

Sun., May 3

2020 Ten Commandments Series: Set Free to Live Free: The 10 Commandments

Second Series: Love Others

Second Series Memory Verse: “I will always obey your law, for ever and ever. I will walk about in freedom, for I have sought out your precepts.” -Psalm 119:43-44

Second Series Text: “The second is like it: You must love your neighbor as you love yourself. All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands.” -Matthew 22:39-40

Second Series Scripture: Exodus 20:1-21 and Psalm 16

Message: Live Free: Do Not Commit Adultery

Memory Verse: “Everyone who honors the Lord, who walks in God’s ways, is truly blessed!” -Psalm 128:1

Scripture: Exodus 20:14, Genesis 2:21-24

Blurb: The Seventh Commandment is just two words in the Hebrew, “no” and “adultery.” God compares marriage to a vine. You’ve got to invest a lot, and you’ve got to wait a long time. You’re going to need to be patient and tending to it if you want it to grow and be fruitful. Adultery is like a weed eater that carelessly severs the vine’s base, killing it in an instant. This Sunday again is a provocative message on the Biblical understanding of the holy act of the sexual experience.

Welcome: -Pastor David

Memory Verse: -Pastor David

“Everyone who honors the Lord, who walks in God’s ways, is truly blessed!” -Psalm 128:1

Worship Music Set: -Sanctify

I Love to Hear You Speak

Build Your Life

Rejoice

Worship Prayer -Pastor Andrew

Offering

Prayers: - Pastor David

-Wesley’s prayer for Sunday morning from *Praying with John Wesley* by David A. deSilva

Generational Bridge: “Lemuel the Lion” -Pastor Andrew & Vicky

Call to Focus: “Psalm 128:1-6” -Pastor David

L: Everyone who honors the Lord, who walks in God’s ways, is truly blessed!

P: You will enjoy what you’ve worked hard for—you’ll be happy; and things will go well for you.

L: In your house, your wife will be like a vine full of fruit.

P: All around your table, your children will be like olive trees, freshly planted.

L: That's how it goes for anyone who honors the Lord:

P: They will be blessed!

L: May the Lord bless you from Zion. May you experience Jerusalem's goodness your whole life long.

P: And may you see your grandchildren. Peace be on Israel!

Message: 10 Commandments "Live Free: No Adultery" -Pastor David

Ten Commandments: Set Free to Live Free: Love Others. No Adultery. John 8:11 "Jesus said, 'Neither do I condemn you. Go, and from now on, don't sin anymore.'"

When I was a pastor in Duluth, there was a couple in the church who owned one of those big homes on what we called "million dollar mile," along 2nd Street near the Glensheen mansion. One day Bill walked me to the south side of the house and showed me the vine that was nearly covering the entire side of the house. "Isn't it beautiful?" he boasted. "This is a prolonged labor of love," he said.

When they bought the house a number of years before, the vine was one of the charms that sold them the house. But that first summer, Bill was trimming along the house and inadvertently severed the vine's stem. He was horrified when he realized what he had done...all in one careless moment. All those years of cultivation and care, gone. Over the next month, he watched the vine slowly die away...first just the fringes withered, but by fall, the entire side of the house was covered in death.

The Bible uses the image of a vine for marriage. Psalm 128, which we just read, says that a wife is a fruitful vine and that children are like olive shoots that are a blessing that sit around your table. Marriage, like a spreading vine, takes years to cultivate, constant dotting attention, nurturing, watering, caring. It can bear rich fruit, but it is also vulnerable. A quick careless moment can sever the whole thing.

Adultery severs the vine of marriage right at it's base. It cuts the spreading vine from its root of trust and nurturing, and all that had been able to grow now dries up.

Today we come to the Seventh Commandment. Again, a very short commandment, just two words. If you've recovered any from last Sunday and are tuning in again, I need to warn you, today won't be any easier. In fact, this may be the most difficult message in this series, because unfortunately, we're all convicted! I need you to be open to my attempt to preach God's truth, but more importantly, be open to what the Holy Spirit convicts you of in your heart. The biggest challenge is not going to be hearing this message, OR even accepting it, as hard as that may be. Even if we do, we have learned well how to KNOW one thing and DO something else. Our real challenge today is what you and I are going to do about this word of life.

