

# Lust and the Forgotten Beatitude

Matthew 5:7-32

*The Living Law (no. 7 in the series)*

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Video and audio versions available online:

<https://relentless-love.org/sermons/lust-and-the-forgotten-beatitude/>

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*This document was prepared by Heather Eades using Peter's notes and the video version of this sermon. If you encounter any significant discrepancies or errors in this document, please let Heather know. Thank you!*

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## Message

Video clip: Budlight commercial (2009)

*Scene shows bride having help from mother making final adjustments on gown, getting ready for wedding.*

Bride Mom...? How did you and Dad make your marriage work?  
Mother Communication and understanding. ...I also did the little things that helped him spend more time with his friends, ...like rake the leaves, ...mow the lawn, ...build a solarium, ...fix the retaining wall, ...and change the oil every 5,000 kilometers. (As mother lists these things, old photographs of her doing these activities show in the background.) And remember, (hands bride an envelope) you can always say 'I love you' with a case of Bud Light.

*Bride smiles and cries tears of gratitude as she opens envelope to reveal a giftcard for Bud Light.*

Bride (crying tears of joy) Oh, mom...

*Scene changes to show group of corporate men watching this commercial in a Bud Light conference room. Two executives reach their hands across the table, giving a squeeze, as one bursts into tears, still watching the commercial.*

*Bartender ('Isaac' from The Love Boat) appears on screen.*

Bartender "This calls for a Bud Light!"

People always want practical application points, so there you go. That's how you make your marriage work according to this age. You bring the merchants into the temple because marriage is an arrangement, this for that, quid pro quo, with boundaries, limitations and negotiations. Scripture has a name for that: *Porneia*. It comes from a root word meaning to buy or sell. It refers to buying and selling Love as if it were a commodity. It refers to harlotry, but also gets used for any sexual communion outside the covenant of marriage.

In Matthew 5:27-32, Jesus talks about lust and marriage.<sup>i</sup> But let me mention that it doesn't only apply to people with active libidos or those that are married. It applies to every human heart, for every human heart is a temple, and every human heart is tempted by *porneia* and its own *epithumia*, often translated "lust." And, actually every child of Eve is married, or engaged to be married, to the Lord of Love.

**<sup>27</sup> "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' <sup>28</sup> But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman [*gynaika*—translated "wife" in the next paragraph] with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. <sup>29</sup> If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell [*Gehenna*]. <sup>30</sup> And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell [That's the *Gehenna* of Fire, and "our God is a consuming fire."].**

**<sup>31</sup> "It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife [*gynaika*], let him give her a certificate of divorce.' <sup>32</sup> But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife [*gynaika*], except on the ground of sexual immorality [*porneia*], makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.**

Last week, I pointed out that the first commandment before the fall was basically, "Give your life to another." And the first commandment after the fall was, "Don't take the life of another."

According to Scripture, when two people have sex, they are basically married, for those two people become one flesh and commune in one life. "*What God has brought together let no man tear asunder;*" Jesus said. "*Don't take that life, by tearing it in two.*"

Well now, I suppose all of us are nervous, and you may wonder: Have I committed adultery? What do I need to cut off in order to avoid the fire of Gehenna? And what does he mean by "lust"—can I look at the *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit issue or not?

**"It was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.'"**

That's the seventh commandment, and God did say that.

**"It was also said, whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce,..."**

But God didn't really say that.<sup>ii</sup> Later, Jesus points out that God allowed that,

In Scripture, sexual intercourse is profoundly sacred and sacramental—that is, it's a physical act connected to deep spiritual realities that actually take two bodies and make them one flesh—even, one psyche. It's profoundly sacred, powerful, sacramental, and must be absolutely... free. Sex is never to be a *quid pro quo*, but rather a complete, and mutual, sacrifice of self. And that's why, sexual communion is to be protected by a covenant of absolute Grace—there is to be no payment, no conditions, no "if" about sex.

