

“CHRIST, THE HOME AND SEX”

Dr. John Allan Lavender

Gen.1:27, 28; 31a

There are two extreme, equally abnormal, and potentially dangerous attitudes toward sex. One is epitomized by the person who talks about sex too much. The other is personified by the person who refuses to talk about sex at all.

Pagan

The first might be termed the attitude of the pagan. We don't need to look long nor far for the cause of this particular phenomenon. According to Peter Sorokin, the world famous Sociologist,

“A consuming interest in sex has so penetrated our national culture, it's been estimated we encounter some kind of sexual lure every nine minutes of our waking day.”

He goes on to point out that in newspapers, books and magazine, on radio and television, from billboards and motion picture screens, in every conceivable way and through every possible medium, we are confronted with sex, as the human body is flaunted before us in varying degrees of undress, appealing to the base, the sensual and the crude.

Sorokin says typical motion picture advertisements show

“a half-clad female clinging to a pair of male shoulders as though she were trying to chin herself.”

And the most widely heralded novel of the season always seems to boast of “three elicit love affairs to the chapter.”

The corner newsstand is crammed full of pulp magazines featuring such titles as “Cash N Carry Lover” “Thrills From a Stranger” “One Night Love” and, as a result of this malicious exploitation of sex, our nation is reaping a whirlwind of tragic behavior, for we are a people beset by a hoard of pagans who talk about sex too much.

Prude

Just as dangerous, just as abnormal, and just as extreme as the pagan who talks about sex too much, is the prude who refuses to talk about sex at all. The one who seems to believe that “sex will go away, if you just ignore it.”

But we can no longer afford the priggish, excessive, indeed, unhealthy modesty with which some have surrounded this subject. Instead, we must think clearly and speak courageously. Sexual feelings will always be a part of a normal, healthy individual. But, before that individual can live easily with this enormous drive, he or she must be liberated from the manacles of unreasoned taboos, unwarranted fears and unfounded guilt which so often is placed upon people.

The Christian View

The Christian view of sex rejects both extremes. It refuses the philosophy of the pagan and spurns the attitude of the prude. Instead, it recognizes this powerful, natural force as something which was created by God and therefore, is good in and of itself.

In our text, we read that when he had concluded his creative work,

“God saw everything he had made, and behold, it was very good” (Gen. 1:31).

Included in God’s creative accomplishments was the human body with all of its complex emotions, capacities, and drives, and God called these *good!* If there is anything smutty or evil about sex and the human body, it is because people have made it so. In the beginning, they were pure and beautiful and good.

Biblical Christianity has always said so! Oh, I know there are some “muddle-headed prigs” operating under the guise of Christian, who have said that sex is evil, that the human body and pleasure are bad in themselves. But, they are wrong.

As C. S. Lewis points out,

“Christianity is almost the only one of the great religions which thoroughly approves of the body, which believes that matter is good, that God himself once took on a human body, that some kind of body is going to be given to us even in heaven, and is going to be an essential part of our happiness, our beauty and our energy. If anyone says that sex, in itself, is bad, Christianity contradicts them at once.”

That's why in titling this sermon this morning, I began with the name of Christ. For sex can never be fully understood or appreciated apart from Him. It is Christ who sanctifies this most basic of all human drives. It is Christ who brings a depth of meaning and beauty to it which no one can fathom apart from this divine dimension.

The Home

But, to arrive at a full and complete understanding of sex, we must not stop with Christ. We must go on to include the institution of the home. Central in the Christian view of sex, is the home -- ordained and blessed of God -- as the divinely appointed place for physical and spiritual fulfillment.

From the very beginning, it has been God's plan that one man and one woman should be joined together in holy matrimony as the basic unit upon which the rest of society is built. People have tried to improve upon that plan. In every age, every land, under every conceivable condition, folks have experimented with different ways of fulfilling the sex urge. But, at long last, they have always returned to that which God ordained from the beginning --

One man and one woman living together in the bonds of holy matrimony as the one true way in which the deepest longings and desires of the human heart can be fulfilled.

