

THE CHRISTIAN AND SEX
Matthew 5.27-30

27" You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' 28 But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. 29 If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. 30 And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell."

There is a neat card that has a Jesus like character on it. He has long hair, beard, white and red robe, and is standing on a mountain or hillside. The other thing is he has a surfboard tucked under his arm. The caption said not, Sermon on the Mount but "Surfing on the Mount."

Well today we see many using the surf board of immorality as they surf, slip, and slide down the slippery slope of life. The Scriptures provide a safer, more secure surfboard to ride. But you've got to be willing to have some patience, fight temptation, and if you fall off, climb back on with forgiveness.

.A couple of weeks ago we read in Matthew that Jesus came not to abolish the law but to fulfill it, to complete it, to reinterpret it.

Jesus in Sermon on the Mount Jesus rescues the law from the anti-life legalist of his day and ours as well, and yet it seems he really makes the law more difficult to follow, actually impossible to follow without God's help.

We can see Jesus is concerned about our inner life, what's going on inside, because what we believe spawns how we behave.

And when Jesus teaches about the commandments, he calls us to a higher standard. We know the Bible places murder and adultery side by side.

Last week Pastor Eldon talked about the sixth commandment, "***Thou shall not murder.***" We were reminded that if we're angry with someone, we have committed murder in our hearts.

"Thou shall not commit adultery" is the seventh commandment. Today we read that Jesus said that if you lust, you've already committed sin in your heart.

More about that later.

I. First, I want to state the obvious, **SEX IS A FACT OF LIFE.**

We all know about the birds and the bees or at least think we do.

Do you remember the old story?

It was Monday morning and two friends showed up for work.

The first friend asked the second friend, "So what did the preacher preach on Sunday?"

Second friend, "He preached on sin."

First friend, "Well, what did he say about it?"

Second friend, "He said he was against it."

I hope someone asks you tomorrow what did Pastor Tom preach on.

You can tell them, "He preached on sex."

But when they ask, what did he say about it, please don't you say, "He's against it."

I'm for sex.

I'm for it because God is for it.

And we know that God is for it as long as we use this wonderful gift within the commandments, rules, and guidelines also given to us by God.

If you read Song of Solomon in the Bible

it's obvious that God wants us to enjoy this precious gift.

WE know that **GOD CREATED** our sexuality as part of the gift of life.

Genesis 1.27 says, "*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created them, male and female, he created them.*"

As we read on Genesis 1.28 tells us that **GOD COMMANDED**,

"God bless them and said to them,

'Be fruitful and increase in number, fill the earth and subdue it.'"

(This gift is to be used for both pleasure and procreation.)

We also know **GOD IS CONCERNED** about us for a few verses later in

Genesis 2.18, "*The Lord God said, 'It is not good for man to be alone.*

I will make a helper suitable for him.'"

Paul would agree. He describes some advantages of marriage and he has some words that encourage singleness.

I Corinthians 7.1 and following he says,

"Now getting down to the questions you asked in your letter to me. (They'd written to him)

First is it a good thing to have sexual relations? (Their first question to him and he says)

Certainly—but only within a certain context.

It's good for a man to have a wife, and for a woman to have a husband.

Sexual drives are strong, but marriage is strong enough to contain them and provide for a balanced and fulfilling sexual life in a world of sexual disorder.

*The marriage bed must be a place of mutuality—(that is the key)
the husband seeking to satisfy his wife, the wife seeking to satisfy her husband.
Marriage is not a place to "stand up for your rights."
Marriage is a decision to serve the other, whether in bed or out...
(Serving one another, to meet the needs of one another, caring about one another
that is really the key to any aspect of relationship, physical, social, emotional, whatever...)*

Now he has a good word for the singles. Paul says,
*"7Sometimes I wish everyone were single like me—a simpler life in many ways!
But celibacy is not for everyone any more than marriage is.
God gives the gift of the single life to some, the gift of the married life to others.
8-9I do, though, tell the unmarried and widows that singleness might well be the best thing
for them, as it has been for me.
But if they can't manage their desires and emotions, they should by all means go ahead and
get married.
The difficulties of marriage are preferable by far to a sexually tortured life as a single."*
(Isn't that good)

II. Perhaps just as obvious, **WE ALL THINK ABOUT SEX IN DIFFERENT WAYS**

First, there is the **PRUDISH PLUS PERSPECTIVE.**

It isn't bad to be prudent.

I'm sure I sound like an old prude today.

Prudish plus is when we think that sex is only for procreation,
or that sex is something "dirty" or that it is a necessary evil.

That kind of thinking that came out of the Victorian age.

We know many people are uncomfortable with their sexuality.

Thus we need to be sensitive.

Our sexual identity is a very sacred.

Many of us struggle, for whatever reason,

with fear, guilt, and shame when it comes to our sexuality.