Marriage creates space for good things to run wild.<sup>iv</sup> And while we're stuck in the confines of space and time and these limited bodies, it appears that we can only give our bodies over completely to one other person at a time; only marry one person at a time.

Now, people have been debating the details of what God permits and doesn't permit for years—and I don't entirely know. So, I've printed up some pertinent Scripture, in order that you can judge for yourself. (You can pick up one of these at the information center after the service.)

I feel utterly unqualified to talk about divorce because I have a remarkably easy marriage, but many of you don't, and most in the Bible didn't—and so I hope you will wrestle the Word of God, and will learn from Jesus.

- In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul seems to make allowance for an unbelieving spouse to separate, and then says that the believer “is not bound.”
- In Luke and Mark, Jesus just seems to say that anyone that divorces and remarries commits adultery.
- In Mark, he adds, “What God has joined together, let no man tear asunder.”<sup>v</sup>

Here in Matthew, he seems to add an exception for “*porneia*...” But I think he's making the point that buying and selling love has already torn that marriage asunder, and if those people remarry, they continue to commit adultery. It's as if he's saying, even if you divorce for a time, don't remarry because no divorce is final—and *what God has brought together no man can tear asunder*.

Well, I really don't understand all of that. But I do know that, according to Leviticus 20:10, the punishment for adultery is death. So, at the count of three—not before, but *at three*—please stand up if you've committed adultery... *or* ever looked at a woman in lust.

And now let me clarify: that word *epithumia*, translated “lust,” is also translated “covet.” So Jesus is not only referencing the seventh commandment, but the tenth, where you're commanded to never covet your neighbor's house, wife, manservant, maidservant, ox, ass, or anything that is your neighbors.<sup>vi</sup> (“Ass” means “Donkey” by the way—It doesn't need to be anything sexual.)

A lot of men lust for their neighbor's wife's companionship. I can't tell you the number of affairs that begin in churches because men covet their neighbor's wife's spiritual or emotional encouragement at Bible study. And since we're enlightened, non-sexist people, this should apply equally to the women just as much as to men. Men often lust for pretty bodies, and women often lust for pretty big bank accounts.

So, if you've ever been divorced, committed adultery, desired to have something that belongs to your neighbor, lusted after a man or woman you aren't married to, stand up at the count of three—one, two, three.

See? We're all in this together, all deserve to die, and all need a savior. We naturally assume that that savior is more “*knowledge of Good and evil*.”

*“Pastor let me know: -- exactly when I can, and cannot, get a divorce.*

*-- Whether or not, I can look at the Sports Illustrated swimsuit issue.*

*-- And what is making me sin; what do I need to cut off, lest I'm cast into the fires of Gehenna?”*

When I was a youth pastor, parents always wanted me to teach the kids how far is too far, what movies they could see and not see, and how to never think about sex... as if we adults all knew, and it was my job to tell them.

I tried, but I kept encountering problems:

- #1, I don't know how far is too far.
- #2, The moment I begin making rules like, "*Never look at a woman's nipple,*" every tenth-grade boy would start thinking about women's nipples... And, of course, so would I. And...
- #3, How not to lust? I wasn't sure what it was or wasn't. What is "lust?"

If lust is equated with *sexual desire*, and I'm commanded to never "lust," how could I also be commanded to "be fruitful and multiply." How could I give life, give seed, producing fruit? Male anatomy just doesn't work that way.

Well it's easy to see why folks read Matthew 5, and think Jesus is saying:

*All divorce is sin and you must never ever lust.*

It's true that Jesus is asking something profoundly difficult for us. But I don't think he's saying that all divorce is sin, and you must never, ever lust... because God got a divorce, and Jesus lusted... and not a little, but a lot.

Luke 22:14 (NKJV) · <sup>14</sup>When the hour had come, He sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him. (12 apostles like the 12 tribes of Israel) <sup>15</sup>Then He said to them, "With *fervent* desire I have desired..." [In Greek, "*epithymia epithymeisa,*" Literally translated "in lust, I have lusted..." meaning, "*I have super lusted.*"]

*Epithymia* is translated as "lust," "covetousness," or simply "desire." And this is what drives me crazy about so many translators: they pick the word that they think fits the context, but can't even begin to imagine the context that the word fits....because they can't imagine that God is good and enjoys being good; they can't imagine that good is Good.

