

XXI. Matthew in Biblical Perspective
A Royal Manifesto of the Kingdom from the King
“Now What about Marriage and Divorce? Part I”
Matthew 5:27-32
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June 27, 2010 – Morning Sermon

In this study I’m going to read Matthew 5:27-32 and then we’ll deal with the issue of marriage and divorce that is specifically covered in verses 31 and 32 which is set in the context of our study from last week. Our Savior said this in Matthew 5:27-32 says, **27** *“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’* **28** *But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.* **29** *If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell.* **30** *And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.* **31** *“It was also said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’* **32** *But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.*

The grass withers. The flower fades. This is the Word of our God. It abides forever and by His grace and mercy may it be preached for you.

In the last study of this I preached on the roots of sexual immorality being found in the heart that bows at the knee of the idolatry of lust of sexuality. I think the only thing that many of you remembered was “men were ugly.” Those were about the only emails I received all week. One of them said, “Harry have you looked in a mirror.” Yes I have and I’m ugly just like you’re ugly. I didn’t give you the whole thing. There are 28 accounts of creation and one of them is an apocryphal account. I’m not sure where this one is found but this is how it goes and I’m sure I’ll get in trouble with this because it has to do with this men being ugly deal. This apocryphal account in an extra Biblical account is that God said to Adam, “Adam, I have good news and bad news.” Adam said, “That’s great, give me the good news first.” God says, “I’m going to make you a wife and you’re ugly but she’ll be beautiful.” Adam said, “Wow, woo-man” (woman). That’s great to hear. What’s the bad news?” God said, “She’s not only going to be beautiful but she’s going to be dumb.” Do you still love me ladies? Adam says, “Oh my goodness, why are You going to do that?” God says, “I’m going to make her beautiful so you’ll love her and I’m going to make her dumb so she’ll love you.” Okay ladies, did I get out of that one?

I read this text and I know it’s a challenging text. It deals with matters of marriage and divorce, sexuality and lust. Our contemporary culture that has bought into free sex, casual sex, and recreational sex says you Christians ask what I thought you’d just be bound up with this sex stuff and some are thinking “Oh my goodness this is in the Bible so I guess it’s alright for Harry to preach it but I hope he doesn’t say too much about it.” Whether it’s the licentiousness of paganism and its view of sexuality or the prudishness of untaught conservative-ism that thinks the best thing to do about sex is to just hide it, Jesus is confronting both of you this morning. This is the opening salvo in

Jesus' ministry to reclaim the high ground of the sanctity of marriage and the joy of embracing Biblical sexuality. In the name of avoiding lust the Bible does not remain silent on sex.

So I'm going to ask that you come to the next study on this tonight. I have had the enormous privilege of preparing for this message and I know we listed that I would return to our Daniel study tonight but I'm going to postpone that so that I can give you Part II of this study. I will bring up some very pointed issues about Biblical sexuality, marriage, what the Bible says about marriage because the Bible is not silent about it. In fact it's almost embarrassing of what it has to say about it but it has something to say that needs to be said so that we don't fall into the view that sex is that which will make my life and therefore bowing in the inordinate pursuit of sexuality and experiences that break lives, hearts, marriages and families. But also to understand that God created it as a glorious privilege and blessing that signs and seals a marriage that invigorates a marriage that expresses the joys of a marriage and that anticipates what it means to be built upon an everlasting love that Christ has for His people where He can't be separated from His bride and nothing can separate us from His love. God has put that in place for that purpose.

There is a reason why sexuality and its practice have such an inordinate attention in our society. The reason is we know it is something very powerful and that it is more than just an appetite. It is an appetite but it's more than just an appetite. We also know that if you worship at the altar of sex it will destroy you. This is why Jesus has this opening salvo. This is not exhaustive about marriage, divorce and sexuality. Jesus has more to say in Matthew 19, Mark 10, Matthew 5 and Matthew 22. He will empower the Apostle Paul and Peter to say much about this in the rest of the New Testament. This is just the opening salvo in which He is grabbing hold of sexuality from the cesspool of meaningless lust and placing it in the sanctity of marriage for its proper embracing and enjoyment. Then He is taking marriage and making sure that you understand how important sexual purity is in the context of its proper practice and joy in marriage and that if not it can actually break the marriage covenant.

