

Sermon Outline

“Jesus on Lust,” Matthew, Part 12 – Matthew 5:27-30 – Joshua Harris August 5, 2012

Introduction

1. One of the most tragic stories in the Bible is found in 2 Samuel 11. It’s the story of King David’s adultery with a woman named Bathsheba. Scripture tells us that David was a man after God’s own heart. He was a worshiper and a warrior of great courage, but he was ensnared by his own lustful desires. From his palace roof, he saw Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, bathing. Instead of turning away, he looked at her with lustful intent. Then he acted on his sinful desire and slept with her. Bathsheba became pregnant. In an effort to cover up his sin, David ultimately had her husband murdered in battle.
2. God sent the prophet Nathan to confront David. Nathan told David a story—a story of a wealthy sheep owner who ruthlessly stole the one sheep owned and loved by a poor man, slaughtered it and served it to his guests. When King David, who was a former shepherd himself, heard this story, he was enraged at the injustice of the act. He cried out, “As surely as the LORD lives, the man who did this must die!” In that very moment, the prophet Nathan turned the tables on David and said these famous words, “You are the man!”
3. Like the prophet Nathan, Jesus confronts each of us with our own “you are the man” moment.

Adultery Is Not Someone Else’s Sin

1. Jesus begins by quoting the seventh commandment: “You shall not commit adultery.” He knows that most of his listeners can claim they have kept this law. But Jesus goes deeper and shows that the *original intent* of God’s commandment is more demanding. He drills down to our very thoughts and desires and points the finger at us, “*But I say I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*”
2. What is Jesus doing? He’s confronting the lie of our self-righteousness. We don’t need a little help from God to be better. Jesus’ words should lead us to being poor in spirit, to being desperately aware of our need for God to rescue us and transform us. Our hope and salvation start with laying aside self-righteousness and admitting, “I’m the guilty one.” I’m the adulterer. I deserve judgment. I need Jesus to save and transform me.

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What Is Good Should Be Guarded

1. You could read this passage and only hear: adultery is bad; divorce is bad. But there's more that we need to hear. Sin is bad because something good that God created is being twisted and harmed. In condemning sexual sin and infidelity, Jesus is pointing out the inherent goodness and preciousness of marriage and sexual intimacy within marriage. God is not against sexual pleasure in marriage. The walls of protection are high, not because God is stingy, but because marriage and sexual intimacy are precious.
2. Marriage is created by God and is a beautiful and sacred life-long commitment between one man and one woman. Sexual intimacy within marriage is an expression of the one-flesh union of husband and wife. It is the ultimate expression of self-giving. It is the creative act that enables new life to be born. We don't guard it because it is bad or shameful. We guard it because it is pure and precious.
 - a. Hebrews 13:4 states this well, "Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral."
3. So what does it mean to look at someone with "lustful intent"? Below are some interpretations by three biblical scholars:
 - a. Charles Quarles describes it as a "lingering look." It's not just looking, but when you "keep on looking" and use someone as "fuel for sinful sexual imagination."
 - b. R.T. France translates the phrase "everyone who looks at a woman and wants to have sex with her." It's more than noticing and appreciating beauty. It is wanting, or even planning, sexual relations in your mind.
 - c. D.A. Carson states, "This is not a prohibition of the normal attraction which exists between men and women, but of the deep-seated lust which consumes and devours, which in imagination attacks and rapes, which mentally contemplates and commits adultery."
4. What lust is not:
 - a. It is *not* lust to be attracted to someone or notice that he or she is good looking.
 - b. It is *not* lust to have a strong desire to have sex.
 - c. It is *not* lust to anticipate and be excited about having sex within marriage.
 - d. If you're married, it is *not* lust to passionately desire and pursue sex with your spouse.

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- e. It is *not* lust when a man or woman becomes turned on without any conscious decision to do so.
 - f. It is *not* lust to experience sexual temptation.
5. The crucial issue in each of these examples is how we respond to the urges and desires of our sexual drive. Noticing an attractive person is not wrong, but undressing that person with our eyes or imagining what it would be like to “have” them is. A sexual thought that pops into our mind isn’t necessarily lust, but it can quickly become lust if it’s entertained and dwelled on. An excitement for sex in marriage isn’t sin, but it can be tainted by lust if it’s not tempered with patience and restraint.
- a. John Piper explains lust with this simple equation: “Lust is sexual desire minus honor and holiness.” When we lust, we take this good thing—sexual desire—and remove from it honor toward fellow humans and reverence for God.

