

“DID GOD SAY ... ? SATAN’S ATTACK ON SEX.”

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First Christian Reformed Church, Lynden, WA

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Texts for the Sermon: Matthew 19:4-6; I Corinthians 6:18-20; Hebrews 13:4

This morning I want to honor marriage and the marriage bed and I want to urge all of us to do the same. Our text says marriage and sex must be held in honor *by all*, not just those who are married, not just those who want to be married. By all, by teenagers, by singles, by those divorced or widowed, by men and women, by young and old.

Our world is drowning in sexual sin. This is more important now than ever in a culture where the marriage bed is defiled among all. All of us need to learn how to hold in honor marriage and sex.

Marriage and sex are part of God’s good creation. It was His idea, He invented it to be good and beautiful and wonderful. God created us with bodies and He created us male and female, as sexual beings. He called it good and He has told us how to keep it good.

Part of the honor and beauty of sexual love is seen in the OT where sexual imagery is set in the context of a garden. Sexuality was instituted in paradise, in a garden of pure pleasures. And it is pictured that way throughout the OT. In the Song of Solomon the bride is pictured as both being a garden and having a garden, and the husband is pictured as tending, protecting and enjoying the garden.

Song of Solomon 4:12, 16 (He says) “A garden locked is my sister, my bride, a spring locked, a fountain sealed ... You are a garden fountain, a well of living water, and flowing streams from Lebanon ... (She says) Let my beloved come to his garden, and eat its choicest fruits.”

Some of you may remember a short story called “**The Garden**” (Douglas Wilson from *Her Hand in Marriage*) I read about 14 years ago. This story honors the beauty and purity of sex in marriage and how all of us can honor marriage and the marriage bed. I want to read it again this morning. It has much to teach all of us, men and women, married and single, young and old.

As my horse plodded wearily up the road, I could see the walls of a beautiful garden ahead. Outside the gate was an equally beautiful woman. At the sound of my greeting, she turned and dropped a curtsy. “Good sir...good morning.”

I looked at her, and then at the garden walls extending out to the right and left. Behind her was the garden gate.

I said, “I am very thirsty...for something clean.”

She smiled, and her smile made me thirstier still. But she said nothing.

“Is there water here?” I asked.

“There is a stream within my garden.” Her statement was simply a statement of fact; there was no invitation in it at all.

I asked, “May I come in and drink?”

“No,” she said. “I cannot permit that.”

“Why is this? Other women have let me drink from the gardens that they tend. You have a lovely garden, but those who let me drink had gardens just as beautiful.”

She laughed at this, and her laugh was merry indeed. “I have no doubt that you have been in some lovely gardens. But was the water clean?”

“No,” I said, and turned my head. She continued with a question. “Is that why you are no longer in the gardens tended by these women?”

I was ashamed so I did not answer her. Instead I looked past her into the garden.

“It seems a shame for such a garden to go to waste.”

She seemed both puzzled and amused. “How does it go to waste?”

“Does any man drink from your stream?”

“No, but no man befouls it either.”

“But is that not a waste? Was not your stream made to quench the thirst of travelers?”

“I’m afraid you are seriously mistaken. It was made to quench the thirst, not of travelers, but of the lord of the garden.”

“Oh,” I said, “This garden has a lord?”

“No,” she said.

“Then I don’t understand. Are you speaking in riddles?”

She smiled. “No, I do not. The garden will one day have a lord, although it does not yet. The stream is for him alone.”

“And who will your lord be?”

“The one whom I appoint.”

“How can the lesser appoint the greater?”

“How can it not be so? When my lord comes, I will grant to him my garden. But until I do, he is just another traveler.”

“And what do you look for? I am sure there are many who knock at your gate.”

At this she blushed slightly but looked straight at me. “I will not have a lord who does not have a lord himself—my lord must have taken an oath of fealty [loyalty, faithfulness] to the Landlord.”

“The Landlord? Who is he?”

“He is the owner of all the gardens along this road. In order to come into my garden, my lord must take an oath before the Landlord to tend the garden well. He must also swear that he will enter no other garden.”

“I have never heard such words as these before. How long must he stay out of other gardens?”