As Jesus is preparing to break the bread and pour the cup, inaugurating the sacrament of communion in the eternal covenant of Grace, he says to the twelve, who represent the Israel that he divorced and sent into exile:

*"(In lust, I have lusted) to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; <sup>16</sup>for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God."*

It's worth asking: "*What makes that lust Good and lusting after my neighbor's wife evil?*"

We'll get back to that in a few minutes... but Jesus lusted, and God got a divorce.

Jeremiah 3:8 · "I sent [Israel] away with a decree of divorce," says the Lord.

Isaiah 50:1 · "Thus says the Lord: Where is your mother's certificate of divorce with which I sent her away?"

God divorced Israel and the children of Israel.

And now if you say, "Well then, surely, I'm justified in my divorce. Surely, it should be allowed..." Maybe so. But first, let me tell you a story—a true story.

I've been talking to a young man named Josh. For years now, he's been absolutely consumed with this woman. He rescued her from a poor, abusive family. She was absolutely enamored with his wealth and good looks, but also very intimidated and reserved. She had a hard time opening up.

He married her, but her heart began to wander. For a time, she kept up the façade, but it turns out she was sneaking out at night and having sex with other men. She renounced her faith, and even became a prostitute.

Josh would walk the streets at night and buy her back from pimps. She gave herself to vile men, but she was frigid to Josh. The counselor said she was caught in a cycle of shame: She was dying for lack of intimacy and from lack of intimacy, but she wouldn't surrender to her husband's advances. She hid her heart in fig leaves and shame.

At one point, Josh gave her a decree of divorce. He even drove her from his house in the hope that she'd come to the end of herself and turn back to him, but she didn't. Still, Josh wouldn't even look at another woman. He divorced her, but he would not marry another. He thought only of her; he dreamed only of her. Unbeknownst to her, he would follow her and always sought to help her.

Sometimes he'd confront her, but she would pay pimps and "Johns" to beat him. She was an adulterer, a whore, and in the end, she hated Love himself. And early one morning, she tried to kill him, on a tree, in a garden.

If anyone ever had a valid reason to give up on love, his name was Josh. And he did divorce, but he refused to abandon his bride or give up on his marriage—he would not leave her nor forsake her. And he's the guy speaking on the mount in Matthew chapter five.

"Joshua" is Hebrew. *Iesous* is the Greek, and in English: "Jesus." And we are His whoring bride. And we did kill Him. But even as we took his life, he gave his life. He said, "*Father forgive,*" and delivered up his Spirit.

The night before, he had ratified an eternal covenant of marriage saying, "*This is my body broken for you. This is the covenant in my blood.*"

So, do you want to be made in His image or not?<sup>vii</sup>

I'll answer for you:

*Yes, of course you do. And...*

*No, of course you do not.*

You're a sheep and a goat, wheat and a tare, grain and chaff, saint and sinner. You're a new self and an old self. In other words, you believe, but you need help with your unbelief... just like me.

Every time I marry people, I say:

"Pay attention—You're entering into a covenant with no escape clause, ratified by God.

*Marriage is God's sneaky way to get a person crucified."*

But then I say...

*"Marriage is also God's sneaky way to give you a new heart."*

And then I make this clear: "We're all married."<sup>viii</sup>

"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh," writes Paul, quoting Genesis. "This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church."<sup>ix</sup>

The church is all of us who do believe, and one day all will believe.

That's Ephesians 5. Already in Ephesians 1, Paul wrote, "[This] is the plan for the fullness of time, to unite (*anakephalaiosasthai*—"bring together under one wounded head") all things in him..."

In Ephesians 4, he writes, "There is *one body* and *one Spirit*."

