

**HAND SHEARS AN ILLUSTRATION OF MARRIAGE 1 Cor 13:1-7**

The hand shears mentioned in the reading are a particularly good illustration of marriage. Some years ago a local farmer Sam Chaffey travelled to England and visited Sheffield where they make UTS blade shears. In an age of automation Sam found each blade was still made by hand. Each forged and shaped till it is just right. No two blades are the same, each blade is unique.

Niki and Calvin you are both unique. Your personalities and character have been forged by your lives experiences. You have talents and abilities, likes and dislikes which are unique to you.

All farmers know the value of a good blade. One blade is useful for cutting but two joined together have a far greater potential. Imagine what it would be like shearing a sheep with just one blade? With the bonding of the two blades, together, the real power and potential of the blade shear is realised.

Niki and Calvin, today are declaring their desire to bonded together in marriage. For they believe that in marriage they will be able to work effectively and reach potentials they have yet to dream of.

A pair of shears is bonded together up in the bow by means of rivets. These rivets must be strong and reliable, able to with stand the stress and tension that it will come under as the shears are shearing the sheep and the occasional thump of frustration whilst dagging on a hot nor-west summers day!

Soon Niki and Calvin will make their vows to one another. In which they will declare their wish to be man & wife, they will acknowledge in their marriage there will be good times and difficult times by saying "I want to be with you whatever happens to us, in comfort or in hardship, in health or in sickness, in sorrow or joy. Through it all I will love protect and serve you." To be able to live up to these challenging vows that you are going to make, you will need a very strong rivet.

In Christian marriage the bonding power, the rivet if you like is Christ.

Calvin and Niki if you choose to build your marriage with Him then you will find that rivet, one that can withstand all tests your marriage will face. Give Christ a place in your future life together and He will provide you with the resources that you will need to build a successful marriage.

Such is the love and commitment mentioned in our reading from 1 Cor. 13:1-7. Love based not on what it can get, but instead what it can give. . Recently I read this analogy of the love which Corinthian's 13:1-7 calls for. It is a love which keeps promises despite feeling or performance. It is love that acts - not by feeling, but based on commitment. It holds itself to a vowed standard trusting that feeling, ----- when it is absent, will soon follow.

Such love says "I'm going to act according to my promise. I will give my self sacrificially and unconditionally to this person, and were going to make it work, believing that the romance, the feelings of emotions are the fruit and not the anchor of our love.

One writer said, A person making a marriage vow makes an appointment with themselves at some distant time and place. This love intends to keep that appointment and does it regardless of circumstances. (((PAUSE)))

For those that have ever used the hand shears, you will know that when they are first brought there is much work needed before they can be used, they must have the handle wrappings and the driving strap attached. Then their are the depth guides to be cut back, knockers to be fitted, finally the blades are ground and pulled back until they are just right.

The "setting up" of shears takes much time and effort, and if the shearer is a good one, then one could say it is a life times work, for the shearer is always looking how the blades can be honed and refined to perform better.

Niki and Calvin today you start an incredibly exciting adventure which will last your lifetime, a life time you have chosen to spend together. I wish you all Christ's blessing as you spend that life together, fine tuning your marriage so that over the years your love for one another increases and sharpens. Becoming a thing of beauty. Like the sight of a top shearer using a finely tuned set of blades in one of our high country wool sheds, giving pleasure to the participants and onlookers.

**GATE LATCH SERMON FOR WEDDINGS**

In our culture when a couple marries we give them gifts as part of the celebration. Kate & Philip I want to share with you an exciting gift on this special day in which you are publicly declaring your love for one another and beginning your married life.

We are told in the bible that if we allow God to be part of our life then he will be our keeper. Ps 121 says; *"The LORD is your keeper; .... The LORD will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life. The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in from this time on and forevermore."* Ps121:4-8

The Lord wants to be your keeper, Philip & Kate. Not a keeper as in the zoo who would encage you and restrict your freedom. Rather a keeper, who will look after you, guarding and guiding you through the life that is before you. He will keep your coming and going - all the way through the new life that you are starting in marriage today. This is Gods gift and promise to those that will accept it.