It is that, you know. This is God's word of life to us. It's about how we can tend and nurture marriage so it can grow into the full and beautiful vine God intends it to be. Review the first tablet of commandments. We put God first and choose only Him. We live under His guidance. We put away culture's teaching. Instead—once again—we say, "God's way is my best life." Say that with me: "God's way is my best life." We may know that in our minds, but what are we going to do about that in our bodies and lives? That's where the harder rub comes.

Let's start with sex. We might as well jump into the deep end!

God is the author of life and creates all life. Incredibly, God gives this life-making miracle into creation itself, creating creation to share in the life-making process. But don't forget, God is directly involved in the beginnings of each new life.

This is all the more true when it comes to humans. God gives a special gift to people, adding the stamp of His image upon each unique soul of each new person. So, first and foremost, sex is God's design for how humans can join with God in creating new life. Imagine that! God invites people to participate in God's amazing power. It's like me spending 5 years building a kit car, investing my money, sweat, blood, and tears into it, and then giving my neighbor a second set of keys. No! At best, I want to ride along with him, nagging at him incessantly to be careful in all that he does. Or, giving my daughter away in marriage...no, I can't even go there yet! Imagine the privilege God gives to us when He gives us a vital role in creating new life. I remember so vividly the overwhelming I felt when I first held the daughter I helped create. Wow. No, I can't ever give her away in marriage, trust her to some...boy!

So, first and foremost, sex is godly. It is a gift from God. It is sacred.

Let that sink in. Sex is sacred. Sacred means set aside, treated special, reserved.

And this is precisely where God's people are different from everyone else on sex. We start at different beginnings. Secular culture sees sex as a recreation of the body. It's something, like kayaking, that we can do if we like, however we like, as long as we honor the greater rule of not hurting anyone. If we do it with others who want to kayak with us, then no foul. It is my right to do as I want, with whom I want, whenever I want, however I want.

Christians, however, see sex as a holy act given as a gift from God. That means we drive this car carefully, with guidance, listening to God's incessant nagging as we go.

Now, the *third* purpose of sex—yes, I've skipped past the second for now—the first godly purpose of sex is procreation, the third purpose is pleasure. God made sex pleasurable! Why? Because God gave it as such a healthy and good thing to do, that God wanted to encourage us to do it—in the right context. So, God turned this chore into a pleasure by how He designed us and our bodies.

Again, the culture sees this simply as something that has no restrictions. If it feels good, then do it. Our society has reduced sex to merely the physical act, as fun. It's like eating a doughnut. It tastes good. Why not? In moderation.

Well, the “why not” comes in the *second* godly purpose for marriage. And that is bonding. God created sex for procreation, bonding, and pleasure. This our wider culture does not understand. Yet we as God's people accept a deeper wisdom that helps us find and stay on the path of abundant life.

Let's go back to creation itself and see how God set up the good life. Genesis 2, starting with verse 21. “So the Lord God put the human into a deep and heavy sleep, and took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh over it. With the rib taken from the human, the Lord God fashioned a woman and brought her to the human being. The human said, ‘This one finally is bone from my bones and flesh from my flesh. She will be called a woman because from a man she was taken.’ This [then] is the reason that a man leaves his father and mother and bonds to embraces his wife, and they become one flesh. The two of them were naked, the man and his wife, but they weren't embarrassed.”

Verse 24, “This is the reason a man leaves his father and mother and binds to his wife, and they have sex.” This is only verse that was spoken by God, recorded by Moses, then quoted by Jesus, and quoted again by Paul. We need to listen to it!

Sex has to do with the union between a man and a woman. And the Hebrew word here is “bind together,” and are not to be separated. Sex is a part of this binding. It's part of the way that God glues people together, in what we call the sacred covenant of marriage.

So, sex is for procreation, for pleasure, and for bonding. The Bible does not show allowance for what we call casual sex. It might, if we understood sex only as for procreation or pleasure, like everyone else does around us. But for God's people, sex is preserved for bonding.

