

## **Till Death Do Us Part - Sermon 1 - Ideal vs. Real**

### **May 10, 2015**

Happy Mother's Day to you. Thank you moms for all you do. Today and the coming weeks have a lot to do with family. We have Mother's Day and Father's Day. We have graduations. Over this next month, there seems to be a lot of times that family gets together. So, for the next several weeks we want to talk about family, specifically marriage.

I get to talk with many couples, who also happen to be parents. I usually ask, "Is he a good dad?" The mom will say, "He is great." I can ask the dad, "Is she a good mom?" The dad will reply "She is awesome." I then ask the husband, "Is she a good wife?" He will say, "She stinks." I can ask the wife, "Is he a good husband?" She will say, "He is terrible." For some reason, most people are good parents, but they fail to be good partners.

Now if you are not married, I know it is easy to mentally check out and say, "Great, this will have nothing for me." I don't think that is going to be the case. We are going to break the wedding vows down. You know them... "To have and to hold; For better, for worse; for richer, for poorer; in sickness and health; to love and to cherish; and forsaking all other people; till death do us part". Those are pretty ideal statements. Those are some pretty big promises. I think these ideal statements have so much for us to learn about life and relationships. Some of you are students or young adults and you may choose to marry one day. Listen to what God wants for your future. Some of you in here want to be married. Instead of looking for the right person, take these next several weeks and ask God to use our time to help you become the right person.

I think one of the toughest things about marriage is when these ideal promises meet up with the reality of day to day marriage. Jesus seems to address this in a passage I want us to look at this morning. Look at Matthew 19:3 "Some Pharisees came and tried to trap him with this question: 'Should a man be allowed to divorce his wife for just any reason?'" The reason they are testing him is because they know he has been saying some weird things. Jesus has been saying some "ideal"

things that go beyond their standards. Do you remember the sermon he preached on a mountain? He said, “You have heard the commandment that says, ‘You must not commit adultery.’ But I say, anyone who even looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” Jesus raised the bar. But as the bar got higher, the grace got bigger. He taught and pointed to an ideal in the midst of our real.

These guys ask about divorce. Back then, they had a version of no fault divorce that you can’t imagine. Here’s how it worked. If a man didn’t want to be married to his wife anymore, he could say “I divorce you” and that was it. No alimony, no provision...she had to get out. If a woman wanted to divorce her husband, she could not do it. She didn’t have the authority or the rights to get out of a marriage. She was stuck.

Look how Jesus responds, “Haven’t you read the Scriptures?” This was a great insult for those, who considered themselves well read. Jesus continues, he replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.”

Jesus takes them back and says, “at the beginning.” These guys weren’t focused on “the beginning”. They were focused on the present—the Real. I doubt marriage was much different than it was now. Maybe they were counseling people in the church, whose marriages were falling apart. They probably said things like we do, “People are so different.” “It is hard to stay together and keep the fire lit for such a long time.” “These people are miserable.” Maybe they were asking for themselves. Jesus says, “Let me take you back to the beginning when things were perfect, when things were ideal, when things were like God wanted them.”

Jesus understood the real, but He was not willing to compromise the ideal. In fact, he used every opportunity to elevate the ideal. These guys were so stuck in the real that they had lost sight of the ideal. What about you and your marriage? Is the real overwhelming? Has it got real comfortable? For many of us, in the midst of our real, we tend to lose sight of the ideal

and pursue something that is less than. In fact when it is real hard, you may be tempted to throw in the towel all together.

Jesus has these guys so confused. He really hasn't answered their question. They can't figure out why he is talking about what God did in the beginning, so they go for their trump card...Moses. "Why then," they asked, "did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?" Jesus corrects them by saying, "Moses **permitted** you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning." These guys had gotten so far away from God's ideal and maybe we have too.

Maybe it is like the story of 4 year old Suzy, who was just told the story of Snow White for the first time in her life while in preschool. She could hardly wait to get home and tell her mother. With wide-eyed excitement she retold the tale to her mother. After relating how Prince Charming arrived on a white horse and kissed Snow White, Suzy asked, "And then do you know what happened?" "Yes," her mother replied, "they lived happily ever after." "NO!" responded Suzy with a frown, "they got MARRIED!"

How do we pursue this Ideal in the midst of the real? I think Paul gives us some idea in the second chapter of Philippians. Look how he begins... "Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and compassionate? Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose."

Do you get what he is saying here? Is your relationship with Jesus making a difference in your relationships with a spouse, your kids, your family or friends? Paul says that your relationship with Jesus and the Holy Spirit, who lives inside of you, should make you more agreeable, more loving and more one with these people, who you are in relationship with.

If that isn't challenging enough, he goes on in verse 3 "Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest

in others, too.” This is Paul’s heart for the people of Ephesus, but I think this is just God’s heart for us and our relationships.

If that is all he said, that would leave me very frustrated. That sounds great, but how do I do it. Paul says, “Let me introduce you to **someone who did it** and let me tell you the **specifics of how he did it.**”

Philippians 2:5 says, “You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.” Notice the word must. This isn’t an encouragement. It isn’t a nice thing for you to consider. If you want to be able to do the things Paul mentioned about agreeing, loving and being one, here is what you have to do. Here is the model you must follow.

Let’s look at how Jesus did it. Philippians 2:6 says, “Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to.” Do you remember in the Story, we learn that Jesus was not only with God in the beginning; He was God. Let me give you this mental picture. Jesus has in his hand heaven. He is the Creator of all things. He has these things in his grasp, but he was willing to let go and grab on to something else.

At first, when I started studying this passage, I went “great...I have to be like Jesus”. But then, I began to realize how difficult it was for him to let go of heaven and grab on to us. You see, he did that knowing our sin condition and not knowing whether we would love him back. For me to do something like we are going to read about shouldn’t be hard. I don’t really have anything to give up. He was God. He had everything to give up and he didn’t have to do it.

Look at what it describes that he grabbed on to. Philippians 2:7, 8 says, “Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal’s death on a cross.” Do you hear what he did? He gave up. He took the humble position. He humbled himself in obedience to God. He willingly died.

Bill Hybels says, Jesus was “...All Powerful, yet cried; the owner of all things, He had no home. The King of Kings, He became a bondservant;

the source of truth, He was found guilty of blasphemy; the Creator, He was spit on by the creatures; the giver of life, He was crucified naked on a cross.”

Do you get what he was willing to do? He was willing to go down? Who in here likes the word down? Down is associated with down and out, downfall, downscale, downhill and downhearted. It is the exact opposite of what most of us are shooting for.

Maybe that is what it takes to pursue God's ideal. In fact if you look at verse 9, it says, “Therefore, God elevated Jesus to the highest place of honor and gave him the name above all names, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord.” The word therefore is a transitional word. Because Jesus was willing to enter our real, God was able to bring about his ideal. Jesus was willing to be broken “therefore” God's power restored Jesus to where God, the Father, wanted him all along.

We avoid being broken. We want to avoid pain. We build walls to protect ourselves even in our marriage. The path Jesus took was just the opposite. He risked trusting. He made himself vulnerable. He went from heaven to hell, from God to man, and from Creator to corpse. Mike and Diane chose a path that was risky. They sacrificed their individual wills for God's will. They were willing to be broken. Maybe that is the big question about pursuing God's ideal in marriage...are we willing to be broken together?