Who We Are Inside is Who We Are

1. There’s a famous saying, “Sow a thought and you reap an action; sow an action and you reap a habit; sow a habit and you reap a character; sow a character and you reap a destiny.” We would like to pretend that the sinful thoughts and desires of our hearts don’t matter as long as we can keep up a good front on the outside. But Jesus shows us that God evaluates the sinful desire of our hearts. We can do all the right outward things but have hearts filled with lust, eyes that wander and minds filled with X-rated fantasies. God sees our hearts!
2. Proverbs 4:23 says, “Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life” (NLT). When scripture tells us to guard our heart, it refers to what thoughts, images, ideas and words are coming to us and shaping us. This is why what we watch on television and in movies, what we read in books and what we listen to in music has significant spiritual implications. It all shapes, moves and influences our hearts.

This Is No Game

1. The way Jesus talks about the seriousness of sexual sin seems extreme. However, we are the ones who are out of touch with reality. We’ve been shaped by the world’s views of marriage and sex. We’ve imagined that there is no heaven and no hell—no judgment or accountability. Immorality and lust is our world’s normal.

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- a. So when Jesus comes along and speaks of the reality of the Kingdom of heaven, it is jarring. It sounds ridiculous and crazy and a huge overreaction. But it is not. We're the ones who have been brainwashed. Jesus is speaking truth. We are created in God's image and we are accountable to God for our sexual behavior. God's judgment is real. Hell is real. We should fear and obey him.
2. Breaking God's laws is no game. Our body belongs to him. When we use it for immorality we disobey him. When we commit adultery, we distort his purpose and dishonor him. And if we claim to be a Christian but live in unrepentant pursuit of sexual sin, our life reveals the insincerity of your faith. If there is no sorrow, no grief, no repentance, no fight against lust and immorality, we should not assume that our faith is real.

Give Holiness A Hand (Or An Eye)

1. Jesus speaks in shocking words to make a vital point: we must be willing to take drastic action to escape sin that leads to hell. D.A. Carson writes, "What then does Jesus mean? Just this: we are to deal drastically with sin. We must not pamper it, flirt with it, enjoy nibbling a little of it around the edges. We are to hate it, crush it, dig it out."
2. Consider several things about drastically dealing with sin.
 - a. First, it's personal. It's about what causes *us* to sin, not some else. We need to take responsibility for our own hands and eyes. We need to be specific and take specific action based on our own temptations.
 - b. Second, right hands are valuable. The "right hand" is often the strongest hand. The point of Jesus' metaphor is that we should be ready to lose something of great value in order to escape sin. Sometimes dealing drastically with our sin is costly.
 - c. Third, it's a fight. It's work. It's tempting to grow weary. But God is pleased when we fight and obey. In fact, it is an evidence of the Holy Spirit's work in us when we fight. And fighting lust is worth it. Purity is worth it. A clear conscience is worth it. Protecting our marriages from adulterous thoughts is worth it. Fleeing fornication and pornography is worth it because heaven is real and God's reward for obedience is real.

Conclusion

1. Even though Jesus calls us to take drastic action against lust and sin, we must remember that he was the first to take drastic action to redeem us from sin and death. His hands and feet were not too precious to him to have them pierced for our transgressions. His life was not too precious to lay it down to pay the penalty for the adultery of our hearts and all the other expressions of our sexual sin. Let's repent because his Kingdom is at hand. And let's give our hands and eyes to the service of righteousness.

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Fellowship Starters

1. Take time as a Care Group to read Matthew 5:27-30.
2. What are your thoughts about this passage? Is Jesus being too radical or extreme? In what ways are you aware of your need for God's transforming work in this area?
3. If it matters who we are on the inside, what is shaping your heart? What are your media inputs (TV, movies, music, social media) preaching and teaching you?
4. In this fight against the sin of lust, are you doing anything that only makes sense if there is an eternal heaven and an eternal hell? Is there urgency in your fight?
5. What drastic action do you need to take to battle lust? Do you need to give up a relationship or certain kinds of entertainment? Do you need to confess your struggle with a brother or sister?
6. Why is it important to regularly preach the truths of forgiveness and cleansing for this area of sin? How can you grow in preaching the gospel to yourself?