

Sunday Sermon September 27, 2026

Two weeks ago, I officiated at a wedding in the lakes region of northern New Hampshire. It was a beautiful place and a wonderful young couple, Kamil and Caroline. The wedding took place in a lovely little community church in Sandwich, and officiating that day reminded me, once again, of how much I love the wedding ceremony in our Book of Common Prayer. The language – the thoughtful, elegant, spiritual language of our marriage ceremony.

Here you go, from the opening statement: “The union of two people in a life of mutual fidelity is intended by God for their mutual joy; for the help and comfort given one another in prosperity and adversity; and, when it is God’s will, for the procreation of children and their nurture in the knowledge and love of the Lord. Therefore marriage is not to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly, but reverently, deliberately, and in accordance with the purposes for which it was instituted by God.”

It speaks of comfort given in prosperity and adversity...

Then the couple is asked: “Will you love them, comfort them, honor and keep them – in sickness and in health?” With smiles on their faces they dutifully reply: “I will.”

Then the vows: “to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish.” In sickness and in health...

Standing in front of God and a church filled with well-scrubbed family and friends, the beaming young couple say these words, make these promises, to each other. Beautiful, hopeful, spiritual words, without knowing – without knowing what life will bring.

On their wedding day, they do not know. What will the adversity be? Will it be richer or poorer? Standing there, young and secure and healthy, it’s hard to imagine sickness. It’s all going to be better, right? And healthy, like we are now. Right?

Now before you think that I preach wedding homilies that are real downers – like “adversity and sickness are coming,” I assure you that I love hearing the couple say “I will” to loving and comforting and honoring. I love hearing the vows “for better for worse, richer or poorer, in sickness and in health.”

It’s aspirational. And, with God’s help, we can live this kind of covenant of love. We can have a love for each other that resembles God’s love for us – unconditional and everlasting.

It’s important to say these words, to take them to heart, and to return to them over the course of years. It’s important to hope and dream for a beautiful life together filled with all good things. It’s holding up an ideal before knowing what life will bring, so that when the challenges come, we remember the promises we made.

But it needs to be more than words. More than words, the promises need to lived out from day to day.

That’s one of the points of the simple little story that Jesus tells in today’s Gospel. 2 sons. Each asked to go out and work in the vineyard and one says the right words: “sure, I’ll go.” But he doesn’t go. The other does as the father asks.

Which of the two did the father’s will? The one who talked about it, or the one who did it? The one who acted, they reply. The story tells us something about words and actions. About walking the talk. About embodying the covenant we make with God and each other.

As inspired as I am by the beautiful words of our marriage service in the Prayer Book, as much as I enjoy witnessing couples making these beautiful promises to each other, I am even more inspired when I see these vows **lived out**, in big and small ways, by people who love each other.

Caring for an ailing spouse. It’s difficult work, but it’s living out the “in sickness” part of the vow that was made sometimes long ago.

When this love expands it includes caring for an ailing parent, child, grandchild or friend, and even a stranger. The bonds of love that unite us as God's family are lived out through our actions, through the steps we take to care for each other "in sickness and in health."

I am always deeply moved as I see people caring for a loved one, putting that person's needs ahead of their own, making sacrifices, putting love into action.

As Jesus described the Kingdom of God come near, He painted a picture of a Kingdom where we forgive 70x 7 times, and give our coat in addition to shirt, and walk the extra mile. He reached out to those cast aside and the ones labeled "sinners." He didn't just talk about compassion, mercy, justice and love, He lived them out, and He calls us to do the same.

To say "yes" to His call to love every neighbor, to seek and serve Christ in every sister and brother, to respect the dignity of every human being, and then to put that "yes" into practice in big and small ways.

So that we might walk the talk of our faith.

Amen