I like the illustration one guy used. He said sex is like fire. If you put it in the fireplace it heats, warms, cooks and makes everything have a sense of comfort and joy. You take it out of the fireplace and it burns the house down. Sex where God has it is to be embraced and enjoyed. The Bible is very specific about some aspects of it that I would like address tonight where we have some appropriate classes for our children and you can be thoughtful about your attendance and I can work my way through this with you. It has its fireplace that it's to be and it has an unbelievable blessing when its in its place and not in the place of Jesus. It is also when its out of its proper place it will destroy lives, families, hearts, homes and ones very existence. That's how powerful this thing is.

Now, Jesus is attempting to bring it back. Just to remind you we are on the Sermon on the Mount and we are in the section right now where Jesus is giving us ten commandments. Moses went up on a mountain. Jesus is up on a mountain. Jesus is taking the Law of Moses that God gave to Moses when He met him on Mount Sinai and Jesus is expanding it in light of the Gospel for us in two sections. One section is the five commandments He is giving us that are Gospel driven about what is exceeding righteousness that we offer as a statement of praise to Him who gives us a perfect

righteousness whereby we are saved. Then He gives us five directives on how we live that righteousness in this world in a way that honors the Lord and does not promote ourselves. We are in the second of these. The first one we dealt with is when Jesus said you heard that you are not to murder so now let me tell you where murder is born and what it means for God's people to pursue life instead of death. The second one we are now in is when Jesus takes the seventh commandment of 'you shall not commit adultery' and He talks to us about the sanctity of sexuality and the sanctity of marriage.

There are three things I want you to remember as we move forward into Matthew 5:31 and 32. The first thing to remember is that the Sermon on the Mount begins with the Gospel saving and changing you. It is that the Gospel saves you personally. There are not group plans for salvation. Your father, mother, wife, child nor your husband can be saved for you. You must personally come to Jesus and when you come to Jesus Christ and put your trust in Him alone – not Him plus religion – not Him plus ritual – but Him alone for salvation, then He not only saves you but He does a reformation that's described in the beatitudes. That leads you into a Gospel ministry of transformation of salt and light.

The second thing I want you to remember is how Jesus is using the Law in its Gospel use to bring us to Him and then to send us and how we live for Him. This One who gives us a perfect righteousness now sends us to pursue a righteousness that honors Him. We don't do this for salvation. We do this for our Savior. One of the things He is teaching us in these first two of 'don't commit murder' and 'don't commit adultery' that the acts of sin are birthed in the heart of a sinner. The acts of sin are not birthed in the culture. It can certainly influence and draw out what's there but we are not victims of our circumstances. Jesus says the issue is in the heart. The heart of the problem is the problem with the heart. So why do people murder? It is because of anger. Why is there anger? It is self-righteousness and self-exaltation in which people are in the wave of your life or are not serving your life as you so desire. So Cain hated his brother Abel and he murdered him. The embryo of murder is anger in the heart. The embryo of sexual immorality is lust. That is the embryo whereby one has determined, not that God has given sex but sex is my god which will give me life or one has determined marriage isn't a gift from God and marriage is my god. My spouse is my god and there is a perfect spouse and perfect children and a perfect marriage that will make my life. Jesus knows that you have taken marriage, a good gift, and put it before Him, above Him and along side of Him in which you have just made an idol of it.

That's why He carefully uses the word lust. It is used 62 times in your Bible. It means an inordinate desire driven by idolatry. Whether its food or drink or whatever it might be it is an inordinate desire driven by idolatry. In other words, we have bought the notion that this pathetic pigmy view of sexuality that is in our culture leading to an erotic experience and thinking that emptiness of that erotic experience will make our life and then we find out it doesn't. Yet what it does is it brings diseases, broken marriages, guilt, shame and broken lives when we put it in the place of God with our idolatrous lusts.

I've done these sermons before on how Satan attempts to trap us in three areas – money, sex and power. And isn't it interesting how the in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus already dealt with power when He said you don't murder. You use the power I have given you to promote life not take life. Now we are in the part about sex and He'll deal with money also when He talks about no man being able to serve two masters. Our

hearts are unstoppable idol factories unless the heart is changed and filled with that alone which truly gives life and that is a vital personal relationship with Christ. That's where we are.