It's all over the New Testament, especially in places like 1 Corinthians, where Paul talks about love and body parts—We think it's just a metaphor. But it's not just a metaphor. If anything is a metaphor, your body is the metaphor...and sex, lust, marriage and even divorce, are all metaphors referencing a greater reality.

We are Christ's Body, and we become his Body through marriage. The two become one flesh, and we all become one body. And *what God has joined together, let no man tear asunder*.

So, what have we learned studying the Sermon on the Mount?

[Image: Slide depicting the word "Repent!" and all the numbered points listed below.]

Not simply, "try harder," but...

*Repent!* (Get a new *psyche*)

1. The Kingdom of heaven is at hand.
2. The Kingdom is a body.
3. You're dead until you are connected.
4. You're connected through a sacrament of communion in the Eternal Covenant of Grace

Maybe there really is no such thing as "divorce and remarriage;" there is only such a thing as "marriage,"...for what God has joined together no man can tear asunder. We're married to Jesus, and in some way, we must also be married to each other.

In Matthew 20, Mark 12, and Luke 20, Jesus says, "*In the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage.*" Is that because *no one* will be married or ever get married? Or because *everyone* will be married, and none will desire a divorce?

Is it because *no one* will experience communion in the sacrament of an eternal covenant of marriage? Or because *everyone* will experience communion in the sacrament of the eternal covenant of marriage, and love the fact that all good things run wild? \*

And now if your tracking with me, you'll ask, "Well, if I'm married to everyone in Heaven, why couldn't I be married to two or three on earth?" Well, it's interesting that in the Old Testament some kings were married to more the one bride, just as Jesus is married to all of us—his one bride. But from the beginning, it's apparent that although that arrangement may have hinted at another world, it misses the lesson we're to learn in this world. And that lesson is love, and, more precisely, to love Love.

That's learning to lose your life for another, and finding it in another, and enjoying it.

That's choosing to bleed for another in freedom.

That's learning to desire love; that's learning to covet love; that's learning to lust for Love, like Jesus—the last Adam.

I hope you remember that the first Adam couldn't find his Helper. And yet, Scripture makes it abundantly clear that God is Adam's Helper. *Adam* means "humanity" and God is Love. In the beginning, humanity was in the garden of delight with Love, but couldn't recognize Love, didn't know Love, didn't desire Love; and God is Love.

And that's when God said, "It's not good that the Adam is alone." He then put the Adam to sleep, cut the Adam in two, making male and female, and began to tell the most amazing story called the Gospel. It's the story of our fall and redemption. It's the Romance of God.

It's the story of all of us, who, at the instigation of a snake, took our Lord's life on a tree because we didn't know the Good. And it's the story of how our Lord gave his Life on that tree, because he is the Good and he wanted us to know it, so we would surrender to Love and receive his Life.

He is our Husband, and we are his Bride. He is the ultimate Adam, and we are his body—the ultimate Eve. He's been telling the story from beginning to end, from the tree in the garden, to the tree on Calvary, to the tree in the New Jerusalem—who is us: his body and bride.

It's the story of Grace, which creates faith. And faith in Grace is a Desire to Love... a lust to Love... the Passion of God.

So, in Luke 22, Jesus sits with the twelve, like the twelve tribes of Israel, Yahweh's whoring bride, to whom he had issued a certificate of divorce. He sits at table with her, and as we learned last year, he proposes marriage; he cuts a covenant and ratifies the eternal covenant of grace, saying, "This is my body broken for you..." And, "This cup is the covenant in my blood...Drink of it all of you."

All of you—Peter, John, Judas, Judah, and Israel:

- Although you will take my life in the morning, I give it to you tonight.
- Although you are utterly faithless to me, I choose to remain faithful to you.
- Although you've broken covenant and I've handed you over to the faithless lovers that you have chosen, I've handed myself over to them with you.
- Israel, though I divorce you, I will remain faithful to you, die for you, redeem you, and make you love me as I love you.
- Adam (humanity), I will not trade you for another; I will not abandon you and create another in your place; I will not leave you nor forsake you.
- I give all of me to you, no matter what you do; it's who I am and who I am making you to be.

