

Faith in the Marketplace (Blind in the right eye)

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Preacher: Harry Robinson

[0 : 00] This machine has worked about three, so I'm confident that it may work again today. The passage then that we're looking at is the second in a series of things that Jesus does when he says, you have heard that it was said, but I say to you.

And last week we dealt with, you have heard that it was said, thou shalt not kill, but I say to you.

This week it's, you have heard that it was said, thou shalt not commit adultery, but I say to you.

And he goes on to say, everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. Which makes Christianity extremely impractical for overstating the obvious.

If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away. It is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell.

And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body goes to hell.

[1 : 17] Well, now, this is what I want to illustrate to you. That here is a man, if you were to take him as the last man on the face of the earth, one of the contemporary existential writers has said that the last man on the face of the earth will be looking for his wife and child through the rubble, the remains of the nuclear holocaust.

That's what the last man will be doing. Well, if you go to the Bible and see the first man, you'll find that he had a similar kind of problem. That is, he was there and he searched through the whole of creation and there was not found a help meet for him.

So the first man and the last man are depicted as looking for the woman who is to be the companion and helpmate of their life. That's how the story begins.

Well, what it does essentially is to suggest to us that there is a kind of bonding between two people. When Adam finally got a wife, taken from his rib and made by the Lord God, he said, this is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh.

There was a peculiar fulfillment in that relationship. And it's later on in Genesis, it says that a man shall leave his father and his mother and cleave to his wife and they too shall become one.

[2 : 59] So that in a very strange and wonderful way, the basic unit of society for us is two people.

Two people joined together in this peculiar bonding, which comes as the result of a man leaving his father and his mother and cleaving to his wife and they become one.

Now that's what's supposed to happen. What actually does happen, and this has been happening for a long time, and I think you should try and get this picture clearly in your mind, that this person here, who is modern man as he has developed over the course of the last 300 years, is a single, solitary savage with no commitment to anybody but himself.

And that's, I mean, if you, if you, that particular expression comes from Anthony Bloom's, *The Closing of the American Mind*. You see, what they've tried to do is to make our sexuality not one of the profound realities of human experience, but just a variation somewhat similar to blondes, brunettes, and redheads, that people may have different color hair, but essentially they're another person, and that the world is made up entirely of individual people.

And that the way the world works is that individual person seeks to survive or seeks to win in the struggle of life. And in order to win, he can afford to make no commitment to anybody but himself.

[4 : 41] He has to be motivated through the whole of his life by self-interest. And therefore, anything that stands in the way of that has to be obliterated.

And the possibility of having another person to whom he has a lifetime relationship is totally unacceptable, or to whom she has a lifetime relationship.

And so one of the results of the modern feminist movement is that women want to be single units in society the same way they perceive men having striven to be single units in society.

That may marry, but their marriage doesn't hold on to anything because if it gets in the way of their particular and personal ambition, then it gets dropped.

That's the way our society works. We are adjusting our laws to allow that to happen. We're adjusting our view of the nature of man to allow that to happen.

[5 : 45] And that's what increasingly is happening in our society. We're creating a society of individual people, individually motivated for individual reasons, without getting them involved in the messy business of a continuing relationship.

We don't want that. Now, it takes, as I want to point out to you, a certain amount of nerve in our society to say that thou shalt not commit adultery.

Because again, for more than a century, I'd say probably for the whole of human history, but in a particular way, in the godless society that we have created, most of our sexual mores have been, as we suppose, derived from religion, probably particularly from puritanical religion.

And one of the emancipating processes of modern life is that man will be free from the inhibitions of his religious and psychological conditioning so that he can do whatever he wants.

And for all of us, the playboy philosophy has permeated our society, which means totally unrestrained sexuality involving any number of people, is the ideal which our society subscribes to.

[7 : 15] Now, I mean, I don't think that... I don't think you should... I should look shocked or you should look shocked at saying things like that.

I just think that's the way it is. That's the process that is part of everyday television, most movies we see. Totally uninhibited sexuality so that nothing stands in the way of it.

Well, what happens then is that you get... you get instead of a couple, you get an individual. And when Christ comes along and makes the statement that he does, thou shalt not commit adultery, all he's doing is, in the minds of most sophisticated modern people, trying to take us back a century or two into a value system that we've now grown out of.