We are now at this point of sexual immorality driven by lust and destroying marriages. Therefore Jesus is coming back to tell us to reclaim marriage to what He has made it to be by those who find their all in Him. Now let Me tell you what marriage is from Me as a blessing and then let Me tell you about sexuality that I have created to put within marriage and its enormous blessing of what I have done with it to put it in your life so that the marriage bed is held in honor among all. It is a sacred thing that I have given to you that is of enormous blessing but when you take the marriage or sex within marriage, the gift I have given from Me, and you put it in place of Me it will consume you. It will destroy you. So Jesus is telling us He wants to start the process of explaining it to us.

Let's go back to Matthew 5:31 and 32. Jesus first of all gives us the Law which we have already heard. What is the Law you have already heard? It is in Matthew 5:31 which says *"It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.'"* Now this is what everyone is teaching you that when you divorce your wife that you are to give her a certificate of divorce. Jesus says, "Now let Me tell you what I am instructing you in light of the ultimate truth of God's Word, not just this rested out of context truth that you've been taught. I want to tell you why there is divorce and when should there be divorce if there ever should be divorce."

In Matthew 5:32 Jesus gives us the Law expanded; *"But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery."* Jesus is very clearly teaching us something here. He is reclaiming marriage. What is marriage? Marriage is one man, one woman, under God, committed in a one flesh relationship for one life. That's what God made marriage to be. He says, "You start with on what basis can I divorce my wife but I start with what is marriage." Marriage is one man, one woman in a one flesh relationship for life. In fact Jesus added this phrase later, "They are no longer two but one. Those whom God has joined together let no man separate." So Jesus is reclaiming the high ground of marriage. As He does this He says there is only one ground that breaks it on this side of death and that one ground that breaks it is sexual immorality. Now Paul will later expand that to answer the question; what about if my husband or wife has abandoned me? Then they have broken the one flesh relationship yet Jesus is telling us you start not with divorce you start with marriage and what it ought to be.

Secondly, He is telling us that we are preoccupied with trying to multiply grounds for divorce. I want you to be preoccupied with the power of the Gospel of grace in making a marriage. Now, there are times when someone has broken the relationship. If they have broken the relationship with sexual immorality, then that is grounds for divorce. If one takes a divorce on some manufactured ground of divorce, then when one remarries one is in the midst of an adulterous relationship. It cannot be owned and blessed of the Lord. It will not be owned and blessed of the Lord. One might think, "Harry what if I have already done that?" I'll get to that in just a little bit but let's just start where Jesus is starting us. There is a high view of marriage and a high view of sexuality within marriage. Jesus is using a careful broader phrase of 'sexual immorality'

and not just adultery where it might be sexual promiscuity of adultery or sexual perversion such as homosexuality or other perverted acts of sexuality. It might be all kinds of inventions of sexuality of how this is used. Whenever you begin to worship an idol it begins to take on all kinds of grotesque expressions. *Pornia* is the word used there for sexual immorality. It could be sexual addictions whereby one is drawn away from the sexual relationship with one's spouse. Jesus says when that happens it has broken the one flesh relationship and that is a ground for divorce. So He then presents it.

The other thing is this one isn't in this text but another one where they will say to Jesus "Moses commanded to give her a certificate of divorce for her uncleanness" and Jesus is going to say "You think Moses commanded divorce but I'm trying to teach you that divorce is not a command but a concession when necessary." Why does God hate divorce? God hates divorce because it wouldn't be here without sin. If there wasn't sin there wouldn't be divorce. It may be a sinful divorce or even if it's a Biblical divorce, it's still because of sin. That's why God hates divorce and He has by concession made it available to protect the victim. It is never a solution. Every divorce Biblical or not will always have consequences. Unbiblical divorces will have disastrous consequences and only the grace of God can reclaim us in such moments.

Let me illustrate this through an example of war. Why is there war? It is because of violence and sin. In the Christian view of war, a just war is only a war that is necessary for very specific things. It is never a matter of foreign policy. It is always the result of the failure of foreign policy. Even a war when it's necessary is going to have calamitous consequences. Divorce is the same thing. It is a last resort to protect a victim from the patterned sexual immorality and abandonment of the spouse, but it will always have consequences. And sinful divorces initiated by people on other grounds will have even more disastrous consequences.