I have a very simple wedding present for you in the form of an illustration

*(Produce a gate post catch and staple)*

Marriage in some ways resembles a gate latch. There are always two parts to a gate latch, a hook of some sort & a staple in which the hook attaches to the post. You only have to open a number of gates to know that they come in all sorts of different shapes and sizes. Just like married couples. Of course it does not matter what they look like, what is important is how well they work together. Can they stand up to the trails that they will face?

This gate latch and staple is an extremely practical one because it has an added feature. A ring that prevents the gate from being accidentally opened by the stock. Not just the ewes but also the great big bulls that give gates such a tough time.

In Christian marriage, Christ is like that added ring. If you choose to build your marriage with him as the third party then when the rough and stormy times come as they always are bound to, then you will find that your latch, your marriage together, will not be broken apart.

In a Christian marriage Christ is the Keeper. Give Christ a place in your future life together and He will look after you. He will guard you and guide you. He will keep you and nothing will be able to separate you. May you have a blessed life together Philip & Kate.

**HOT STUFF WITH "BA"**

I want to talk for a moment about passion. But not the kind of passion you might be thinking off. Mind you it does have it's hot moments. I'm thinking about the passion, Justin and Rebecca share for the fire brigade.

I recently went along to a fire brigade practice and observed them practising with BA'S That's breathing apparatus where you strap oxygen bottles on your backs and done the masks so they can breathe while fighting a fire. As I watched, I learned some rules of using BA's. When using BA's, you always work as a team of three. You enter as a team, you carry out the task as a team and finally you exit as a team. If they fail to do this then it become potentially very dangerous, or should I say dead trouble.

In the exercise their task was to enter a building and look for a person. As they searched the darkened room, they moved around being careful always to be in contact with one another, keeping close, communicating by touch and voice. Constant contact with the rest of the team is essential for safety.

The reading from 1 Cor. 13:1-7 talks about love and commitment. Love based not on what it can get, but instead what it can give. Very much like the fire person who risks their life for others seeking to serve not to be served.

The BA team as they enter the work area show commitment in two ways. Firstly a commitment to one another and safety and secondly the commitment to get the job done. To carry out the task successfully they must communicate in every way possible, they must move as a team, think as a team for only in this way will they reach the objective.

Justin and Rebecca you are going to declare very soon that you are prepared to work as such a team for the rest of your life. To be successful in this task there will be times when you will have to work hard, but if you are prepared as you are declaring, then today is the start of an incredibly exciting adventure which will last your lifetime.

Recently I read this analogy of the love which Corinthian's 13:1-7 calls for. It is a love which keeps promises despite feeling or performance. It is love that acts - not by feeling, but based on commitment. It holds itself to a vowed standard trusting that feeling, ----- when it is absent, will soon follow. Such love says "I'm going to act according to my promise. I will give my self sacrificially and unconditionally to this person, and were going to make it work, believing that the romance, the feelings of emotions are the fruit and not the anchor of our love. One writer said, A person making a marriage vow makes an appointment with themselves at some distant time and place. This love intends to keep that appointment and does it regardless of circumstances.

So I wish you well Justin and Rebecca as you team up and vow to work as a team until by death you are parted.

Those quick with figures will have noticed that in the BA crew there are not two but three. In Christian marriage, Christ is the third team member. Rebecca and Justin if you chose to build your marriage with Him then when the rough and stormy times come as they are always bound to, then you will find that you will have greater resources to draw upon.

Give Christ a place in your future life together and He will look after you. He will guard and guide you. He will keep you and nothing can separate you. May you have a blessed life together Justin and Rebecca.

And in the words of the station master after detailing the fire crew, Get to work.

**MARRIAGE IS LIKE SHEARING**

Andrew and Joanne you both have an impressive farming pedigree as you are decedents of solid farming stock. The farms you come from both farm Corriedale sheep. Which most of us know are capable of producing good quality wool.

I took my mother into a shearing shed the other day and as she stood and watched the shearer working she described him as poetry in action. When you look at the shearer at work most see the bent back and the movement of the hand piece. What many don't see is where all the power is coming from. It all lies in the feet and the knee movements as they twist around and position the sheep for each blow which removes the wool and reveals the whiteness of the fleece.