See? I suspect that, in marriage, we are to be bound to one other person in this world so that we would learn to give our all to that person in this world, such that we could give our all to all in the next. In the next world, I won't be limited by this old body of death, and in the next, I'll see my Lord in everyone I meet, and give my Lord to everyone I meet. He is all, and will be "all in all," flowing between all, like a river. In the next, I'll bleed love for all and receive love from all; God is Love, and that dance of love is life—eternal life—a limitless river of life.

It's probably unwise to talk to preschoolers about the joy of sex.<sup>xi</sup> And it's probably unwise to speculate about the ecstasies of heaven with immature Christians. Because the Devil tempts us all to think about venereal disease, abuse, shame, insecurity, fear, and a bunch of fig leaves.

But you see, there is this moment in the sacrament of the covenant when giving pleasure to my bride is sincerely the greatest pleasure I could receive. And I think that moment is a sign and a symbol of the Life Divine.

It's more than physical; I think it's spiritual. I think God begins with the physical, and over time the physical fails in order to reveal the spiritual; and in this way, God teaches us the deeper lessons of love.

I think I've tasted it there, but I'm sure I've known it in a moment of worship, years ago, when God pinned me to the floor and filled me with fire. In a moment, he revealed his love... and I couldn't help *but* love. I thought I was going to die, and I wanted to die because I knew it was life eternal. I was a living sacrifice... and *it didn't hurt*, it was absolute pleasure.

And so in Luke, just before Jesus broke the bread and poured the cup, he said: "With *fervent* desire I have desired [in lust, I have lusted] to eat this Passover with you before I suffer [*pathein*: where we get our word "passion"]; <sup>16</sup>for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God."

So, Jesus earnestly desired, in lust he lusted, to eat that meal with them. And that meal was his own body broken and blood shed, which he was serving for dinner.

Now, Jesus is not a sadist—he doesn't enjoy suffering for suffering's sake. Yet, Jesus must enjoy giving for giving's sake. He must enjoy loving for Love's sake.

In Acts chapter 20 and 21, at the end of his ministry, Paul is journeying to Jerusalem just like Jesus. Jerusalem is the whore that crucifies Christ and becomes the bride. Paul is journeying to Jerusalem, and he stops to say good-bye to the leaders of the church in Ephesus and then in Caesarea. He tells them that the Spirit has revealed that he'll be imprisoned in Jerusalem, eventually martyred, and they will not see him again in this age.

In Caesarea, the believers begin weeping and begging Paul not to continue—and he says, "*What are you doing weeping and breaking my heart?*"<sup>xii</sup>

[Image: slide of Acts 20:35a (ESV)]

To the Ephesians, he says, "Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, "It is more blessed, (more happy, more desirable) to give [*didomai*] than to [*lambanein*] to take or to receive."

<sup>xiii</sup>

You know, Acts is the last half of the Gospel of Luke, and so this is the last beatitude in all the Gospels. I think of it as "The Forgotten Beatitude." I think it sums up all the others and explains why Jesus was so weird.

*"Blessed, happy, are the givers... and sad are the takers."*

See, I think he actually believed that... and none of us do; at least not all the way, and at least not yet.<sup>xiv</sup>

Last week, we said that the height of human anger is taking life from another. But the height of God's anger is giving his life to another...on a tree in a garden.

*Thumos* is translated passion or anger.



*Epithumos* is translated lust or desire.

The height of human lust is taking life from another—we call that rape. But the height of divine desire is giving life to another...on a tree in a garden. It's love without limits; it's love with no *porneia*. It's absolute unadulterated and limitless Grace.<sup>xv</sup>

You may remember that the Old Testament prophet Hosea was commanded to marry a harlot, divorce her when she became unfaithful, then buy her back from her pimps, and marry her once again, so that Hosea would know what it was like for God to love Israel; so that Hosea would know the heart of God, who is Joshua, or in English, "Jesus our Lord."