Here is an illustration of this. I had a gentleman come to me and say, "I'm going to divorce my wife." I said, "Why?" He said, "She doesn't make me happy. Are you trying to tell me that God wants me to stay in a marriage and not be happy?" I said, "No. I'm telling you that God says to stay in the marriage and get happy and His grace is sufficient. I have a Christ centered, Gospel driven, grace overcoming message for you and this message is not that you have a marriage partner with you or outside of you or out there in the future that's going to make your life. My message is that Jesus Christ will make your life and bring you into this marriage as an asset, instead of the liability putting upon the pressure of the woman to be your messiah or to put the pressure upon a sexual experience that will make your life. I am not about to validate your idolatry and send you out to more idolatry and then put you upon another woman and another sexual act in which she is going to have to come up with something she can't come up with. It is absolutely impossible. You have taken that which is good and glorious and a gift from God in its proper glorious use and you have made it into an idol and it will destroy you."

Jesus is saying we reclaim the high ground of marriage and reclaim the high ground of sexuality and by the way sexual immorality can be a grounds for divorce but if you divorce on reasons other than sexual immorality or its implications and people remarry then they have gone into sexual immorality in those because it is not a divorce sanctioned by Biblical statement. Jesus is saying divorce is by concession and not a commandment and is not a solution but a last resort protection for someone.

He then expands it and embraces it by calling it back to our marriages. By the way, put this in context. Marriage is one man, one woman, one flesh relationship for life. So what ends a marriage? It is death which by the way wouldn't end the marriage if there wasn't sin, that's why there's death. The wages of sin is death. The fact of death in this world is because of sin also. So here is this one relationship for life, now let's go back to the Old Testament. Did the Bible say you can't commit adultery in the Old Testament? Yes. If you did commit adultery what was the penalty? It was death. What would have happened to the marriage? It was over. In the New Testament the power of the sword of God was not given to the church but the power of the towel – we serve one another. Because we don't have the power of the sword and we don't initiate the penalty of death for sexual immorality and promiscuity, therefore there is mercy extended to the violator. You are not put to death but mercy continues to protect the one who is being victimized if necessary with a divorce. Divorce here is an act of protection but not a solution.

Here are a couple of takeaways in conclusion. There is a lot more I want to develop for this in the second part but for now let's look in 1 Corinthians 7. The first takeaway is what does the Bible say about marriage and sex? We are to flee sexual immorality but I want to put this text in front of us and this first takeaway has six things about what the Bible says about marriage and sex. When you read the book of Corinthians Paul is writing to the church at Corinth. He has given to the church at Corinth a message in six chapters. From chapter seven on Paul is answering seven questions that they sent to him. The first question they sent to him was about the matter of sexual morality, immorality and its relationship to marriage. He handles that question in 1 Corinthians 7. They will ask him about a lot of things but why would this be the first question? In that day the word 'Corinthian' was synonymous for sexually immoral people. In other words if you were called a Corinthian it was a derogatory term meaning a sexually immoral person. So sexual immorality is all over the place at Corinth and so they asked Paul about it. Paul does what Jesus does. He doesn't go immediately at sexual immorality but he goes after the sanctity of marriage where sex belongs.

1 Corinthians 7:1 says ***1** Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: "It is good for a man **not to have sexual relations with a woman.**"* (ESV) I want to stop right here. I love the ESV but when I adopted the English Standard Version there were about six or seven places where I wrote to them and said I sure wish you would take a little closer look at it and this passage was one of them. In this particular passage verse one is a very difficult thing to translate but I prefer the New American Standard version with one word of explanation. Look at verse 1 in the NAS.

1 Corinthians 7:1-5 (NAS) ***1** Now concerning the things about which you wrote, it is good for a man **not to touch a woman.** **2** But because of immoralities, each man is to have his own wife, and each woman is to have her own husband. **3** The husband must fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband. **4** The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. **5** Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.*

Now "not touching a woman" doesn't mean I can't shake hands with a woman or have the Christian side to side hug. It doesn't mean we can't pat each other on the head.

It means you cannot have a sensual contact designed to promote sexual intimacy. You are not allowed to have that kind of contact with a woman outside of marriage. You are not allowed to sensually touch a woman, a touch that is designed to communicate intimacy designs.

He goes on to say in I Corinthians 7:2-5, **2** *But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband.* **3** *The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband.* **4** *For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.* **5** *Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.* Verse 3 in that day was so unbelievably countercultural. Go try to find a country 2,000 years ago in the Middle East that said a woman had any rights over a man. There is nothing more sacred than understanding how God made us male and female and there is no where else in which the dignity of the woman is more secure than within Biblical Christianity. Here you have Biblical equality understood and not the world's notion of interchangeability. Most countries would have stopped after the first sentence in verse four.