The reading from 1 Corinthians read to us by Joy talks about a love that could be described also as the poetry of love in action. The poetry of love that Paul describes in this letter is a quiet subtle love. A love which knows no bounds or limits. It is strong in character and undemanding. It is the essence of a good marriage. It is a love that is not always overtly obvious just like the feet and knee movements of the shearer. Instead it is built on many small and unseen actions. Such love builds the foundation for a lasting marriage. And everyone knows this takes a lot of work.

In today scripture from Corinthians Paul mentions some of the characteristics of love which are required for endurance in marriage. Love is not rude, it is patient, it is not self seeking, it is not easily angered and it keeps no record of wrongs. It always protects, hopes, trusts and preserves  
These are high ideals for any of us to aim for in our relationships. But I believe that with Gods help we are capable of so much more.

A young shearer starts with the ideal of being a top shearer. But before they line upon the boards at an AMP show they need a lot of coaching and practice by experienced shearers who seek to show them the best way. In the same way Paul starts our reading by saying "and now I will show you the most excellent way to love" and he points towards the love of Jesus because .

He was a man who talked a lot about love, his words were full of meaning because his actions demonstrated at all times his understanding of true love and it's qualities. It was a love based on not what he could get but rather what he could give. He gave himself self-less-ly for others.

So I urge you Joanne and Andrew to look to and be inspired by the love of Christ as you build your marriage. As you adventure and farm together discovering the true meanings of love. We wish you all Christ's blessing as you spend this life together, fine tuning your marriage so that over the years your love for one another increases and deepens and becomes a thing of beauty, reflecting the love that Paul writes about..

For a marriage based on the example of Christ's love will never look like a badly shown sheep, but instead will be as poetry in action, a joy to watch just as master shear is a joy to watch.

**POOH BEAR**

As I spent time with Rachael and Geoffrey preparing for their marriage, I discovered they had a very close friend called Pooh. Some of you might know the story how pooh bear came to be a friend and taught them a thing or two about communication one birthday. Pooh Bear is a hero of a popular children's story book by A.A. Milne. Sadly, although Geoffrey may not have realised this, he is a bear of little brain. A story about Pooh bear is most appropriate today in our celebrations.

Let me set the scene for you Pooh Bear - (*here*)- is visiting his great friend Rabbit and over indulges in the hospitality. When he goes to leave, to his horror he discovers that he can no longer fit out rabbit's doorway. He is stuck. Then enters good friend Christopher Robin. A young boy called upon frequently to get Pooh bear out of scrapes. Well after quite a lot of scheming they manage to pull Pooh out by his paws, with the help of numerous other friends. Poor old Pooh goes off without his honey pot determined not to be stuck in that predicament again.

In our bible reading today the story centres on a Wedding feast in which the hosts find themselves in a predicament - not unlike Pooh, stuck in the Rabbits door hole. They have run out of wine and are in danger of appearing as ungracious hosts. Jesus, alerted by Mary his mother, recognises their difficulty and gives clear instructions to the servants which results in the miracle of water changing into wine.

Living in this wine growing region of Marlborough most of us would appreciate the effort which goes into making wine out of grapes - so Jesus' accomplishment is no mean feat. Jesus as the Son of God is able to achieve this without difficulty and even provide a gold medal wine in the process.

In the same way as pooh bear - our bear of very little brain who was fortunate to have a good friend in Christopher Robin to pull him out of scrapes. We too are fortunate to be able to have Jesus as our friend. This same man Jesus, the Son of God who performed the miracle of producing Gold medal wine at the wedding at Cana can also guide and help you today in NZ, the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and beyond, if we choose to trust him.

Rachael and Geoffrey the greatest gift I can give to you as we celebrate your love for each other today is to give you back your Pooh Bear to remind you in the years that are ahead of you that although Pooh Bear - will get old and tired with time, a relationship with Jesus Christ is ongoing and living, able to enrich each of you personally and also your married life if you choose to call upon his name. Jesus will be a true friend, there to pull you out of a tight spot as well as enjoy the honey of your relationship.