

Sermon 8-18-19
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Martin Luther's Small Catechism Sermon #8. The 6th Commandment

Love And Faithfulness

Today in our series on Martin Luther's Small Catechism we're up to the sixth commandment – You shall not commit adultery. So you know where this is going. Right?

Now consider the fact that at the beginning of the commandments section of the catechism it says this: "The Ten Commandments. As the head of the family should teach them in a simple way to his household." This means that kids were meant to hear this commandment and its explanation.

Here it is as found in the catechism.

The Sixth Commandment

You shall not commit adultery.

What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we lead a sexually pure and decent life in what we say and do, and husband and wife love and honor each other.

Can't you hear it? Daddy, what's a sexually pure life? Although speaking about the subject of sex might have been easier than we realize in the 1500's. For, everyone lived with lots of animals around. And animals don't much care where they choose to engage in reproduction or when.

Now, as one of our pastors – a father of teenagers – emphatically stated at the Eastern Region Meeting in May, if the family and the church don't teach sexual morality, no one else in the society will. In fact, the society and the schools will un-teach anything the church teaches. Therefore, he emphatically stated his opinion that it's necessary to teach sexual morality even from the pulpit.

Kids do need to hear this commandment and it's meaning. They need to take it to heart. For, a life lived in rebellion against our Creator's righteous will leads to everlasting evil without relief – namely hell. Indeed, that threat used to keep a lot of things in line.

But it was precisely at this threat of judgment that the sexual revolution of the 1960's and 70's took aim. Hell was mocked. How could something so beautiful and intimate like sex lead to hell?

Besides, Masters and Johnson had just discovered that pre-marital sex, adultery and deviant sexual behavior are all supposedly normal among human beings. They discovered that even young children responded sexually. As later critics have pointed out, how did they discover this without their "scientists" molesting children? But at the time it was all very "scientific." And the father of the then

relatively new science of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud, who was still greatly revered at the time, believed that all manner of mental neurosis were based on the societal suppression of various sexual desires.

In addition, at that time in history female contraception first became widely available. As a result, feminism pressured women with the notion that for the first time in history they could be as sexually promiscuous as men without any consequences. Therefore, sexual liberation was the way to go. Also at that time American courts had decided that pornography – the making money off of explicit sexual depiction – was somehow protected by the first amendment to the constitution, an amendment which was meant to protect free political speech. And one more thing. Antibiotics had gotten victory over venereal diseases. All of this made for the so-called sexual revolution.

But after fifty years of such sexual liberation are people any better off? Is our society any better off? Are families any better off? Or is porn addiction becoming a killer of marriage and the family?

Interestingly, at present there's even a movement among men called Men Going Their Own Way. These are men who have sworn off women – period – because women have become dangerous. The courts and the legal system have caused that.

So, was the sexual revolution part of a grand conspiracy to undo western civilization? Was it part of a plot to throw western society into confusion by separating people from two of the most important organizing forces of society – family and religion? That's an interesting question being raised by some. Certainly, it was and is the devil's plot. But it seems he has had a lot of human help.

Here we come to an important question. What can be done to rebuild the family? What can be done to enable men and women to live together in contentment and harmony as husband and wife? What can be done to enable both young and old to make it through sexual snares in order enter the Kingdom of God?

Law and Gospel are the keys. Now, until there's a big change in American courts and legislatures we cannot count on civil law providing any curb against lust and its consequences. But, this doesn't stop the church from presenting God's Law as a mirror. As we've seen, the mirror is one of the law's proper functions. When we're confronted with our Creator's perfect will for us – the law that is meant to be written on our hearts – then we see the enormity of our rebellion.

In His ministry, Jesus used the mirror all the time. For instance, in the Sermon on the Mount He said in Matthew 5:27-28, “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.” This identifies the lust of the heart as the overwhelming problem, not simply the action of adultery. And although Jesus' words apply directly to men, women's liberation now makes it apply to women as well.

Here's another use of the mirror that Jesus made in Matthew 19:8-9, “8... ‘Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. 9 I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery.”

Notice Jesus said it was not this way from the beginning. In other words, our Creator meant lifelong monogamous marriage to be a great blessing to us. But the

rebellion of our sinful nature sets our hearts against God's will and can cause the relationship between husband and wife to be poisoned. Instead of loving God and loving neighbor – in this case a spouse – we hate God and hate our neighbor. That's exactly what the mirror reveals.

So, it's the thoughts of our hearts – even though we restrain the action – that makes us unrighteous before God. And even though we may love our neighbors by not following through on our thoughts, we are still hating our Creator thereby. For, He considers His gift of sexuality to be a holy thing, not to be spoiled even by thoughts.

In His teaching on divorce Jesus said that although divorce is permitted in the Law, it was not this way in the beginning – the very beginning. Therefore, it's most important to know our Creator's intention from the beginning. Indeed, we're only 26 verses into the very beginning of the bible when we read in Genesis 1:26-28, "26 Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.' 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. 28 God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.'"

So, male and female is our Creator's idea. "Increasing in number" can be done only one way – sexually. Thus, sexual procreation is also His idea. Marriage and the family are His idea. Therefore, human sexuality is righteous in God's sight. It's holy because it's His creation.