In Hosea 6:7 (RSV), Hosea prophesies saying, "At Adam, [in Adam, or like Adam], they transgressed the covenant."

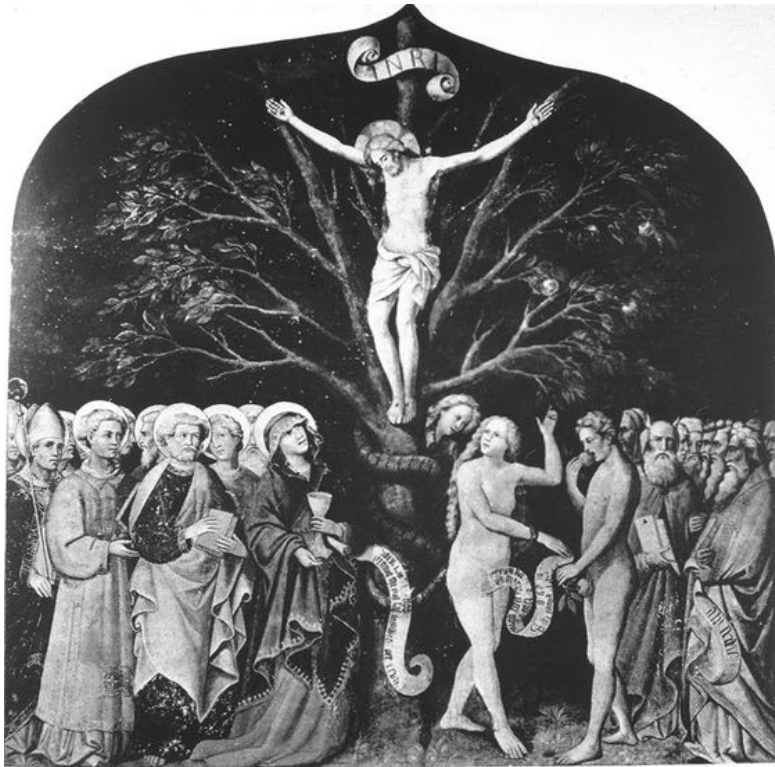


Figure 1 "Mystery of the Fall and Redemption of Man" by Giovanni da Modena (1420)

And that's why I keep showing you this picture—I want you to make some connections that we have forgotten.

Jesus is the *eschatos*, the last and ultimate Adam, and we, humanity, are his bride. We have all been to this tree, and we all know this tree, for it grows in the sanctuary garden of our heart. And now we all come to this tree when we come to communion.

Have you ever noticed how the most vile and evil deed can be the very same deed as the most sacred and blissful deed *except for* the intentions of the people that commit it?

Sex can be rape, producing death, or a communion that is Life—the only difference is the intentions of the heart.

This sacrament can be judgment on the self—drinking judgment on yourself, like Dracula, as we saw last week—it can be judgement on the self, or it can be a sacred communion that impregnates the self with eternal life. Maybe everything you do can be rape or love, evil or good, taking life or giving life, sin or righteousness—it all depends on the intentions of the heart.

- If we think that Love is a law that we must fulfill, we'll lust for *the knowledge of good and evil*, so we can know how much we can sin and still get to heaven; how much we can take and still not have to give; how much we can wound love and still get his stuff, his kingdom, in the end.
- If we think Love is a law, we'll crucify love and use love the way harlots use love to gain things that aren't love.
- If we think Love is a law, we'll try to take his life and consume it like food, like zombies lust for body broken, and vampires lust for blood shed.

But when we see that Love is the Life who longs to fill us with himself, we'll desire his life, surrender to his love, and bear the fruit of his Spirit. We'll desire him, like a faithful bride desires communion with her groom—the joy of complete and total, uninhibited and mutual sacrifice and surrender. When we see the Grace of God in Jesus Christ our Lord, we'll love as we have been loved.

You know, I really don't know exactly what God is telling my homosexual friends to do or not do... those verses are more nuanced than I once imagined. And I really don't know what God is telling my friends in broken marriages about divorce and whether or not they can remarry. I really don't know the point at which your sexual desire becomes unrighteous lust.