We don't live that way anymore. And again, Anthony Bloom in his *Closing of the American Mind* says, if it wasn't that men got to the point of completing the sexual revolution where there would be no inhibitions to man's sexual activity, he said the only thing that happened was that the feminist movement came along at the same time and kind of pulled the rug out from under that particular right that man claimed he had and strove so hard to complete.

So, we were left in a situation where the sexual revolution has not altogether completed its goal because the feminist movement came along and said, we've got rights too.

[9 : 02] And so, the chaos and confusion of our times is sorting those things out. But what happens then is this, that you take a statement like Christ's, you shall not commit adultery, and you discover that what, that basically as a kind of public prohibition, it's probably a good one.

You know, it's wise that everybody else should not commit adultery. But as a private and personal thing, it's quite a different thing. We make decisions the other way. There was a very senior law official in the city of Vancouver whose career came to a dramatic end because of an adulterous relationship that he got involved in.

And one of his friends said sometime later, he thought the law applied to everybody but himself. And of course, most of us do that.

I mean, we can see the benefit that derives from certain laws, but then the personal application of them is an exception which we're prepared to make.

For ourselves. And that's why Jesus says, it's not the overt activity of adultery. It's what goes on behind.

[10 : 29] And what goes on behind, he says, everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. Well, you see, what happens here, I think, is that you come into the world of the eye.

And what has happened, I think, for us particularly, as probably to no other generation in the history of the world, sexuality has become an imaginary activity stimulated by the eye.

so that the primary relationship in sexual excitement comes from the stimulation of the eye. So that coming down Granville Street today, eight lovely girls where you can have your lunch watching them, watching them with the eye.

Now, the eye is not, I don't think, the fundamental basis of a bond between two people. And marriage doesn't work because you may marry a very beautiful girl, but familiarity does such things to you, or a handsome man, that that fades very quickly and there needs to be something far more

profound.

There has to be a level of communication which is more than just the exercise of the eye. It's very similar to you going into a restaurant that has all the food illustrated on a big thing.

[12:09] And you say, with the eye, that would suit me very well. But then if you consult your stomach and the consequences for your stomach, you may choose not to have it.

Well, similarly, the eye deceives us all the time because what may appeal to the eye may create an enormous problem for us. It's something like this kind of problem.

If you were to think of a laboratory, a carefully controlled laboratory where a particular medicine was brewing away, coming to the point where it could be encapsulated and sent out to bring healing to all sorts of people.

But it was very important in this atmosphere-controlled laboratory that nothing should get into the mix which would defile it.

So people had to be very careful when they went into that laboratory that they didn't bring anything into the laboratory which would defile the medicine which was being manufactured in there.

[13:19] And so it would not be inappropriate to say to the staff of that laboratory, thou shalt not commit adultery. Because if you adulterate this, instead of it going out and healing, it'll go out poisoned and will do a lot of damage.

Well, in a sense, the family is the same kind of controlled laboratory. If you have a laboratory and that's the family and in that family people are to be raised and healed and treated in that family, then if somebody comes into that family and commits adultery, then what they're going to do is, in a sense, instead of it being a place of healing, it will become a source of poison.

And that poison will be distributed to all the members of the family. It doesn't just affect one person, it affects a whole lot of people. And that's why, you know, why Christ says that thou shalt not commit adultery.

because somehow you are going to infect the laboratory, the home in which this takes place, and instead of a medicine for healing, you're going to create a poison which perpetuates disease.

Well, now that's, that's why when Christ says if you look at a woman to lust after her, that something is coming into the mix, which is breaking down the relationship.

[14:50] The relationship is a one man, one woman, one life relationship. So that when two people come to be married, you say, do you take, John, take Jane to be your wife?

To have and to hold in this day for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, till death us do part. Will you keep yourself only unto her or unto him so long as you both shall live?

That's the ideal that is set up, but the I doesn't fit into that ideal, and it keeps wandering off and making eye contact, which in a sense tend to be a source of defilement.

So that our sexuality leads us into a strange relationship because it is such a powerful motivator in the whole of our lives and because it provides so much satisfaction.

