

The Road Less Traveled – April 13, 2018

I was driving toward Dallas the other day when I saw a billboard that made my blood boil. It did what a billboard is supposed to do, I guess. It caught my eye. “Double Your Closet Space!” the message proclaimed in huge letters. It caught my eye because I assumed it was an ad from The Container Store, and my family has a long relationship with that particular retailer. But it wasn’t. It was an ad for a divorce attorney.

Now I know family practice attorneys have to make a living, and to do that they probably need to advertise. I don’t necessarily like what they do, but I know they serve an unfortunate necessity. It was the glib nature of the promotion that offended me.

I mean, I live in the real world. I am not that naïve. I know divorce happens. In fact, I know that in many cases it is the best of a series of bad options. My parents divorced when I was 10. In fact, divorce is probably more common than not in my extended family. So I know it happens. And sometimes – especially in the case of physical or emotional abuse – it is absolutely necessary.

But is divorce ever an occasion to celebrate or make jokes? I think not.

In the end, divorce signifies the death of a dream. In most cases two people get married with the intention of sharing a life together. Sometimes the odds seem better than others at the outset, but I think nearly all people go into marriage intending forever. Sometimes though – either because of external forces or bad decisions on the part of one or both spouses – that dream of forever withers and dies. I think there is a lot that is sometimes left undone in terms of really trying to breathe new life back into a relationship, but the fact remains that sometimes it dies. And when it does, then divorce becomes a sad reality. And it is a reality that I always grieve, regardless of how bad the situation. Because divorce is a legal action that serves as the postmortem for a dead dream.

I think the casual nature of the billboard hit me wrong because it spoke to how accustomed we have become to marriages ending. I was watching a television show not long ago, and one of the middle-aged male characters confided to a male colleague that his wife had asked him for a divorce. “Hey I’m sorry, man,” the second man said to the obviously distraught husband. “But, you know, these things happen.” Aside from showing no aptitude for counseling, the second man pretty much summed up what has become the prevailing attitude about marriage.

If you can make it work, great. But if not, well these things happen.

My point is that it is not supposed to be that way, at least not for those of us who profess to follow Christ. Marriage may not be a sacrament in The United Methodist Church, but it certainly has sacramental qualities. A sacrament – The Lord’s Supper and Baptism – reveals something extraordinary, something holy, in the substance of ordinary. That is, I am convinced, God’s intention for marriage. It represents two people committing themselves

to God to minister to, nurture and grow with another person in a way that no one else on earth can. That an ordinary day, doing the most ordinary things, can create a window revealing something of the Divine.

A couple of nights ago Melissa and I were sharing our evening devotional, which just happened to be on the subject of marriage. And the author, a United Methodist pastor named J.D. Walt, said this: "The revelation of Christ inspires a response of worship from the church. Christian marriage serves as a type of every day temple where Christ reveals himself through the sacrificial love of husband and wife. As couples offer themselves up to God for the blessing and benefit of the other, the world witnesses something of the splendor of holiness."

In the coming months, I plan for us to spend some time in worship exploring not only God's dream for our marriages, but how God works through all of our relationships. If you have any thoughts you would like to share as I contemplate those messages, please [click here](#) to drop me a line.

See you Sunday.