So, now we get to the covenant of marriage. "Marriage, it's what brings us together today!"

Remember the previous covenant of children honoring their parents? Well, that covenant, although it continues through all of life, is pushed down below a higher covenant, marriage. And this covenant God intends for most people. "This is the reason a person *leaves* his father and mother and cleaves to his spouse, and they become one flesh."

Now, marriage is falling out of favor of late, and many more couples are just cohabitating. Living together is just more convenient: less mess, less legal risks, less commitment.

Marriage is binding yourself in covenant to your spouse. Yes there is a legal component, for how the state handles marriage, but that's not what we're talking about. We're talking about biblical marriage. And biblical marriage is between one man and one woman. By the way, did you know that the Bible is the earliest record of marriage being only one man and one woman? That's where this idea came from! You don't get it without the Bible. And the Bible also says marriage is a covenant (like it says in Malachi 2:14 and elsewhere), it's a binding: not intended to be separated.

And notice that God intends for children to be raised in the bonded covenant of marriage. It is the best for the children, too. The tended vine of marriage in Psalm 128, it's laden with fruit.

Bill told me how he lamented the death of his vine. The previous owners had spent years cultivating it, nurturing it, feeding it, tying it up, protecting it. It was constant work—the word "tending" is an ongoing verb. But it resulted in the flourishing vine. And that result is part of what Bill wanted in this house.

Most people I talk with still want what marriage is supposed to bring. This past week, Roy Truax passed away. I have the vivid image of Roy and Lil, having been married faithfully nearly 74 years—their spreading branches of family, and having the joy even in old age of the blessings of their commitment. I want this in my life. Most people do. The problem is that most people settle for less. That commitment is so exclusive, so all-encompassing, requires such giving up of our selfishness, that for so many of us, we settle for something not as great—perhaps a little more immediate—but a whole lot easier.

And, I'll tell you, Church, as people, you have this option. You have every right to craft your life as you see fit. But, church, it is my job to tell you how to find your best life. And that, once again, is God's way. Are you willing to do what it takes to be a Roy and Lil, a Cal and Cathy Ripley, a Harris and Irene Miller, a Jerry and Donna Gustafson? They all cleared 65 years of marriage, and we've watched them live that out right in front of us! I'll tell you, I'm paying attention. I'm watching. I want that, and I'm willing to go the distance! Only 40 more years to go!

Covenants are a lot of work. They restrict certain behaviors and require certain other behaviors. Staying on a set path is a lot of work. It requires heading in one direction and not others. Romans 12:2, "Don't be conformed to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds so that you can figure out what God's will is—what is good and pleasing and mature." Transformed by your renewed minds...switching from culture's teaching to God's...to God's good and perfect will.

Marriage is the binding of three persons: the husband, the wife, and God Himself. God binds Himself in the marriage covenant, just like God binds Himself to us in salvation. Our God is a binding God. Life comes when we are bound rightly. Tearing apart that binding is a ripping apart that brings death. How does the old marriage rite go? "What God has joined together, let no one separate!"

The covenant of marriage, you see, is an expression of something much bigger. It's a model of the committed love that God makes as the basis for all covenant relationships: most importantly, His relationship with people. God binds Himself in covenant with His people. He demands fidelity—the very first commandment—as the only basis for the covenant to work. Jesus calls Himself the Bridegroom, and we, His people—the Church—He calls His bride. Our individual relationship with Jesus is a covenant. It is exclusive. It demands certain behaviors and commitments, and precludes others. And it requires constant nurturing and tending.

In Ephesians 5 it says that Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her, to present her to Himself as a radiant bride without blemish or spot. The history culminates in Revelation 19 near the end of the Bible, with a wedding and the wedding feast, with Jesus' bride wearing white. I talked to Lil this past Monday, the day Roy died, and I reminded her that Roy is now sitting down at the wedding feast with Jesus in glory. That's what I want. I'm committed to go the distance.

Marriage is a model of God's relationship with us, and in the Bible, idolatry is called adultery.

