

Sermon Notes: “Intimacy Matters”
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National Presbyterian Church, Washington, DC
February 6, 2022

Matthew 5:27-28, 31-32

27‘You have heard that it was said, “You shall not commit adultery.”

28But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

³¹“It was also said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce’ (Moses in Deut. 24:1). ³²But I say to you that anyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

Matthew 19:3-11

³Some Pharisees came to Jesus, and to test him they asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause?” ⁴He answered, (quoting Genesis 2)

“Have you not read that the one who made them at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’ ⁵and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’?

⁶So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.”

¹⁰His disciples said to him, “If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry.” ¹¹But he said to them,

“Not everyone can accept this teaching, but only those to whom it is given.

Hosea 2:16-20

¹⁶**On that day, says the Lord, you will call me, “My husband,”** ¹⁸and I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land; and I will make you lie down in safety. ¹⁹**And I will take you for my wife forever.**

Implications of Genesis, Hosea, Matthew (and 1 Corinthians 7)

1. Human Marriage is not merely a utilitarian human construct, but is ordained by God as a portrait of the permanent covenant relationship God desires with his people
2. Covenant marriage (our promises) are to reflect God’s inviolable commitment of grace to us – no matter what (*but see Paul in 1 Cor. 7:10-11*)
3. Sexual intimacy is not only for procreation (Genesis 1:28), but is a gift of God (like the sacraments), given to deepen and reflect God’s call for a couple to become a permanent new entity: “one flesh.” (*Genesis 2:24; 1 Cor. 7:1-7*).
4. Marriage is not a “better” state than singleness. Both are “calls” from God.

Debates in Jesus’ Day

Views of Marriage in Judaism:

- 7th Commandment assumed.
- Disagreement on divorce (Rabbi Hillel more lenient than Rabbi Shammai)

Greek Debates about the Body

- Body is irrelevant to our identity and to spirituality – so why not indulge any impulse or change our identity?
- Body is dirty – don’t indulge it in any way

Christian Views about the Body

- Our bodies are not accidental but the deliberate creation of God – essential to our identity, entrusted to our care, for now and eternity. We will always be “embodied in some way” (1 Corinthians 15).
- The human body sanctified by the bodily incarnation and resurrection of Jesus – who still gives us his “body and blood.”
- But – until heaven, the body will always be prone to sin, weakness and death, and will therefore often be a place of spiritual (including sexual) confusion and struggle (see Jesus, Romans 7, 1 Corinthians 6-7)

C.S. LEWIS:

We have the view which St. Francis expressed by calling his body “Brother Donkey.” . . . Donkey is exquisitely right because no one in his senses can either revere or hate a donkey. It is a useful, sturdy, lazy, obstinate, patient, lovable, and infuriating beast; deserving now the stick and now a carrot; both pathetically and absurdly beautiful. – Four Loves

- Which views are dominant in today’s society and issues?
- How does the Biblical view pertain to these issues?
*e.g., Not only sexuality
but . . . Hunger? Race? Medical care (Covid)?*

1. Human Confusion and Turmoil about Sex

Confession of 1967 (PCUSA Constitution)

The relationship between man and woman exemplifies in a basic way God’s ordering of the interpersonal life for which he created mankind.

Anarchy in sexual relationships is a symptom of our alienation from God, our neighbor, and ourselves. Our perennial confusion about the meaning of sex has been aggravated in our day by the availability of new means of birth control and the treatment of infection, by the pressures of urbanization, by the exploitation of sexual symbols in mass communication, and by world overpopulation.

The church, as the household of God, is called to lead people out of this alienation into the responsible freedom of the new life in Christ.

Reconciled to God, each person has joy in and respect for his own humanity and that of other persons; a man and woman are enabled to marry, to commit themselves to a mutually shared life, and to respond to each other in sensitive and lifelong concern; parents receive the grace to care for children in love and to nurture their individuality. The church comes under the judgment of God and invites rejection when it fails to lead men and women into the full meaning of life together, or withholds the compassion of Christ from those caught in the moral confusion of our time.