

Sunday, July 18, 2021 - The Ten Words Series
“The Real You”

Exodus 20:14; Ephesians 5: 3-8

Rev. Derek S. Klemm, Mountain View Lutheran Church, Las Vegas, NV

Adapted from CPR, 29.4

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

We continue in our Ten Words Series today and come across another commandment that has a lot in common with the one Pastor Brad preached on last week and that I preached on the week before. Like the others, you might think to yourself, “I’ve never committed adultery before. I’m clear on this one.” There’s the letter of the text of the commandment – “You shall not commit adultery.” And then there is the rest of Scripture, not least of which is the word of Jesus in which God’s will is routinely intensified. Jesus says that whoever has *looked* at another lustfully is guilty of committing adultery in their heart. Lest anyone think this commandment does not apply to their circumstances, Jesus’ words suggest otherwise.

Let’s start by accentuating the positive. God has a good and gracious use for human sexuality, formalized all the way back in Genesis chapters 1 and 2 – for human intimacy, companionship, procreation of the human race, the basis of a family structure. That is to say, in its’ proper context – a publicly committed marriage between one man and one woman so long as they both shall live, loving intimacy and relations are a *gift from God*. We don’t, as some Christians are want to do, advocate suppressing sexuality as a bad or dirty thing. God made us creatures, body and soul and in the proper place, it is good. The other end of the spectrum is to suggest that anything that you want to do is natural and therefore is good and it must not be denied – by you or anyone else. The Christian view is right in the middle that sexuality *need not* be denied but that there are appropriate limits, so long as it is in the proper realm in a consensual practice between married people.

When sexuality loses the intimacy and security of its proper place is where things get off track. Over the past quarter century since the advent of wide availability of the internet the porn industry has

grown exponentially. Have you pondered what it is? It's looking at pictures or videos of intimacy. One after another. Always more, always new. But a picture. Fixation with a fiction, a picture of an intimacy that isn't even real. The human race obsesses on it. Can't seem to get enough of it. What a tragedy!— because **God gave us sex as a window, something not to look at but to look through.** You might call it a sign – when sex is its true self, the way God designed it to be.

But pornography is only a variant on what we do with sex in general. The fact is that we stare obsessed at the picture itself rather than use sex as the window it was intended to be. And so the pileup of crashed relationships continues on the highway of life.

Remember the woman that Jesus met at the well? Five husbands and a sixth fellow she's just shacking up with. Why? She was looking for love in all the wrong places. She was focused on the picture or the window, rather than looking through it to the reality. And if you focus on the picture itself, you will indeed be disappointed, soon get bored, and itch for another picture to look at or another window to gaze at.

Countless is the marriage disrupted by the man or woman who “falls in love.” Rare is the person who realizes that he or she is not actually “in love” with another person, but in love with a feeling that's by its very nature is fleeting. The person you already know has all these flaws, these personality traits, these issues and sides that you just don't like... the new person is mysterious, a template onto which you can project all your hopes and dreams, fill in the gaps with who you want them to be... until you come to know their own flaws and long for the novel and mysterious yet again. It hangs on novelty, and novelty just doesn't last.

God in his Word warns us of this danger constantly. This “no adultery,” no sex outside of marriage, is one theme that the Scriptures hammer home in uncompromising clarity. And yet the Scriptures show at the same time an utterly frank picture of the mess, the hurt, the damage we do to

ourselves and to others by ignoring God here. From David and Bathsheba to the woman at the well.

Never forget why God hates sin: he hates it because of the damage it does in us, the people he loves.

And this drives us to the heart of it. What are you looking for? What is sex itself given to you to make you thirst for? It's Him. It's the blessed Trinity Himself. You know what you ache for? You ache for a relationship of love, a relationship where the love is so solid and fixed and sure and unchanging that it doesn't hang one little bit on you. Because you know you screw up all the time. You need a love that doesn't change when you fail. That's the love God gave you when He sent His Son into your flesh to make you His friends. That's the love that hangs on Calvary, where, far from letting your sins drive Him away from you, He draws you into his embrace by taking every last one of them into Himself as His own. And His faithfulness to you is then absolute.

You won't fill that need in finding your "soul mate." You won't live happily ever after at the wedding. You can't expect your spouse to fulfill all your needs for companionship and help you to never feel lonely again, or insecure again, or fully forgiven for all your sins again. They won't complete you. Nor will you find a satisfying identity in your spouse or your gender - what defines you is something else outside yourself that God provides for you - adopted in baptism - His. That's your identity - baptized child of God. That supersedes whatever "feels authentic" or real about who you are, the picture you give the world to look at. That ache is for a role that only God can fill. The real you is what God is doing in and through you.

Don't mishear the strong warning in the Epistle lesson: it's not saying that your sin causes God no longer to love you, but that sexual sin in particular has this horrible power to make you no longer care about His love. That's why it's so dangerous. It can lead you to despise the very thing that sex itself was given you to see through to. It's what St. Paul, talking about sexual perversions, would call worshipping the creature rather than the Creator who is blessed forever (Rom 1:24-25). This is the whole point of the Book of Hosea, where the prophet Hosea marries a prostitute named Gomer to portray the

teaching God wants to convey about His faithfulness to Israel despite their unfaithfulness to Him. This is the whole point of Jesus calling himself the Bridegroom. It's why in the Lord's Supper He comes to you, touches you, puts His body into you to have communion with you and engender in you His own divine life. That ache, that desire you try to still with the changing pictures, the oh-so-fleeting orgasm, or the only slightly less fleeting feeling of being "in love"—it only is finally satisfied in Him, in His unalterable, unshakable love for you. Love that covers every shame and holds you tight.

Don't focus on the picture. Don't stare at the window. Look through sex to what God gave it to be a picture of. He's wildly in love with you, and He wants your sexuality to picture His fidelity and to be grounded in His unchanging and ever-forgiving love. Because that's the real deal, and He defines the real you. In Jesus' name, Amen.