Go back into history, and you will discover that polygamy failed, not because someone said it was wrong, and started a crusade against it, but because, simply, it did not satisfy the deepest needs of men and women.

Even when the Bible records the polygamist nature of some homes in the Old Testament, it is careful to point out the favoritism that persisted in those homes. The man almost always had one wife whom he loved above others. She was his favorite. Not because he was perverse, but because he was normal. For the natural, normal expression of human nature, which cries out for completion and fulfillment is: one man and one woman becoming one flesh.

Now this perfect blending of two personalities cannot be achieved in the casual liaison, the transient passion or the clandestine affair. Sex outside of marriage is like tennis with the net down. It is devoid of commitment to certain boundaries which make it meaningful. Real sexual fulfillment can only be found in the home where sex is not only sanctioned, but blessed, by society and God. It is not only allowed, it is encouraged. There, within the confines of the home, one man and one woman bound together by God as one flesh, are given the power and the privilege of fulfilling the divine purpose for which they were created. What are some of the aspects of that purpose?

Creation

First of all, there is the aspect of creation. And nothing is more miraculous, more gratifying and more uplifting than this, that in the act of love, a man and wife are literally partners with God in the creation of new life.

I am sure every parent here remembers the wonder and amazement they felt when their offspring came to live in their house. I love the story of the young father who was looking down into the crib where his new baby lay and kept saying, “It’s amazing. It’s amazing. It’s amazing.” His wife snuggled up to him and said, “Yes, it really is amazing, isn’t it?” He answered, “Yes. I just don’t see how they can make a crib like that for \$49.98!”

Well, like every mother and father here this morning, whether their children are young or old, can remember that hallowed moment when their offspring when they knew in sudden sense of awe as the true meaning of their love dwelled up within them and they came to see that, in the marriage

relationship, their love had been the instrument from which an immortal soul was brought into being.

As one writer indicates,

“Sex is our link to the past and our link to the future, and no Christian should enter into it without a deep and lasting sense of the sheer wonder of ongoing life. After all, our years on this earth are few enough, a mere ‘moment between sun and frost’. But we are, also, part of an endless chain of life, and we are responsible to God and to man to see that that chain does not break at our link, nor life be wasted because of our indifference or selfishness or lack of faith. In the mystery of sex is hidden the mystery of new life and only the most shallow soul can be careless before that mystery.”

One of the most moving and meaningful parts of the marriage ceremony for me, comes when as the presiding minister, I turn to the father and ask, “Who gives this woman, to be married to this man?” And her father responds, “Her mother and I.” He then turns, leaves the wedding party and is seated with his wife.

There is great symbolism there! Portrayed in that little drama is the passing of one generation from the stage of life -- a generation which has had its day in this creative partnership with God, has raised its children and brought new hope into the world -- now steps aside so another, younger, stronger, more eager generation, may add its link to the chain of life as it, too, becomes a partner with God in the act of creation.

Completion

A second and even more basic aspect of sex in marriage is the completion of human personality. No one is an island. No human being is completely alone. No person is an entity unto himself. He needs, as we say, “a better half.” There must be a fusion of his personality with that of another, so that gradually, over the years, the two of them become that perfect union the Bible calls “one flesh.”

In Mt. 19:4,5, we hear Jesus say,

“Have you not heard that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife, and these two shall be one flesh.”

You see, sex in the Bible is not *primarily* concerned with propagation. That is one of its functions, but more than the creation of a *new* life, God’s *deepest* purpose in sex is to make possible the completion of two lives which already exist. In the intimate union of husband and wife, a fragment of a man and a counter fragment of a woman are joined together to form a satisfying unity. That which was individual and incomplete, finds fulfillment and wholeness in another.