“Forever.”

“But what if he is born to travel?”

“Then he is not born for my garden.”

“I see,” I said, becoming a little angry. “Then why have I never heard of such an oath? I have been in many gardens.”

“Yes, you said that before. But was the water clean? Were the gardens tended? That is what happens when there is no oath...”

...At this parting comment, she turned and walked slowly back into the garden, pulling the gate closed behind her. I spurred my horse, which began to trot down the road. I needed to find this Landlord.

This garden is beautiful and clean and pure because it has high walls around it and is tended well and treated as something precious. That is what the words “held in honor” mean. This is something highly prized, something having exceptional value, like a precious jewel. Sex is divinely created and ordained, it is a precious gift to be esteemed, not demeaned.

The Mona Lisa is probably the most famous painting in art history. It’s in a secure place in the Louvre in Paris behind an unbreakable glass security shield.

Our nation’s gold supply is protected in Fort Knox by the most intricate and elaborate security system ever devised, in fact by multiple layers of redundant security measures. It is a classified facility, no visitors, no tours and no exceptions. It is out of public view.

Things that you have that are valuable to you, you have gone to lengths to protect. Fireproof vaults, safe deposit boxes, insurance, back up disks, are all ways we protect what is valuable.

God has gone to great lengths to protect His beautiful and wonderful gift of sex. He has placed it in a safe deposit box called marriage. That is the only place where it should be kept and it should not be removed from that place and put anywhere else.

The purpose of sex is marital intimacy, the two becoming one flesh. It is not meant for public view. What God has joined together should never be separated, sex from the marriage bed. Sex outside of marriage is not about intimacy and love, it is about self, lust, taking, stealing.

Our text uses two words to describe all the ways we sin sexually and defile the marriage bed.

Sexual immorality, means those who indulge in sexual activity outside of marriage whether with another person or on screens, internet, social media, or books or magazines. This is a general term for anything involving uncovering nakedness and sex outside of marriage.

Adultery, means those who are unfaithful to their marriage vows to forsake all others, again whether with another person or on screens, internet, social media, etc.

All sexual activity outside of marriage is Satan’s attempt to cheapen and destroy God’s beautiful gift. It would be like taking the Mona Lisa down to the street corner. Marriage is God’s personally painted portrait of the relationship between His own Son and His Son’s bride, the Church. Taking sex outside of marriage or viewing it outside of marriage smashes the master’s masterpiece.

It is too valuable, too rich, too deep, powerful and precious to be cheapened and trivialized in places like one night stands, affairs, movies, videos, TV, magazines, sexting, porn sites on the internet and romance novels. All of those dishonor the marriage bed. They pollute the soul and damage the heart and destroy something good and precious. Those who belong to the Landlord of the garden, have no business in those foul gardens.

If any of us finds something of great value that doesn't belong to us, if we are honest people of integrity, we will return it to its rightful owner. Every now and then you will hear an incredible story of someone finding something of great value, a lot of money, someone's Social Security money, a precious jewel, a valuable painting, and instead of keeping it they will return it.

We should all do that with sex. If we find it missing from its place of safety and security then we should return it there. And make sure it stays there. We can turn away, turn it off, don't click.

As Christians let's become the Shem's and Japheth's of the world, covering up Noah's nakedness (Genesis 9:20-27), not exposing it more and more. God will bless and honor those who honor what He calls good.

Our text ends with a serious warning. God will judge and curse those who defile the holiness of the sexual union. God hates and condemns all sexual immorality, porn, fornication, adultery, homosexuality, sexuality explicit material and uncovering of nakedness. He doesn't mumble on this, He gives as clear a warning as can be given.

Application and Conclusion:

We must teach our daughters the value of the garden and why it is worth protecting from every person who comes asking. Teach them the value and importance of an oath that has been sworn to the Landlord. She should be taught not to trust any boy who won't first make such an oath.

Teach the value of modesty in the context of a garden, that it's for one man only and not everyone else to see. Immodesty in clothing is a way of letting the gate open a crack for others to look in and it suggests that maybe more is available. Close the gate and be clear about virtue and honor; close the gate and be clear about the value of what is being protected.

