

Sermon Series: Spurred on to Holiness (and Power) by Immersing Ourselves into the Life of Christ Through the Eyes of the Apostles – A Harmony of All Four Gospels

Sermon Title: Fight to Protect Your Marriage. Wise Advice from the Savior Regarding Lust. From Matthew 5:27-30.

January 20, 2019

Theme verse: Acts 4:13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus. (ESV)

Introduction: Dave Schonberg and I discussed once whether or not someone who only thought about committing adultery as Jesus said is guilty enough for church discipline like the person who actually and physically did commit adultery. Excellent question. The answer is no because no one would admit to a crime that could not be proven but, even though the crime cannot be proven does not mean that no one was hurt. Wishful adultery if discovered betrays a partner, deeply and the wound is raw. Emotional adultery, which comes next, is the next level of pain but at this point there is not much difference between emotional adultery and physical adultery. One person who responded to my Facebook ad about today's message which said that 55% of all men commit adultery with 5 persons, offensively remarked that I must have taken those statistics from the people of our church. No, the number of cases of adultery in Bible believing, Lord loving churches is extremely low compared to the world around us because we intentionally strive to grow in our Christian lives and listen to the advice Jesus offers everyone, advice that if followed will prevent extra-marital affairs, and oh how I hate that word.

Main point: Adultery, like every other sin, starts in the heart. Controlling our thoughts, controls our emotions which controls our actions.

Do you want to be married and madly in love with your spouse for 60-70 years? Think that kind of dream is unrealistic? Not for believers. Listen to the illustration in today's Best of Desiring God.

Context

Exegesis

Let's make that 70 year marriage happen by listening to his advice from Jesus.

1. Admit to yourself that if you have no control (via the Holy Spirit) of your heart's affections, then you do not truly love your wife.
 - Temptation is not lust, but lingering is.
 - If you recognized that you lingered too long you must also admit you loved your wife less than you should have.
 - Do not give in to the false concept of the Pharisees or today's culture that says

only external actions matter. If your heart is not single-minded, you do not truly love your wife as you ought.

2. Don't settle for less than the best.

- According to today's standards and values, it is O.K. to have many sexual relationships prior to marriage.
- The fact is a man has joined himself to several women in this process and connected his soul to theirs in ways he cannot undo.
- This means as well that in a marriage relationship the wife will wonder if he is constantly comparing her to the many others and how does she measure up?
- Hebrews 13:4 says "Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous". (ESV) The best is when one man has saved himself for one woman and she to him for the rest of their lives. There is no guilt, no comparing, no diluted experiences by having multiple partners.

3. Let's clarify the concept of lust.

- As Sam Storm's has said, lusting is not looking.
- As I shared with Pati, if looking was lusting I would have to cover my eyes watching Fox News. The fact is that God made humans to be beautiful, both men and women and their beauty is to be appreciated.
- The word for lust in this passage is epithumio which means to covet something that does not belong to you. The LXX used this word in these passages: Exodus 20:17 and Deut. 5:21 describing the 10th commandment "Thou shall not covet your neighbor's wife"
- The English understanding only describes half of that Greek word, which has sexual overtones, but by using that word Jesus was stating very clearly what he meant. Do not look at a woman in a way that you want her as your own sexual partner when she is someone else's partner.
- This does not absolve a man who lingers his look too long. As my dear wife says, it is insulting and belittling to a wife when a man turns his head to look at another woman and suffers a neck injury in so doing.

4. Know, however, that Jesus was right, coveting another man's wife starts with the visual.

- It is what our eyes see that incite our hearts to sin.
- You don't get the same response when you hear a woman sing. Lustful coveting does not come through the ears, or nose for that matter.
- Therefore a man needs to guard what he sees by monitoring the thought that immediately comes next. If the thought is I want her for my own and imaginations start then he needs to immediately turn off the thoughts one millisecond after having seen what cannot be unseen.

- This is so critical in our sex-saturated culture today. It seems that every commercial uses models that appeal to our base natures, every web page that has no sexual content offers ads that do. Every TV program, every movie has lots of flesh to incite these same desires.
 - By the way these images are air-brushed. The cellulose is removed by photo editing and in the same way our eyes do the same thing to the woman we think is Ms. perfect. She's not.
5. But it can also start by being too close emotionally as well. This is why I have always maintained that members of the opposite sex cannot be close friends like members of the same sex can.
- Sharing intimate details of the heart and life can start building a soul connection with a member of the opposite sex that will lead to a physical connection if not stopped.
 - I think this why so many pastors get snared into relationships with the women they chose to spend time with counseling. Bad choice. Stupid decision.
6. Know that these temptations are like playing with fire. They can ruin your life if not dealt with drastically like Jesus said. *Matthew 5:29–30 [29] If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. [30] And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell. (ESV)*
- Of course Jesus was speaking figuratively here. Illustrate with the story of Jim and Mary. One eye out the other sees. Two eyes out the ears hear her sweet voice. Both ears gone he smells her sweet perfume. Finally he brushes past her and feels her warm skin. Off go the hands.
 - Let's describe it this way. Jesus is saying do whatever it takes to remove the temptation. That means to me if it is a woman at work that you are constantly fantasizing about and you see her every day, it might mean asking for a transfer to another department. Or if that is not workable, imagine yourself in a compromising position with that woman in being caught by her husband or your wife. In other words do whatever is necessary to remove the temptation from you.
 - Jesus starts with the eyes but ends with the hands because he follows the logic of temptation. It starts with a look and then an imagination and concludes with an action, i.e. stealing a man's wife with your hands. Neither gouging our eyes nor cutting off our hands will stop us from sinning but taking the actions I have described above will.
 - Another way to remove our eyes is to avoid TV programs or movies that

glamorize adultery and perhaps even display it. By watching, we trim off a little of our standards and react less each time we see something like this. If we saturate our lives with such content soon, it will be no big deal.

7. Know that anyone who refuses to fight this fight is destined for hell. Matthew 5:30b For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell. (ESV)
 - If a person ever gives up the fight to control his lustful passions, be very concerned. This passage says that person is on their way to hell forever.
 - Minimizing adultery, excusing it, condoning it with the words “God wants me to be happy” is the same as saying “I’m a hell-bound wretched sinner still un-regenerated and possibly never will be person.”

8. Know also that women can be as guilty as men in these matters. The things that catch their eyes attention are eyes that are not looking at male pecs and male abs as much as masculine kindness and masculine gentleness, the kind of attributes seen most often by the men in romance novels.
 - So, just because Jesus was referring to the male sex in this passage does not mean he meant to exclude the female sex either.

Application

Saving the best for last. . .

1. The best way to avoid these marital bombs is to cherish and treasure what you have. First of all cherish your relationship with Jesus that is better than any temptation but cherish what he has given you. Cherish and treasure your spouse. Here is what Solomon says (and he should know!): Proverbs 5:15–21 [15] Drink water from your own cistern, flowing water from your own well. [16] Should your springs be scattered abroad, streams of water in the streets? [17] Let them be for yourself alone, and not for strangers with you. [18] Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth, [19] a lovely deer, a graceful doe. Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight; be intoxicated always in her love. [20] Why should you be intoxicated, my son, with a forbidden woman and embrace the bosom of an adulteress? [21] For a man's ways are before the eyes of the LORD, and he ponders all his paths. (ESV)

2. Realize that living in your imagined world will be massive pain. It is not just two marriages that will be destroyed but families and in-laws and friends who will have to choose sides and not condone what you are doing. The costs are always ignored. Satan makes sure of that.