Ah, we finally now get to the 7th commandment! No adultery. Sex is only for marriage, and marriage is a covenant of exclusivity. Adultery breaks the covenant and cuts it off at its base.

Why? Because it is a consummate act of violating the covenant of exclusivity. It rips apart what was put together in order to bring life. In addition, it also violates sex of its godly purposes. In the Bible, the punishment for adultery is death! This is true in our relationship with God—eternally, and it was true for marriage—legally—in the times of the Old Testament.

I need to stop here and say one word about our human tolerance of adultery. We may argue that adultery is acceptable to some people. Did you know that there are Christian swingers sites, where you can “hook up” without the condemning judgement of close-minded people?

Here again we must separate what *seems* right to us, and what is *declared* right by God. God is telling us the exclusive path to abundant life. People may permit all kinds of things. But God says that He wants us to avoid all the pain and heartache that accompanies the paths that people say are permissible.

Now, time to get real. How do we apply this covenant commandment? Well, as the commandment so succinctly puts it, don't commit adultery. Reserve sex for only your marriage partner. I know that sounds prudish. I know I sound unrealistic. I know I'm turning off most of my listeners. But I have to steadfastly tell you, only this is the good path of life! I know our culture today seems to hold that recreational sex is harmless, and perhaps even a right that we have—and must be preserved—as individuals. Okay, perhaps that can be true legally. But biblically, this is not the way to nurture a healthy, fruitful vine of marriage.

And, side note, sex is not *a right or a need*. You are not entitled to a fully satisfied sex life. You are not being jipped if you don't have one. Jesus died at the age of 33 a virgin. Many people live full, happy lives without sex. Don't buy into the cultural belief that sex is required for happiness. Not true. You can live full, rich, fulfilled lives without doughnuts, kayaking, or sex. And furthermore, research shows that the most sexually satisfied people are those who keep sex exclusively for their marriage partner. Don't buy the lie of our culture. Even science affirms God's wisdom! I'm so glad Alyssa Milano is calling for a sex strike! She's single, after all. Now, she just needs to change her reasons why!

So, don't commit adultery. But you know what? You have. I have. We have all committed adultery. Jesus, in His sermon on the Mount, in Matthew 5 says, “You have heard that it was said, Don't commit adultery. [Okay, that's the 7th Commandment] But I say to you that every man who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery in his heart” (verses 27-28). We are all guilty. We have some repair work to do.

Some of you have also committed physical adultery. You're no worse a sinner, but you have to deal with a lot more devastation to your relationships. It is very, very hard to repair this. Adultery doesn't just happen all in an instant. You do it only after taking many smaller steps—compromises—that don't seem quite so bad. For Bill, the vine was severed when he didn't take the precautions necessary ahead of time to ensure the safety of his vine. It happened because of his careless way of trimming.

Now, I looked at Bill with a puzzled look. I said, "But you told me you severed the vine, and yet here it is, beautifully spread over the side of your house?"

He smiled at me and said, "I have a forgiving wife, and I committed to restore the vine." He then told me of how painful it was to tell his wife what he had done. Yes, she forgave him, but then they also worked together to come up with a plan to nurture the cut vine back to life again. Over the next years, they were both fully invested and worked constantly to cultivate the roots, nurture a new shoot that came up, and carefully tend the sprawling vine as it once again covered the side of the house magnificently. It had taken seven years, and Bill told me how Dorothy had helped him now to ensure his reckless cutting would never happen again.

Can you see here the analogy for how we are to tackle our adultery? Adultery cuts the vine, but it doesn't have to kill the relationship. If you are honest and have a real conversation with God, and then your spouse, God can bring forgiveness, even from your spouse whom you have betrayed so deeply. But it doesn't stop there. Actually, that's just the beginning. Then you must come up with an "all-in" plan, total commitment of fidelity and investment...just like your wedding vows...to nurture your relationship again. It will only grow slowly, and only if you are careful and attentive. You must change your behaviors and practices. You can't do that alone...you need God's help, and your spouses'! You probably could also use some pastoral counseling. I'm serious! At least seek out wizened counsel from people who've been married awhile, like folks in our church. Join a life group with them. Take them out for coffee. Ask them how they did it.