I am not only speaking here of the physical union. If man were an animal, we could limit it to that, for in the animal kingdom the physical union is an end in itself. But, human beings are spiritual beings and there can be no satisfying completion of personality in marriage, unless, along with physical harmony, there is a like mental and spiritual harmony. When there *is* that mental, spiritual and physical unity, then, as a man and wife come together, a new entity is formed. An entity which is distinct and separate from every other entity that has ever been or ever shall be.

They are one! One in a togetherness so holy, pure and beautiful and pleasing to God that he inspired Saint Paul to use the mysterious welding experience of marriage as an illustration of the union of Christ and his church. (Eph. 5:32)

Oh, my friend, do you not see that sex in marriage is not something to be shunned or feared or entered into as a chore or duty? You are the only person on earth with the right and thus the responsibility to say to your mate, “You are the other half of me.” Sex in marriage is a gift of God ordained and blessed by him, and should be received with gratitude and exercised with joy.

Pleasure

A third aspect of sex in marriage is pleasure. I speak now with all the reverence and restraint I muster, for we are treading on sacred ground. And yet, this, too, is an area in which the voice of the Christian church needs to be heard.

There are so many whose lives have been restricted and restrained and sometimes ruined because they have associated the enjoyment of sex with forbidden pleasure. Let it be clearly and unmistakably understood that there is nothing forbidden about the pleasure of sex in marriage. To label that pleasure as shameful is to libel our creator. As one guide to Christian marriage states:

“God intends that the marital union shall produce pleasure in the senses of the married couple. This pleasure is normal. It is part of the epoxy which binds a couple together. It is a powerful instrument in strengthening the marriage bond.”

But, as one young bride confessed recently,

“When you have been told, ‘It’s bad’ all your life, it’s difficult to change all of your feelings in the course of one night.”

Of course, it is. That points out our great need for some *adult* sex education. We have plenty of courses on “boy and girl relationships” for teenagers. Perhaps our greatest need is a course for adults which would help to remove the negativism which has been associated with sex, and has made many a man or a woman an emotional invalid, incapable of the spontaneity which is necessary if love is to be more than a mechanical affair.

We need some courses which would enable us to find new ways of introducing sex to our children, so they will not grow up with the erroneous idea, “It’s bad.” We need to learn how to teach them the difference between repression and sublimation.

Repression is a negative, unconscious burying of the sex urge which is utterly devastating. Sublimation is a positive, God-ordained, conscious channeling of this creative urge into other

forms of creative activities until that happy, holy, hallowed moment, when in marriage, one can give himself or herself without reservation to that person set apart for them by God himself.

But, let it be understood that *that* kind of mutual delight and joy can never be experienced outside the home. The simple, undeniable, scientific fact is that sex is two-thirds psychological. And, if this relationship is cloaked in the nagging fear of extra-marital pregnancy, the extra weight of guilt, the torturous strain of secrecy, the unhealthy lust of a clandestine affair, it cannot provide the psychological and emotional pressure God ordained it to have. For, in the Christian view, it is Christ, *the home* and sex.

Having said that, may I end on this note. Sex in the Bible is never sex, it is always knowledge. Again and again, as the Bible speaks of the marriage relationship, we read, “He knew his wife.” Need I remind you that such knowledge does not come overnight? Such perfection of mutual understanding does not happen in the few moments it takes to repeat the marriage vows.

Even as it requires years to build a true and lasting friendship, so too, a bride and groom can expect it will take years to perfect their knowledge of each other. That kind of knowledge which comes through a gradual increasing of intimacy until finally, in one grand and glorious, mysterious and majestic amalgamation of body and soul, they become that perfect oneness which God ordained and planned and blessed from the very beginning. It’s in order then, for each of us who is married, to turn to that one whom God set apart especially for us, and out of a depth of love and understanding beyond anything we have experienced before, join the poet in this sacred pledge --

“Because God made thee mine, I’ll cherish thee
Through light and darkness, through all time to be,
And pray His love may make our love Divine,
Because, God made thee mine.”