There is much I want to say from this text but let me give you the six things in the first takeaway to get started with. The first thing is the Bible teaches that Biblical sexuality is marital. There is not Biblical sexuality outside of marriage. It is good for a man not to sensually touch a woman. Where can a man sensually touch a woman? It is in marriage, your wife or husband and that's the only place. It is marital and therefore covenantal.

Secondly, Biblical sexuality is monogamous. There is no polygamy, bigamy or multiplicity of partners sexually. It is marital and marital means monogamous. It says, "Let each man (singular) have his own wife (singular). Let each woman (singular) have her own husband (singular)..." It is one man and one woman.

Thirdly, Biblical sexuality is heterosexual. A man is to have his wife. A wife is to have her husband. It is a heterosexual relationship that is taught within Scripture.

Fourthly, Biblical sexuality is to be habitual and prioritized. Paul said this is a matter of regularity. You can be spontaneous but this is a matter of regularity. Don't deprive one another. This is to be a regular part of your life. This is to be a part of your life that is to be unbelievably exciting. Lust is when one says "I'll go after you as long as you are intriguing and exciting" and in five years when you're less intriguing lust will send you somewhere else. When you get old it will be more enjoyable because it's built on love. It is Biblical sexuality. Because it is built on love it is to be habitual, prioritized and even if you took a spiritual retreat for prayer and the Word don't deprive one another except if there is the priority of your spiritual life where you need to focus upon something otherwise it is to be a regular part of your life. And if you have gone on a spiritual retreat or had to be away, come together again. That's Paul's nice way to say 'fill in the blank.' Go hug each other real close. Just get with each other.

Fifthly, Biblical sexuality is to be reciprocal. The man's body belongs to his wife. It is not hierarchical. The wife's body belongs to her husband.

Sixthly and finally, Biblical sexuality is ministerial. When Paul says the man's body belongs to his wife and the wife's to her husband he is saying to us that God has

given you sexual appetites, abilities and desires. Jesus did not say for a man to deny sexual desires but He says do not lust after a woman sexually. Jesus forbids lusting after a woman. Sexual desires are good in marriage. Why? It is because they drive us to minister to each other and love each other, to love as we would be loved. The Bible not only condemns me lusting after a woman outside of marriage sexually and idolatrously but it condemns me lusting after my own wife. I am to desire her and in my desire for her it is desiring to give myself to her. That is what God calls us to.

He doesn't say just say lusting after a woman sexually is idolatry unless your married but anytime you put anybody in the place of God even within marriage you have put yourself in an impossible situation. Jesus says "I'm going to sanctify your sexual desires and I'm going to transform them so you're not driven to abuse the person for your sexual gratification in the emptiness of a pathetic pigmy erotic moment but I'm going to give you something in which you greatly love each other. That moment is simply the capstone of the embrace of life with each other. You have now come to give not to take." When both come to give, the Lord then blesses both through each other. Singles that is the moment you are looking for and longing for, not the meaningless encounter at a coffee shop or a tavern or on the internet. That is the moment you are keeping yourself for because that's the moment that Christ is honored, not attempted to be replaced with idolatry.

The second life takeaway is what about the sin of sexual immorality? Here is where I will spend a lot more time in Part II of this sermon but I'll give you a couple of thoughts on it now. Sexual immorality isn't like where someone liked sugar but now they are a diabetic they will do away with sugar, no, it's a lot tougher than that. I am very much indebted to people like Tim Keller and John White and most of all C.S. Lewis and his essay on Four Loves. One of the things that challenged me to think my way through this is as I was reading through and thinking through this matter of sexual immorality, it is an inordinate desire that is driven to idolatry in which I have taken the sacredness of sex and made it something else. Our society is preoccupied with sexuality. How many songs do you hear about hamburgers? Have you ever noticed when you talk about marriage, romance and sex and all how poetry starts, usually bad poetry at that? Sex isn't just one of the other things out there. It is something that is powerful. God designed it.

