

The Red Light District of the Sermon on the Mount

Matthew 5:27-30
Doug Roman, Bible Baptist Church
Sunday AM, January 24, 2016
Sermon Summary

Introduction

It's fun to watch the transformation of a major home renovation. When buyers purchase their home and do extensive renovations on it, you can expect to encounter problems under the floor covering, behind the sheetrock, and above the ceiling. Sometimes, the exterior looks just fine but once you move past it, it's not uncommon to discover wiring or plumbing that is in major disrepair. Jesus' sermon on the mount goes beyond the outer exterior and moves to the interior. It's not just a fresh coat of paint or new floor covering but a major renovation of lives going right to the heart of the issue. Jesus shows us that that behind the walls of adultery is a heart in sinful disrepair. The sermon on the mount has a way of doing major renovation in our hearts.

Exposition

We will trace Jesus' penetrating teaching on this subject in three phases. We will close with principles and application.

1. The subject is lust (vv. 27-28).
What is lust? It is the desire to fulfill a good and godly appetite in the wrong time, in the wrong way, and with the wrong person.
 - A. The prohibition (v. 27). This is a prohibition taken directly from the ten commandments. The seventh commandment says, "You shall not commit adultery." It's found in Exodus 20:14 and Deuteronomy 5:18. Laws prohibiting adultery deter the act about as effectively as laws against suicide.
 - B. The point (v. 28). "But I say to you..." The authoritative intent and requirement of the commandment (rather than mere exegetical contribution to an interpretation; no rabbinic citations). To keep the commandment is to refrain from the adulterous act *and* the thoughts that lead to the action.
2. The gateway is looking (v. 28). The child's song here certainly provides a simple but applicable exhortation, "O be careful little eyes what you see." "[Jesus] is not even forbidding us to look at a woman, but to look lustfully. We all know the difference between looking and lusting" (Stott, 87). But what would also rightly follow is "O be careful fertile mind what you think." Imagination is a God-given gift; but if it is fed dirt by the eye, it will be dirty. All sin, not least sexual sin, begins with the imagination. Therefore, what feeds the imagination is of maximum importance in the pursuit of kingdom righteousness (Carson, 151). The imagination is the bedroom in which the lust is given life. Jesus deals with that to which the law points, namely purity of heart in the matter of sexuality. It is interesting that Jesus uses a male in his example. As such, one may wrongly conclude that lust is a male problem. The sin of lust does not discriminate on the basis of gender. The fruit of lust includes romantic fantasies, viewing internet pornography, sexual activity with a girlfriend or boyfriend, adultery, and more.

3. The solution is simple (vv. 29-30). Or is it? Gouge out your eye and cut off your hand. This is not to be taken literally. It is a figure of speech. But it is nevertheless a vivid image. Cutting off or gouging out the offending part is a way of saying that Jesus' disciples must deal radically with sin (Carson, 151). Jay Adams, a key figure in founding the nouthetic counseling movement, expressed it with the phrase "radical amputation." So then, this is not about dismemberment, maiming, or mutilation but mortification (Romans 6:11). So then what does this look like (Stott, 90)?
 - Gouge out your eyes...don't look.
 - Cut off your hand...don't do.
 - Cut of your foot...don't go.
 - Consider yourselves to be unable to do (dead to) the things or visit the places which previously caused you to sin (Romans 6:11).

4. Principles and application
 - A. Principle 1: The battle against lust is radical. We must not allow small amounts of sexual impurity into our minds through the eye gate nor should we "wean" ourselves off of sexual sin. The battle against lust requires "radical amputation."
 - B. Principle 2: The battle against lust is intense and intentional. We will be constantly assaulted with opportunities for lust. Know this. Prepare for this. We must not allow shame to keep us from finding a trusted friend or counselor to help us battle lust.
 - C. Principle 3: The battle against lust requires fighting pleasure with pleasure. As a book by Joshua Harris is titled, *Sex is not the Problem (Lust Is)*. We cannot vilify the gift of sex because of the sin of lust. The Song of Solomon depicts the delight of lovers (the book is not an allegory of Christ and the Church). Proverbs 5:15-19 and Hebrews 13:4 teach us about the beauty of sex.
 - D. Principle 4: The battle against lust requires a guard. Even with the blizzard this week on the East Coast, a guard remained at the Tomb on the Unknown Soldier. The posting of a guard at a gate is a common military tactic. So the posting of a guard at our eye gate is an indispensable moral strategy (Stott, 90) (cf. Job 31:1).

Playing with lust is as foolish as playing with a bear in the wild. You can't tame the bear of lust. It will not play on your terms.

Conclusion

Sin distorted the wonder, beauty and intimacy of sex to a cheap, distorted, and impersonal pursuit of personal pleasure-seeking. The salacious titillating craving of lust is a sin which falls short of the glory of God. When confessed and dealt with, it is a sin that is washed away by the blood of Jesus Christ. The path to maintain purity is a hard-hewn road, as is any path that follows the way of holiness.