Now, in our day the pendulum has swung from Prudish the **PLAYBOY PERSPECTIVE.**

Sex is all about feeling good and all about having fun.

Sex is such a powerful force and influence in our lives,

marketers and advertisers use it to sell everything with untold promises of power and fortune.

We are saturated with sex on our TV's and computers, in plays, in magazines and movies.

I read Desperate Housewives and Models are the most popular shows this Fall.

The swimsuit issue of Sports Illustrated outsells its regular issues.

And I thought that Sports Illustrated was about baseball, basketball, football, and golf.

Sex is always portrayed as great.

God wants people to enjoy their sexuality but again within the context of marriage.

But with the Playboy approach there maybe short term pleasure at the cost of long-term pain. It is difficult to balance the scales of pleasure and pain.

Sex can become an addiction to some.

We know there are unwanted babies left in garbage dumps, on bathroom floors, or even in cars that don't float in water. How horrible.

There is the risk of venereal diseases or aids.

There are unreasonable and unnecessary expectations put on the partner.

It's hard to gauge how much love one has for another.

Basically we all want to love and be loved.

But if there is no commitment many experience being used, betrayed, or abandoned. .

We move from the Playboy perspective to the **PERMISSIVE PERSPECTIVE**.

This differs a bit from the playboy perspective in that

it's not necessarily about feelings; it's more about rights, my rights.

I went to a campus ministry meeting last week.

Professor Chris Keisling said,

“Traditionally the culture helps enforce the values which strengthen community.

But one of the predominant values of our culture is “self-serving.”

It's all about an individuals rights, not responsibilities.

It's all about me, myself, and I and what I want, what I deserve, what works for me.

So people become object, simply objects of other people's pleasure.

And the result, some are easily used and abused, tossed about and thrown out,

And, because of that value the community is in trouble because there is no objective law, no consistent codes, there is a lack of moral law, and thus no community cohesiveness.

Historian J.D. Unwin studied eighteen fallen civilizations to find out why they had fallen.

He comments, "Every society has two choices.

They can choose either sexual promiscuity and decline or sexual restraint and growth."

Paul talks about this choice as well, Galatians 5.16-18

“So I say, live by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

For the sinful nature desires (root of self-interest) what is contrary (is at odds) to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary (incompatible) to the sinful nature.

They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.”

Now here are three non-Biblical models or permissive life styles we struggle with today.

PREMARITAL SEX is having sex before marriage.

There was a lady who I was just chatting with one day.

I'm not sure what I even said.

I just remember her saying the Bible didn't say anything about having to have a piece of paper before people could live together.

She is right.

The Bible doesn't say anything about needing a piece of paper to live and love another person. It does say something about the behavior.

The word is fornication.

It comes from the root word "pornia", also part of word pornographic.

Paul uses the word immorality in this translation from Galatians 5.19-21

The acts of the sinful nature are obvious (What develops out of trying to get your own way all of the time): ***sexual immorality*** (fornication), ***impurity*** (a wound or something that hasn't be cleaned) ***and debauchery; I could go on, idolatry and witchcraft*** (drug use); ***hatred, discord, jealousy*** (all consuming-yet never satisfied desires), ***fits of rage, selfish ambition*** (an impotence to love or be loved), ***dissensions, factions*** (divided homes and divided lives) ***and envy***(depersonalize everyone); ***drunkenness*** (uncontrollable addictions), ***orgies***, (ugly parodies of community) ***and the like***.

I have two friends (I know that surprises some of you I have friends)

They have been together over 20 years.

They have survived so many things.

They are truly committed to one another.

When I asked them, why they didn't get married, they gave me four or five good reasons.

They were good reasons, they made sense.

In knowing them and knowing what they'd experience those reasons made sense.

The next questions are, "Why not get married? That is what God wants.

Don't you trust God to get you through this together?"

Some of you young people may be struggling with this.

You might be pressured by a "friend" or peer group to give in and go all the way.

And to say no leaves you sitting in the stands of the other team on homecoming night.

To say no is not a popular position.

You have a tough decision.

Do you follow Jesus or follow the crowd? Be obedient to the crowd, or be obedience to Christ.

It's interesting; a middle school in Portland, Maine has begun to issue condoms for safe sex.

Here is something to remember, IF YOU WANT SAFE SEX FOR MARRIAGE,
THEN SAVE SEX FOR MARRIAGE.
THE ONLY SAFE SEX, IS TO SAVE SEX.

Then there is **EXTRAMARITAL SEX** which the Bible calls adultery.
The statistics are staggering as to how prolific this is, even in the church.