What is the first thing Adam does when he sees Eve? He writes a poem and says, "This is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh and she shall be called woman." He just starts waxing eloquently. God moves us in this so that sexuality is so powerful. I don't deny its proper place. I want to enjoy its proper place but I don't want it to be put in the wrong place because it is utterly destructive. Do you remember what Jesus said back in the earlier verses? He said, "If you find yourself lusting after a woman, be willing to pluck out your right eye and cut off your right hand." In the last study we looked at how Jesus' teaching is not the method of sanctification but He is teaching the intensity. Depart with right hand or right eyes rather than be unfaithful before the Lord in this area. I don't think by accident He is choosing hands and eyes.

Men, remember where the act of sexuality born? It is born in the heart. Do you remember what Paul prays about the eyes of your heart? So don't pluck out your right eye, redirect your eye to Jesus Christ. I Corinthians 7 said, "Men, don't touch a woman." What is it that a woman responds to? It's not sight, we're ugly, remember? She responds

to touch, emotion and communication. So men redirect your eyes and then redirect your hands. Ladies, don't let any man who has a wrong directed eye use his hands to make your body his playground of idolatry. This is very clear direction that Jesus is giving us about where our eyes and hands are to be and what we are to do in the order of the pursuit. There is something else about filling the heart. There is something that happens in our mind and our heart that impacts what we do. It's not just a matter of saying, "I'm not going to do that." It's about filling something up so I think and look differently and move in another direction.

Another thought about this matter is that when you and I are asking God to remove sexual immorality, it's because we are pursuing purity and the engagement of sexuality within marriage, the anticipation of that and it is because our heart has been filled with the love of Christ, therefore there is no room for the idolatry of sexuality and marriage, but the enjoyment of what God has given for His glory.

One might say, "Harry, what if I have had a sinful divorce?" Confession is the first thing. Confess your sins to the Lord who is faithful and just to forgive you and then to anyone else you have offended. It's not the unpardonable sin. The pardon is there but it does have consequences so don't say, "Well, I'm going to go get a simple divorce because Harry said I can still be forgiven." It will have consequences. I can be forgiven of getting drunk, getting in a wreck and cutting off my arm but I still don't have an arm. But if you are in that situation your first step is to say, "God, please make this new. I want to confess my sin to You." The Lord forgives. There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. I want to confess my sins to others like the spouse that I have violated or another person I have drawn into my sinful circle and I want to ask their forgiveness. I want to do repentance. I want to turn from what I was doing to a new way of life to the fullness and sufficiency of Christ. Then I want to implement in my life those deeds that are appropriate to repentance – reconciliation, restoration and restitution. I want to go back and put in order what my sin has destroyed to whatever degree that I can by God's grace. I want to bring Christ and the Gospel to bear upon this.

God's grace brings two things. It brings the fullness of forgiveness where there is no condemnation. It also brings the fullness of conviction. In some churches there is the emphasis on conviction and nobody ever finds out they can be forgiven but in some churches because they want to teach there is no condemnation they belittle conviction. God's grace gives both of those. God's grace says you're forgiven and brings the blessing of conviction where you say, "This is not a way I want to walk. I want to walk a different way for Jesus Christ because I love Him."

The last takeaway is what about tomorrow? I'd like to ask you to attend Part II but here are a few things in case you can't hear Part II. Here is what you need to know about sex. Sex is the sign and seal of marriage. Sex is the celebration of intimacy in marriage. Sex is an instrument to promote sex in marriage and sex is a way to express the sufficiency of Christ's love for you in marriage. When are a man and a woman married? This is what I say in the wedding ceremony. "Upon the consummation of this union before God I pronounce you man and wife." We have done the covenant ceremony and then they go to the covenant bed. It's not an adultery bed and they join the marriage. The two are now one. It is the sign, seal and sacrament of marriage. I didn't say

marriage was a sacrament. It is the sacrament of marriage. It signs and seals the relationship.

Then sex becomes a celebration in the marriage. As you enjoy one another and as you're growing in intimacy, your sexual intimacy becomes the expression of it to the glory of God. Then as your calling one another into intimacy, the movement to sexual intimacy is a movement of transparency and vulnerability. It's a movement of unveiling myself and its call where I don't just do that with your body but you do that with your soul in one another's life. That's what promiscuous sex and casual sex does. It says, "Expose yourself, I'll expose myself but I won't do it in my heart and I won't make myself vulnerable to you in my life." In the Christian we have exposed our self to one another personally, emotionally, spiritually and then we come together physically. God is reminding us there is a deeper walk that you can have with each other if you find your sufficiency in Me and I set you free to love each other, not lust but love each other. So with a right view of sexuality as the sign and seal of the sacrament of marriage, as an instrument to promote intimacy as an expression of our intimacy, all is built on a right view of Jesus Christ who is our life and who alone gives us life.

