

Sunday, January 18, 2015

Sexuality: Honoring God with Our Bodies

1 Samuel 3: 1-10, (11-20); Psalm 139: 1-6, 13-18; 1 Corinthians 6: 12-20; John 1: 43-51

As we begin our conversation on sexuality, we realize the conversation quickly gets to sex.

The problem Paul was encountering in the Corinthian church was the attitude that because they had freedom in Christ (everything is permissible) and that only spirituality mattered and not their bodies (because the spirit will last, the body will die), so then they had freedom in going to prostitutes because all is permissible.

Seems to make logical sense.

If all is permissible; if “food for the stomach, and stomach for food,”

Then, would it also not be true

– “the body is for sex, and sex for the body.”

**Paul says NO, you got it wrong.**

When it comes to bodies, its:

“The body is for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.”

How are we to understand this?

How are we to understand our bodies?

There are many ways, of course, but I am interested in a biblical/theological understanding.

The Psalmist David declares to YHWH:

“For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;”

And not only are we fearfully and wonderfully made by God

– God is also in relationship with us

– as David expressed also in this Psalm: “You have searched me YHWH, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways.”

When we talk about our humanity, we ought to marvel at God

– rather than griping how we look.

In our culture we gripe more about our bodies, than we give praise to God for this display of God’s creativity in us.

And when we talk about our humanity, we often talk about ourselves as if we a compilation of parts, an aggregate of body, mind, spirit/soul.

That is how we may interpret what it means to be human  
– we are a makeup of different parts  
– especially, as we read in Scripture to “love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength.”

Some ancient and modern day philosophies and religions also divide our humanity into its composite pieces to understand ourselves – and what we must do to discipline the body in order to grow spiritually  
– or, not to take heed of the body,

**Because only spirituality matters.**

But such understanding of humanity is not biblical.

**And such non-biblical understanding has done much to shape how we think about our faith and how it shapes our behaviors and actions.**

For example, my brother-in-law cannot wait to one day be set free from his body, from this earth and enjoy the bliss of eternity in heaven when Jesus comes to make all things new.

He gets perturbed with me though, when I say that we are created to be human, and human is what we’ll be – right here on this earth.

Just as we express in the Shema that God is One  
– yet, we understand God as a Trinitarian community,

So too, the Hebraic and biblical understanding, is that humanity is also one (we were created in God’s image)  
– yet an interrelationship and integration of body, mind, soul/spirit.

What does that mean for us?

**Well, for one body/sexuality and spirituality are not opposite ends of a continuum**

– they are both a full expression of what it means to be human  
– what God intends for us in our humanity.

Sexuality, body, mind, spirit are inseparable in us  
– they are intrinsically connected/together.

We can only be understood, not as a sum of parts, but as an integrated whole.

We are gendered, sexual beings.

We are spiritual beings.

These are integrated together in us as human beings – **and one cannot be separated from the other.**

There is no such thing

- as our spiritual selves,
  - or our physical selves,
  - or our sexual selves
- these are all integrated and one cannot be expressed or experienced without the other.

So loving God, honoring God has not only to do with our spirits, or our minds and hearts, it also has to do with our bodies, our sexuality

- **it has to do with all who we are.**

And that is what Paul was getting at when he was talking about prostitutes and then, **the larger umbrella issue of sexual immorality** within the Corinthian church.

Sexual immorality is not just a physical issue

- early Gnostics and some today think what you do with your body has no real connection with your inner life, your spirit.

Scripture says **No way** (actually Paul probably would say something that did not get printed),

Because sexuality and what we do with our sexuality is deeply spiritual

- because body, sexuality, and spirit are all interconnected, interrelated, integrated.

Listen to what Paul says.

He begins with talking about freedom

- “I have the right to do anything, but be mastered by none”
- I can eat what I want (context: whether its been sacrificed to an idol or not)
- “food for the stomach, and stomach for food for God will destroy them both in the end.”

As already stated, the Corinthians applied that same logic to their sexuality

- i.e., that the body is for sex and sex for the body
- because, they too will be destroyed in the end by God.

**But they got it wrong**

- and, we get it wrong too, if we have the same attitude.

Yes, we have freedom to eat what we want, we have freedom to act in ways that seem right to us;

Yet, that same freedom does not apply to our sexuality or our sexual behavior in the same way.

Listen: “The body is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. . . . Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself . . . [for] whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit.”

This “one in spirit” does not mean that we are “one with Christ” **ONLY** in spirit

- but it embraces our whole being (because if we note the context, Paul continues addressing the body.)

Therefore, to be “one in spirit” with Christ means that the work of the Spirit in us connects us to the life, ministry and resurrection of Christ

- in him we are new creation, new humanity, the life we live in our integrated humanity
  - our bodies and what we do with them,
  - our minds and what we think on,
  - our souls and what we meditate upon and worship

Has been integrated with Christ by the working of the Spirit in us

- so, that we live and work, make love, express our gender and sexuality
- in ways that honor and glorify God in whom we have been fearfully and wonderfully made;

We think and engage in ideas that express and honor the creativity and goodness of God who made all things good;

And we meditate and worship the One who holds all life, all things together.

There is indeed something deeply spiritual about our sexuality

- it is a gift from God to be enjoyed and given back to God as an act of worship.

When we use our sexuality and engage in sexual behavior that debases us

- we reject God’s good gift to us and seek to live in ways which unites our bodies
- not with God, but with that which seeks to bind us, oppress us, overpower us.

**What we will be talking about in the next weeks and months, we are called to engage in this light.**

When we talk and think on our sexuality and our sexual relationships and as we engage in dialogue on same-gender/same-sex relationships

- we are seeking to understand the extent of how our expression of our sexuality honors God.

And it is not merely an either/or discussion

- whether only heterosexuality honors God or whether homosexuality can also honor God.

There is a bigger question at stake

- for we can dishonor God in our heterosexuality, **and we do.**

This opens up all sorts of queries of how we are to think about sexuality and sex

- about relationships,
- about marriage,
- about sex outside the covenant of marriage
  - either before or during.

The question of sexuality and sex is indeed a holy question

- not just about gratifying our bodily desires.

And so as we heed Paul, we are being called to reframe what it means for us to be human in all its integration, in all its sexuality,

So that, in every way we bring honor to God,

Because we have declared through our baptisms and our ongoing confessions  
– we are united to Jesus Christ.

**May we praise God in all we are and in all we do  
– especially in our sexuality.**