We must teach our sons the value of the garden and why they should defend and protect the sexual purity and virtue of every woman, whether in person or virtual. Even if a gate is opened they should close it until an oath has been sworn to the Landlord. Teach the importance of warriors who defend the honor and virtue of women, and who do not take advantage of them.

To those who are single or engaged, learn well the lesson of the story and the great value of a pure garden and the great value of the oath, of vows. Young women, let no one into your garden until there has been a public oath before the Landlord that he will never enter another garden. And young men, enter no garden until there has been a public oath before the Landlord that she will never let another into her garden.

Never in the history of the world have newlyweds brought more baggage into their married sex life as they do today. Bad experiences, past relationships, pornography, abuse, shame.

Good marriages don't just happen. A good marriage begins long before you ever get married. It begins by guarding your heart, it begins by not defiling the marriage bed in your heart and with your eyes. What you do and what you watch before you are married will profoundly affect your attitude in marriage.

When a mother tells her son he can't have a bag of chips a half an hour before dinner, why does she do that? She knows what good food has been prepared, and she doesn't want his impatience to ruin it. In the same way, God says no to all sexual immorality so we don't destroy the joy and purity and honor of the marriage bed with our impatience and lust (Doug Wilson).

Parents and fathers, especially, become more concerned about the spiritual atmosphere in our homes. There are a so many of things in our homes that open the door for demons that defile sex to get in. One of the most powerful weapons the devil has in his arsenal is the internet. Be wise. Set limits, bring habits under control. I will address this more next week.

As husbands and wives we must strive to tend the garden, to restore honor, to give ourselves to the other and not just take, to see the gift as from God for His glory and our enjoyment, to see the goodness of God in our marriages. Glorify God in your body and with your body.

To husbands in particular, the word *husbandry* refers to the care of living things and to the art of tending a garden. Husbands have a special responsibility to love and care for and tend well the garden given to them. By tending your garden it should become more beautiful and fruitful and pleasing. It is not good husbandry to be harsh or cruel or demanding or critical or complaining. That doesn't lead to a beautiful or pleasing garden.

Husbands, honor marriage by doing all those things that don't come naturally. Love her with gifts, words, helpfulness, dates, music, listening, an I love you, hugs, kisses.

As Christians we should resist every form of sexual immorality wherever we encounter it. This takes constant vigilance since our country is awash in sexual images. The temptations bombard us. When those temptations hit us on a screen or in person we have about 5 seconds to do what Joseph did with Potipher's wife—flee. To linger any longer means to fall into the trap.

Ask for God's help to steer clear of all pornography, of all images that demean and cheapen and trivialize and create un-godly expectations and comparisons. Don't go in those gardens, the water is very polluted and poisonous.

When you stumble or fall, don't stay down there. Ask the Lord to forgive you and start again in your walk with Him. Ask Him to empower you to overcome. The power over sin and addiction is not in us. It is outside of us. The path to that power is pretty simple: it is facing the truth about ourselves and our condition, and a desperate desire for change and deliverance. Surrender to Jesus.

We can have a clean and pure future despite an unclean, impure past. A forgiven past creates a holy future. It's by grace and the blood of Jesus. Jesus died on the cross that we might have victory over our sin.

The disease in our culture has a remedy and that remedy is to restore honor to marriage and the marriage bed. It will take courage, vigilance, prayerful dependence on God's grace. It will take action on our part to cover nakedness and return what has been stolen to its rightful place.

The most intimate and personal and holy gift of sex belongs in the safest and most permanent place, within the covenantal bonds and vows of marriage which is honored when we take vows before the Landlord of the garden, to enter no garden but the one given us in marriage.

Prayer: Holy Father, make marriage and the marriage bed honored in this place and by all of us. Show us where we need to build better walls and plant taller hedges. Help us to see more clearly what You have created us for and how much better life is when we live it according to Your plan and purpose. Deliver us from our attachment to things unclean, from our sinful desires.

God of the garden, Landlord of all that is true, beautiful and good, restore all our souls; heal our bodies, our minds and our land. Lead us all in paths of righteousness for your names sake. In Jesus' name we make our prayer. Amen.