The sin of adultery was considered so serious under Jewish law that the penalty was death.
Leviticus 20:10 (NIV) "***If a man commits adultery with another man's wife,
with the wife of his neighbor--both the adulterer and the adulteress must be put to death.***"

God isn't a mean spirited ogre trying to take the fun out of life.
God cared about people and community.
God gives us these laws because adultery creates chaos in the family
and that creates trust issues, and that in turn destroys the foundation of community.
Many of you have experience personally or though family the pain of an unfaithful spouse.

The third alternative life style is **HOMOSEXUALITY**
Homosexuality was wide spread at the time of Jesus in Roman culture.
Fourteen out of fifteen Caesars practiced homosexuality.

Most cultures do not condone the practice.
Paul challenged that behavior too. We read I Corinthians 6.9-11,
"Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral (we've talked about that),
nor idolaters nor adulterers (we've talked about that), ***nor male prostitutes,***
nor homosexual offenders (perhaps he is talking about practice rather than orientation),
nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers
nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God."(Now this next line is interesting)
And that is what some of you were. (It is implying that there is hope, these folks were
changed, a life can be changed, thus a lifestyle can be changed too...and here is why)
But you were washed, you were sanctified,
you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.
(The love of God through Jesus Christ can change people's lives.)

I know there are many who think differently about these issues of sexuality.
Based on the scriptures
Our United Methodist DISCIPLINE says that all persons are of sacred worth
and that homosexual **behavior** is incompatible with Christian teaching.

There is another way to think about our sexuality.
It's from the **PURITY PERSPECTIVE.**
This is most difficult in our culture today because of the tide of permissiveness.

As we give and take in relationships we want to do so with a pure heart, pure motives.
That gets at the **HEART** of the matter of being obedient to God and caring for one another.

When we talk about the heart, Jesus raises the standard.
Matthew 5.28, “ ***But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.***”

I remember President Jimmy Carter confessed that sin when he was in office.
He had never physically committed adultery but admitted lusting in his heart.

Sometimes we say, “It doesn’t hurt to look.
Let’s take a look at the word “looks.”
The word that we translate “looks” indicates a continued action.
The word also denotes intent and purpose.
This is not the casual thought that pops into the mind.
It describes a person who nurtures and allows those initial thoughts to grow.

Jesus does not condemn a causal look or thought.
It is the look that becomes a longing, lusting look that is devastating.
For some it may not hurt to look, for others, it may lead to lusting.

Here is another way to think about it, a way to check it out:
We know **LUST** wants to get and take and **LOVE** wants to give and share
LUST seeks to dominate, **LOVE** seeks relate
LUST uses others, **LOVE** respects others
LUST treats others as objects, **LOVE** appreciates others as persons

One of the most obvious evidences of lust running rampant in our country
is the growth of the pornography industry.
Pornography is big business.
The industry grosses an estimated \$10 billion per year.

General Motors, now sells more graphic sex films through its DirecTV subsidiary
than does Hustler pornographer Larry Flynt..

EchoStar Communications Corp., the No. 2 satellite provider,
makes more money selling sex films than Playboy does with magazines, cable, and Internet.

The United States the world’s leading producer of porn, makes 150 hard-core videos a week.

It is estimated that 60% of all web sites are pornographic
Over 75% of all Internet users on line after 10 o’clock are viewing pornography.
The largest group of that 75% are boys between the age of 13 and 18.

III. The next obvious question? WHAT IS THE SOLUTION.

29If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away.

It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

30And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away.

It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.”

In these verses Jesus is saying more about prevention than punishment.

Jesus emphasizes that in our sin we're separated or cut off from God.

By suggesting we poke out our eyes and cut off our hands,
he is saying we need to separate ourselves from the things that cause us to sin.

He knows the real problem is not with our eyes or our hands. It's with our hearts.
Matters of the heart put it in the spiritual realm.

Now dealing with temptation is a spiritual issue. It's not for the timid.
We need strength, God's strength.

God's strength to **FLEE** temptation.

Remember Joseph. Potifur's wife tempted him

Day after day the heat got turned up. He is God's strength, finally fled.

We need God's strength to **SAY NO**. But just saying no doesn't usually work.

Just saying no, I'm not going to think about that, not dream, not fantasize about that.

Let's try a little experiment. Everyone close your eyes.

Now I want everyone to not think about Pizza.

Don't think about French fries and a little catsup on the side.

Don't think about your favorite piece of chocolate, your favorite desert.

Don't think about your favorite ice cream, favorite candy.

DID IT WORK?

We only made those thoughts bigger and stronger didn't we?

There is a computer term that says "garbage in, garbage out". Our minds don't always work like that.

When Jesus was tempted he refocused and filled his mind with godly thoughts.

We need to **FILL OUR MINDS WITH GODLY THOUGHTS**

Philippians 4:8 says, "*Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things.*"

AND FILL YOUR HEART WITH JESUS

Remember, your body houses the temple of God.

PRAYER "Have Thine Own Way Lord."

"