Most importantly, Genesis 1:26-27 says that God created us in His Image. This means that Adam and Eve were created with their Creator's sexual design and regulation written on their hearts. With God's Law written on their hearts, Adam and Eve would do their Creator's holy will in every aspect of life including sexually. They would be holy even in their sexuality. This is an amazing concept. Isn't it? Yet, that is what our Creator intended. The only reason it's an amazing concept is because sin has destroyed the holiness of sexuality.

Therefore, if Adam and Eve had not forsaken the Image of God in order to define and judge good and evil for themselves, instinctive holy and righteous sexuality would be a consistent part of a holy and righteous human existence. There would be no lust for what is not our Creator's will. How do we know? Before Adam and Eve sinned, it says of them in Genesis 2:25, "The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame." Shame only comes from sin. And sin only comes from sitting on God's throne and defining good and evil for ourselves.

Consequently, the very first thing Adam and Eve experienced after they sinned is recorded this way in Genesis 3:7, "Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves." The very first thing they did after sinning was to define and judge their nakedness as evil because the thoughts of their hearts were now evil. Nakedness inspires lust – something they'd never known – and we've been living with the situation ever since.

It's interesting that some people think they can recapture the holy and righteous innocence of Adam and Eve through nudism. But being unrighteous definers of good and evil for themselves, ultimately they cannot.

When my son was in the bloom of young manhood at 19 or 20, and in the U.S. Navy, his ship came to port in one of the Caribbean islands. He and a buddy decided to check out the local clothing-optional beach. The beach had nothing to offer but middle-aged European tourists. Thus, he reported that if you've seen one nude middle-aged European, you've seen them all. So, aging is one of the jokes Yahweh plays on all those that think they can get back to the Garden of Eden without His Messiah. He's playing the same joke on all our now 60 and 70 year old hippies. We cannot get ourselves back to the Garden of Eden through communes, political action or anything else. Death will take us all.

Now, there is a way to move back toward righteous sexuality. It's a way no one would naturally think of. It's Jesus Christ and Him alone. On the Day of Pentecost 33A.D., Peter preached to the assembled crowd in Acts 2:38-39, "38... 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call.'"

Thus, the new life in Christ has these three distinctive features. First is the recognition of the power of original sin in our lives and how through it we hate both our Creator and our neighbors. That recognition through the mirror of the Law leads to godly sorrow and a longing for God's true righteousness in our lives.

Second, is recognition through the preaching of the gospel that being baptized into the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ brings upon us the great promise of God that He has put us on the path of restoration to righteousness. On the Day of the Lord or upon death – whichever comes first – those baptized into Christ will be restored to a righteousness before Yahweh as complete as Christ's. In case you didn't notice, all this is by faith in the promise of God in Jesus Christ.

Third, those given repentance and baptism into Christ's death and resurrection are filled with God's Holy Spirit. Only the Spirit of God can direct God's people through all the wicked rebellion of this world. Only He can give God's people the new perspective they need to enjoy what our Creator has intended for us. Only He can bring us to forgiveness of our sins and a new life.

And, as this pertains to the sixth commandment, only Lord Holy Spirit can enable us to live sexually pure and decent lives in what we say and do. So there is hope in this life. We don't have to live in lust or as rutting animals. Husband and wife can love and honor each other as those made in the Image of God.

I close with some profound advice our former seminary president, Pastor Richard Shields, has for those considering marriage. He notes that in the present climate where sexual activity is expected of couples from the moment of first meeting, that sex is being used for a purpose for which Yahweh never intended it – namely as the foundation of a relationship and the means by which to heal its hurts. He points out that as a result many couples use sex as a way of making up for arguments. This works initially, but there comes a point where it no longer does. Then what is a couple to do when they have never learned to work out their

differences and repair damage to a relationship through repentance and forgiveness?

He counsels that committed relationship and practice of the spiritual mechanisms God has given us to work out differences must precede sexual activity. He warns that premature sexual activity distracts from learning those mechanisms of repentance and forgiveness. It distracts from real commitment and honor of each other as male and female. It can easily paper over serious defects in a relationship. Instead, Pastor Shields counsels that sexual union be considered the crowning jewel of a well-founded relationship in which the time-honored pledges of mutual monogamous faithfulness and support have been publicly expressed through marriage.

This is not to say that couples who follow this advice will enter a marriage utopia. No. Life issues, temptations and troubles abound in this life. However, couples who have founded their marital life upon faithfulness to their Creator and faithfulness to each other have a far greater chance of finding Yahweh's blessing in this life in spite of all its difficulties.

One more thing. Pornography is the solution to nothing in marriage. It's merely cash to those who sell it and sets us up for many unrealistic expectations. Instead, for those seeking the joy of sexual intimacy in their marriage, there is much wise and godly counsel available.

Concerning the sixth commandment, we close with an excellent promise from Psalm 85:8-13, "8 I will listen to what God the LORD will say; he promises peace to his people, his saints – but let them not return to folly. 9 Surely his salvation is near those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land. 10 Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other. 11 Faithfulness springs forth from the earth, and righteousness looks down from heaven. 12 The LORD will indeed give what is good, and our land will yield its harvest. 13 Righteousness goes before him and prepares the way for his steps." May the Lord bless you this day. Amen.

All Bible quotes are from the NIV.