor O'Neill:

Really, brother at the end of the day, God is always sending his Holy Spirit down to every one of us in this room, even those of us who may be almost atheist. God's Spirit is always trying to get through to us. And the truth is if we will tune out all the other strong desires that we have, God will make his will known. So hearing God's will is a little like trying to tune in the right station or channel on a CB radio. If you tune out all the other interference, then the station comes through loud and clear. It's a bit like that with the Father's will, if we will only die to the tremendously strong lusts I would almost call them, because lust in its real sense does not apply only to the physical, but a lust for power, or a lust for money, is something also that is real in us. If we would die to those tremendous lusts, and those tremendously strong desires, then God would make his will known brother.

But I think what happens to many of us is, we get brain washed with Playboy, we get brainwashed with the movies that we foolishly go to see, because some of them are just, I think straight from the pit, and I think I'm liberal about the whole business of movies, but I think we go to these things and we become brainwashed with the idea of what the girl has to look like, and the kind of way she has to behave, and our desires are filled with those thoughts. And so those are so loud and strong, brother, that God cannot get his word in at all, and so the passage and scripture is the place where Elijah you remember, heard the thunderstorm, and the fire, and God was not in the thunder, he was not in the fire, but he was in and then King James says, "He was in the still small voice." But the Hebrew says, "He was the sound of gentle stillness."

And it's the sound of gentle stillness that the Holy Spirit brings into a heart that wants God's way more than their own way, that reveals God's will. And the trouble loved ones, with us is you see, we've been taught to fall head over heels, or to get utterly caught up with the way the person looks, or the way the person can sing, or the abilities they have, and we've been tuned into all of that, so that is so strong in us that we can experience no sound of gentle stillness. Loved ones, the truth is; if it's really God's will, then you should be willing to break up with the person if God tells you. That's the test. If this relationship is really God's will then you should be willing to break it if he tells you to, or to initiate if he tells you to. That's the key. And I would ask you to ask yourself that and don't just answer it in a prejudice way.

Question from the audience:

Is God's will decided at any certain time in a person's life?

Reply from Pastor O'Neill:

Obviously, there come real moments of decision and I do think you have to very seriously remember those words of Sir Thomas Moore in "A Man for All Seasons", that there do come moments when a person has his whole life in his hands like water, and if at that moment of decision he dares to open his hands, his life slips through them, and is gone forever. And sis, I would have to say, first of all, that most of us would testify the fact that there are real moments of decision when it's vital for you to make the right decision. But it does seem that God's will usually is revealed in a gradual way. And really if you keep on following him, you find yourself being lead gradually into this plain and obvious way to go.

Now, I think for many of us the trouble is, we're not following out God's will in the little things. He tells us to stop wasting our evenings, or he tells us to start applying ourselves to our studies, or he tells us to start reading the Bible, and we keep grieving him, and grieving him saying no to all these little decisions and so actually what we're doing is walking more and more in our own way. And then we demand that he super imposes a kind of overdrive on us to pull us out of our own way into his way. And that's I think, where many of us live our lives in confusion, because instead of opening out to God more and more in little decisions and therefore naturally coming into his will for us, we're opening out more and more our own way in little decisions and then we're asking him to almost come down in a helicopter and take us out and put us over there. And he refuses to do it because he will not overrule our free will. So I would say sis, gradual opening out towards God in the little decisions. You'll make a decision after lunch today; you'll make a decision that will either move you towards life and God, or towards death.

Question from the audience:

[Question Inaudible 26:59].

Reply from Pastor O'Neill:

Well brother, I will get in great detail to that next Sunday, but I would remind you loved ones, that Paul was talking I mean, the betrothed are those who were engaged, you know. And he is talking about engaged couples who had already moved well towards marriage, and he was speaking to them rather than to guys or girls who were absolutely unattached, and that's why he tries to make those concessions, look if your relationship has gone to the point where obviously it should open into marriage then by all means marry, you do not sin. And of course, we ourselves get all caught up with Paul's prejudices. He hadn't prejudices, it's simply he was speaking to engaged couples in much of those verses in 1 Corinthians 7.

Question from the audience:

[Question Inaudible 28:16]

Reply from Pastor O'Neill:

The qualities you're looking for in the person's life? Yeah, I'm with you brother, there's no

question loved ones, you'll get – it's really interesting you know, but the old psychologists here will say, "You get the children you deserve." And the truth is you'll probably get the wife you deserve. It's interesting that God – there's a verse of a hymn, that's says, "Prayer is the soul's sincere desire uttered or unexpressed." Prayer is the soul's sincere desire. And I think, you see, a lot of us pray very holy prayers. We pray Lord, for a woman who is pure, and has a gentle heart, and has a heart for your kingdom, and we pray that prayer. But inwardly our sincere desire is for a woman that will give us satisfaction physically, and emotionally, and God answers the real prayer of our hearts, you see.

There are laws built into the universe, loved ones, that means that you will get what you really want. And there's no question brother that, that's I think one of the needs that you have to meet before you can receive God's choice for you, and that is to begin to want the kind of women or the kind of man God wants for you. And I agree with anyone here who says, "Isn't that difficult in this society?" I think it is, but I think that's why God has called us together as a family like this, so that we will begin to treasure the values that are real and eternal in each other. And so that we will begin to learn not to judge each other by the outward appearance, but by the inward beauty of each other's hearts, but it is necessary to come to that.

Now loved ones, could I finish on just one emphasis that I know God wanted me to share today? I think there are many of you here who say, "What, what if we married and we weren't even Christians? So how could we even know that it was God's will for us to marry?" Or, "What if we married and we were Christians but we aren't really sure that it was God's will to marry each other?" Loved ones, the meaning of Romans 8:28, "All things work together for good to them that love God," or, "God works together for good in them that love him." The real meaning of that is that God never lets anything take place in your life that he is not able to redeem. God does not permit anything to take place in your life that he is not able to redeem. And so it is a charge against God to say, "Maybe we should never have been married?" God over saw your life even when you were not a Christian, that's the meaning of verses like this. [Audio file ends abruptly]