

“Naked and Not Ashamed”

Please pray with me and for me, and for yourselves.

Lord Jesus, grant me your Spirit that I would proclaim your word in truth and power and that all who listen would hear what you have to say to them. To the glory of the heavenly Father. Amen.

Grace Mercy and Peace - Blessed are you in the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The sermon this day continues the one on marriage that I began the end of August. The Text is Genesis 2:25 “The man and his wife were both naked and not ashamed.” Is it sad or amusing that those who selected the OT Lesson felt they had to end at verse 24 so people in the church would not hear the words Adam and Eve were naked and not ashamed?

We look back at the Victorian Age as filled with sexual repression and prudity. Yet nude figurines and pictures male and female were common in homes and public. We sometimes see them in our day. They still delight the eye. In today’s art it is hard to find something that is not lewd, vulgar or offensive. We don’t know the difference between pornography and beauty. We act as if the obscene is normal. I think the Victorians were wiser and healthier than we are today.

God invented sexuality. Adam and Eve, the Garden of Eden, are still the image of innocence, purity, ideal sexuality. They were husband and wife totally free to enjoy everything good, unaware of the possibility of wrong,

naked and unashamed. The first thing sin brought was the shame of their nakedness before God and before one another. They hid and covered themselves. We do not naturally possess their innocence and purity.

God knows very well the effect sin had. The OT is filled with tales of rape, incest, adultery, homosexuality and the horrible results. Many of the great heroes of the faith in the OT are scared by sexual sins. Jesus talks about divorce. It was never part of God’s intention. It is never good. Yet like murder, because of the reality of sin—the hardness of human hearts, both execution and divorce occur.

Shame, evil in this world were not God’s intention. We have been redeemed from the power of sin in our lives. He gave us the Spirit and power of Christ. As Christians, we are not to further the course of evil, destroy others, wreck our marriages. But it does happen. Christians are victims of the evil others do. Sadly we too are sinful. Even though we are not supposed to, we do cause real injury to others, to our spouses. We suffer the results, divorce and other pains that we bring upon ourselves. We live always in need of confession, forgiveness from our God and one another.

Human sexuality has brought enormous evil. When that occurs people try to protect themselves. It is a reasonable reaction to reject sexuality, to feel everything about it is evil, to seek a better life without it. The NT talks about this, people would reject marriage. Some of the heresies in the early church despised the physical body and sought pure spirituality.

We see this struggle in church history with the rise of monastic orders, the denial of marriage to priests. My personal

opinion is that we are going to see a popular rejection of sexuality in our society. People revolted against it, an increase in celibate groups, in and outside the church. They will appeal to many Christians but they are an evil trap. Especially for those who are not married Satan has a false view of sexuality, that it is all evil. He wants people to think no discussion, no image of the nude, no song, everything about it is unchristian, unspiritual. He wants us to think we are to rise above it to a higher plane.

I am sure there are those of you that are wondering why you came today? What good is all this talk to those who are young or single, to those who are celibate by circumstance, separation, divorce or death?

God makes very plain that sexual relations are restricted to within the marriage covenant. Before marriage, outside of it, celibacy is always God's only standard. We have forgotten today that to be celibate is an excellent way of being fully male or female. It is different but not less than being male and female in marriage. A great deal is made about the difficulties of celibacy. The impression is given that celibate life is inadequate, so unhealthy, that all single people should be engaging in sexual relations anyway.

It is commonly taught that the denial of one's sexual desires is horrible. Yet anyone in a good marriage knows very well that requires a great deal of self denial. No one can seek the good of the beloved by seeking self centered personal satisfaction. Much of what makes for a satisfactory marital relationship is developed in the years before marriage, the

struggle for self-control, seeking the true good for others instead of using them for selfish need.

Modern sexual psychology tries to hide from us that throughout the world, in cultures and times far removed from the Bible, the normal practice is for marriage to occur in the mid to late twenties, for sexual relations to be forbidden before and outside marriage. Like the prohibitions against murder stealing and slander people come to these ideas because they work to make a good society. Very early marriage, youthful promiscuity, infidelity, homosexuality are harmful in themselves not just because they are against God's laws.

Modern Psychology is correct when it says it is not healthy to repress our sexuality, but many people cover over the technical distinction between repression and denial. I feel in an attempt to justify their immorality. Further they try to get others to follow them, do as they do. Film, TV, music, art, advertising, in schools, in government, in the church, they promote their ideas. As if by making immorality common it will become good. They have been very successful. Many Christians feel naked and ashamed for speaking God's word. Ashamed to tell the truth about sexuality, how good it is in the proper place and harmful when misused.

Repression is psychologically harmful; denial is not. It is easy to see the difference when we talk about anger instead of sexuality. Let us say someone deliberately caused your child serious injury. Will you be angry? Is God angry that happened? Anger at injustice and evil is a correct feeling.

Should you get a gun and shoot the guilty party? Should you cause them injury in return?

Repression is saying “I do not feel angry”. It is a rejection of reality. Refusing to admit, to accept how he really feels. When that is done the feeling, the intensity of its power does not go away. It is buried from consciousness, works its way through the mind and will force its way out. It will be dissipated some other way. People can spend a long in counseling trying to discover what is causing their problems.

Denial is not the same at all. It says I feel very angry. It cries, It is in anguish, It gives vent to the power of the feelings. It admits the reality. Denial is saying even though this is how I feel, I chose not to act this anger out in harmful ways. It denies the deeds of anger.

Repressing our sexuality is to say I do not feel the feelings God built into me for my good as a man or woman. Denial says, I feel those desires and needs. I chose not to act on them in ways that are harmful to me and others. That is the foundation of adult maturity. It is basic to our life as Christians growing in the power of Christ’s Spirit.

The Bible says: “I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. Do not be conformed to this world, be transformed by the renewal of your mind. Let no sin reign in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions, yield yourselves to God, your members as instruments of righteousness. Put off the old man, which is corrupt according to deceitful lusts.” Peter writes: “Since Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the

same thought. . .live for the rest of time in the flesh, no longer by human passions but by the will of God. Let the time past be sufficient for doing what the Gentiles do. . . licentiousness, passions, drunkenness.” Hebrews has “Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the immortal and adulterous.”

Naked and not ashamed. That is God’s intention for marriage. The Song of Solomon is 8 chapters of love poetry. Two become one flesh is much more than hormones. It is a mystic reality, power, spiritual communion, not at all animal like. Our sexuality is creative, complex, unique, never the same, unrepeatable, perfect yet imperfect, leading onward, higher up and further on, deeper and wider. It makes us united as one yet in it we become most uniquely male and female. Honeymooners find an unbelievable intensity of delight, yet after many years couples look back with fondness to those days as the beginning of a path to far more wonderful delights. Years of good marriage do not diminish sexuality.

Yet it is true the greater potential something has, the worse it can become. Bad marriage, bad sexual relationships can easily be worse than nothing at all. Today we call what used to be sick, disgusting, depraved - great. We call adult material, what is grossly immature and juvenile. Words like virgin, chaste, pure, innocent and all they connote are forgotten. Satan’s action made us naked and ashamed of good. Now we are not ashamed of evil.

We need to return to the Garden of Eden, God’s plan for us in marriage. We are not without sin but we have been redeemed. The power of sin has been broken in our lives.

We have been given the Holy Spirit, the power of true holy love for one another in Christ, so let us live. Amen.

May the Peace that passes all understanding Keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

October 6, 1991 Calvary

Psalm 119:49-56 Genesis 2:18-24

Hebrews 2:9-11 Mark 10:2-16

20th @ Pentecost