Here's the deal. Until Christ is the sufficient lover in your life you will never be able to love your husband or wife, emotionally, physically, sexually or in any way because you will always be trying to substitute them for Christ. But when Christ is enough then you are set free to love each other. So I want to introduce you to Jesus who is enough to set you free to love each other and not lust or abuse or use. Instead of a covering up in the darkness of sexuality there's the celebration of the marriage bed which is honorable and a joy of what God is doing in your life.

I appreciate your patience on this and I'd like to say one more thing on this. Obviously this is an issue in our society today and I believe Christians ought to be different, not because we don't talk about it but because we know what God meant for it. We embrace and enjoy what God has given in it. We don't allow the idolatry of it to ruin it. We don't allow our fear of it to run from it but celebrate it in marriage with one another. That means Briarwood Presbyterian Church, in this area like every other area, has to be a safe place for sinners to land but an unsafe place for sin to flourish. So that when we assemble men don't have to worry about fleeing immorality or temptation because no Christian woman would ever want by the way she walks or dresses or carries herself to tempt her brother into idolatry that paves the road to hell, Jesus said. No man would ever look upon a woman and say, "Jesus is not enough. I am going to make you and an experience with you my meaning in life" but he would take a woman and say, "Praise God for Biblical femininity." He would take his wife and say, "Praise God for one whom I am now free to give myself to and lift up in the Lord."

I'm indebted to Tim Keller for reminding me since he is a couple of years older than me of my generation's preoccupation with this matter of sex and love. You know the song that says "What the world needs now is love sweet love" and "Love makes the world go around." We wrote some terrible poetry and then put it to music but I've got one for you. This song by Petula Clark says, "My love is warmer than the warmest sunshine, softer than a sigh. My love is deeper than the deepest ocean, wider than the sky. My love is brighter than the brightest star that shines every night above and then there's nothing in this world that can ever change my love." That is poppycock. Wait until you get old. When this idolatry of love is in place, it will always fail and you don't

have to wait for eternity because it will fail now. If you will know Jesus Christ, the joy of Biblical sexuality and the blessing of marriage, is a gift of God's grace.

My love is warmer than the warmest sunshine? There is only One who can say that and it's the One who made the sun to shine. My love is deeper than the deepest ocean? There is only One who can say that and that's the One who brought into being the oceans. My love is wider than the sky? The only One who can say that is the One who stretched out the heavens. My love is brighter than the brightest star? That is the One who hung them in the universe. There is nothing in this world that can ever change my love? There is only One and nothing can separate you from the love of Christ. That's what will free you up to know the blessings of marriage and God's gift of sexuality within marriage instead of the cesspool of idolatry. Praise God for the blessings He gives. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the time we could be together. Thank You for the privilege to walk through this text and at least begin to examine some of the issues around it. Father, we live in a society that is bombarding our children with all of this idolatry. Oh God, would You make this place a place that lifts up Christ, the Gospel and every good gift that God has given that it might be embraced and enjoyed whereby we say 'no' to the idolatry of Your gifts and 'yes' to the majesty of Christ. Then Father, in saying 'yes' to Christ we might enjoy what we do to the glory of God even the sacred and honorable marriage bed but also knowing that fornicators and adulterers you will judge. The idolatry is sure to bring judgment. Father, please also make this a place, where the many of us who have fallen into sin in these matters or embraced the idolatry of these sins, whether it is the sins of sexual immorality or sinful divorces, a safe place where the Gospel can make all things new but that same Gospel makes this an unsafe place for sin to grow. God we can't do that so please send Your Holy Spirit for Christ's sake, Amen.

An outline for the Sermon on the Mount:

Introduction: (Matthew 5:1-2)

I. The Christian, The Gospel and our Character (5:3-12)

II. The Christian, The Gospel and our Ministry (5:13-16)

III. The Christian, The Gospel and the Law (5:17-48)

IV. The Christian, The Gospel and our New Life (6:1-18)

V. The Christian, The Gospel and our Perspective (6:19-34)

VI. The Christian, The Gospel and our Relationships (7:1-20)

VII. The Christian, The Gospel and Commitment (7:21-27)

Conclusion: (7:28-29)