Again, it's considered to be that part of the sexual revolution, which is part of modern secular society, is simply because man can't answer the question of death and since sexual involvement is probably the most vibrant reality in human existence, we have made sex into everything in order because we can't face the problem and the reality of suffering and death.

[16:26] And when a man gets to an age where he can see death closing in on him, the inevitability of the process of aging, then it becomes even more important to him, that he celebrate life by complete sexual fulfillment and that leads to adulterous relationships.

And the rationale behind it is that this is my life and I am living for myself and I am committed to this. Well, what happens then is this.

Christ says of the eye that it's better, as he says of the hand, that it's better that you should cut it off and you should pluck it out rather than to go to hell having a hand and an eye.

Now, what I think Christ means by that is simply that the physical gratification which sexuality affords is not to rob you of the spiritual fulfillment which sexuality promises.

Because sexuality is not an end in itself. It is simply a foretaste of something far greater than itself.

[17:53] And so it's very important that you make that distinction and it would be better for you to pluck out your eye to cut off your hand than to go to Gehenna to go into hell having a hand and an eye.

You see, what this does actually because sexual fulfillment simply doesn't belong to everybody in our society. To the strong and to the beautiful people perhaps, but to the retarded and to the

widows, to the old, to the young.

There's lots, great areas of human life where sexual fulfillment simply doesn't belong. It's not even possible. And so that if they're going to live, they've got to live for something more than that. And that's why I think it's important to remember that sexual fulfillment promises something greater than itself. And that thing greater than itself has to do with our spiritual relationship to God. And that's why Jesus says, if your eye offends you, pluck it out because it's far better to be impaired physically, you know, to restrain your physical appetite in the interests of your ultimate spiritual goal than to express all the needs that you may have physically and yet have no spiritual goal or reality in your life.

[19 : 30] And that's why Christ says to us that that's what we're to do. Now, there is a story, and I think that it comes in John's gospel, though some commentators think it belongs in Luke's gospel because Luke has this special interest in women.

But it's the story of a woman taken in the very act of adultery and being brought to Christ and the men saying, what do we do? Because they wanted to know what Christ would say to somebody for whom the evidence was that she should be stoned because of her adulterous relationship.

And you remember that it was then that Christ knelt down and wrote on the sand and stood up and said to them, let him that is without sin cast the first stone.

And so you get the picture of Christ doing that, saying that, and then saying to the woman, neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more.

And the thing that I would like just to leave with you as we finish is this. I don't think anybody can say in our society what is said here in Matthew chapter 5 verse 27.

[20 : 53] I don't think any one of us can stand up and throw the first stone. I don't think any of us can speak with authority to this situation.

And I don't think the authority of all those who might set themselves up to speak to this situation is ultimately valid. the only way anybody can say what Christ says here is if he is who Christ is.

And Christ is the one who having lived and died and risen again, his words are recorded and his word is passed on. And the reason that he can command us to behave in this way is because he can enable us to behave in this way.

Anybody else can give you all sorts of advice. as to how you might conduct your life. But he can command us to behave this way because he can enable us to behave this way.

And when he says to the woman, go and sin no more, he can do it to us. I think this is very hard teaching for our society because we've been so indoctrinated with the concept of sexual fulfillment, that that's the great meaning and purpose of life.

[22 : 12] that's what we've been told over and over again and it doesn't work. And we know it doesn't work. And yet, who can relieve us from it?

It's a hard word that Christ gives. But he gives it because he has the authority to do so. And he has the ability to enable us to do it.

You see, many people in the scriptures don't get married. Paul says it's better for you if you're not married because you'll spend your time seeking to please your wife or your husband and that'll get in the way.

But I think the reason that he says it primarily is because our sexuality is not an end in itself.

Sexual fulfillment is not the goal of human life but is within human life a promise of a far greater fulfillment. And Christ commands us in this way because he wants us to find that fulfillment and he alone can lead us to it.

[23 : 25] And that's why when you read this passage I feel almost apologetic about preaching it to people because it's not just high ground from which you can preach down to other people.

It's the substantial reality of all of our lives. And there is no high ground from which we can speak down to anybody. But there is the one who gives this word and his authority and that's Jesus Christ. And he who commands it can enable us to obey it. Amen.