It takes time, as you earn trust again by your consistent behaviors. It takes new practices. Our plans must include how we will guard our minds, what behaviors we will do in certain situations, what practices we will live by when we are home, alone, on the internet, or out with co-workers, or social friends, or who we will talk to or what we say when blowing off steam after you've had a fight or your spouse has hurt you.

You need to create these parameters with your spouse, now, before you make compromises. Perhaps you may need to make an addendum to your marriage vows with these specific details.

We've got some repair work to do. You need to seek forgiveness from God, then from your spouse, and then put into place some structures and patterns that will preclude you from doing it again. God will help you. Your marriage can be saved. Even if you have committed adultery recently...even if your spouse doesn't know about it yet. Maybe you're why I was intended to preach this sermon!

And, if you are single, then you need to create a godly pattern for your life that you will live by. Set your standards—and boundaries—before you feel emotionally attached. Ask your parents and friends (and even your kids!) for best practices for keeping your sexual purity. I've got some suggestions! Pull Cassi aside. Even now you are cultivating the roots for a relationship vine that one day may grow into a beautiful vine.

Older folks, I want to ask you to reach out to others. How can you invest in marriages? Take a younger man or woman out for coffee. Talk about the real stuff of marriage. Be honest and transparent about your life. Offer to be a listening ear. Join a life group with mixed ages. Perhaps send a couple to a marriage seminar.

One last word on this adultery commandment: divorce. Jesus links divorce and adultery. Carrying on in Matthew 5, Jesus says, “It was said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife must give her a divorce certificate.’ But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife except for sexual unfaithfulness forces her to commit adultery. And whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery” (31-32).

Ouch. I don’t want to just dismiss this because Jesus is trying to point to a terrible poison that can kill the vine growing now. Divorce is bad. All the people who have talked with me about their divorces—and there have been lots!—and not one has said it was good. Necessary, maybe, but never good. They wouldn’t wish it on their worst enemy...it is just so painful. And it points to why God wants marriage protected. But, we sinners do sin. And divorce is a sin: it is a breaking of the good marriage that God intended. In spite of who is to blame for what, people who get divorced need to process that pain. They need to acknowledge that failure, that death, to themselves, and before God. They need to repent and ask forgiveness. Without that, the pain of that divorce will continue to poison all future relationships. And that’s what I think Jesus is talking about here. This is unrepented divorce, unforgiven divorce. When you seek forgiveness, that sin is taken away and no longer hangs on you. Yes, you must live with the consequences, but that then becomes part of how you tend the new vine you grow.

As a pastor, I perform marriages for divorced people, and I place them into leadership, provided they have worked it through before God, with their close relationships, and are living a life under God’s grace.

Guarding your marriage includes a serious dose of guarding how you use your body. But how you guard your body first starts with how you guard your heart. After all, according to Jesus, that’s where adultery grows.

Have a conversation with your spouse. Fix a fancy meal and sit and talk honestly and openly. Repent. Plan to ask for, and give, forgiveness. Come up with a plan for reconciliation, changed practices for tending new growth over time. For some of you that conversation may be with your spouse. For others, it may start with seeking—or giving—wized counsel from someone you respect.

In John 8, Jesus is presented with a woman who was caught in adultery. Read John 8:1-11 sometime today. Pay particular attention to how Jesus removes the condemning judgement from how that woman was treated. But also don’t miss how in the end, Jesus tells her to go but to sin no more.

Grace, forgiveness, but combined with a change of behaviors, earning trust, a commitment to fidelity, the sanctity of the marriage, and tending the vine. This is God’s best plan for your life. Amen.

Closing Song: *Rejoice* -Sanctify

Announcements: -Pastor David

National Day of Prayer Lifestream Worship, Thursday at Noon

Drive in worship next Sunday, for Mother’s Day, at 10 a.m. Recorded service also offered.

Memory Verse: -Pastor David

“Everyone who honors the Lord, who walks in God’s ways, is truly blessed!” -Psalm 128:1

Benediction: -Pastor David