But I know that if you surrender to love (and in this is Love [Peter points at the communion table]), you will love, and that love will fulfill the entire law.

Now let me say, I really haven't been tempted with homosexual desires, and so don't want to give much advice in that department. And I really have never been tempted to file for divorce, and so don't feel qualified to judge others. However, I sure have been tempted to lust after women other than my own beautiful bride, and that's adultery, committed in my heart—the very worst place to commit it.

I've found that making rules doesn't really help, vows don't help...but Love helps. And Love is not a law but a person, and when I talk to that person...

- I begin to love Love.
- I don't want to take from others; I want to give to others.
- I don't panic, thinking I have to have; I begin to trust that all things are mine, and I am Christ's, and Christ is God's.
- I change the channel, 'cause I have a new heart.

You may have noticed that Jesus said that if your right eye causes you to sin, it's better to tear it out than to be thrown into Gehenna with it; if your right hand causes you to sin, it's better to cut it off

than to be thrown in the eternal fire with it. And that is absolutely true; but, it's not your eye or your hand that causes you to sin— it's your heart.

Matthew 15:19 · “Out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, *porneia*”—the thought that you could buy and sell love.

*I am Love*, says God.

You need heart surgery. Moses prophesied that one day God would circumcise our hearts. The thing that needs to be cut away is the hardness around your heart that keeps you from the joy of love without limits—relentless love.

You need a new heart. And this is where you get it. (points to communion table) Jesus is the heart of God, given to you like fruit on a tree. You have tried to take it, and he has always fore-given it. He is knowledge of the Good... and He is Life. He is Love.<sup>xvi</sup>

## Communion

This is the Good in flesh [Peter holds bread to tree]. This is the Life [Peter holds cup to tree]. On the night he was “given over” [*paradidomai*],<sup>xvii</sup> he gave himself [*didomai*] because he wanted to. He is Love.

He took the bread and broke it saying this is my body given to you. And he took the cup, saying, “This is the covenant in my blood.”

## Prayer

Jesus, I'm just so grateful that you said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive,” and you did not say, “It *should* be more blessed to give than to receive,” You said, “It IS more blessed to give than to receive.” And you are reality.

So God, what you're asking us to do is confess that we live in un-reality; we confess our *unfaithfulness*. We confess our broken relationships to you. We confess our desire to take rather than give. We confess our faithlessness to you and we invite the faithfulness that comes from you. Lord, with the little bit of faith we have, would you make us faithful like you? Lord Jesus, would you help us lust for love, like you? Would you cause us to live in your kingdom that is at hand? We need that new heart. And we thank you, Father in heaven, that you've given to us in Jesus.

Amen.

## BENEDICTION

My wonderful bride taped these words from C.S. Lewis to the refrigerator : “What lies ahead is far, far better than anything we leave behind.”

And what is it that we leave behind? We leave behind broken relationships, frustrated and unfulfilled desires, a lot of pain, a lot of hurt, ...a lot of wonderful moments where we tasted something, and yet then it vanished. What lies ahead is far, far better than what we leave behind. And yet, God uses all those frustrated and unfulfilled desires to create in us a new desire: to give, rather than simply take. He uses them all to create in you a lust for Love.

In Heaven, no one is repressed. Because why do we have limits and rules, and boundaries and laws? Well, it's because we all want to eat each other, devour each other, suck the life out of each other. But God is giving us a new heart. And so I hope that you receive this message as a message of incredible hope. Such that you would entrust yourself to God and submit yourself to the surgery right now rather than later. I guess what I'm saying is that God is good. So believe the Gospel and begin to live even now.  
Amen.

## Endnotes

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The Jews were notoriously committed to a very high standard of marriage, in which adultery was punishable by death<sup>i</sup>—even though the men, in particular, didn't stick to the standard. There is no term for “premarital sex” in the Old Testament. And that's basically because if you had sex, it meant you were now married. That was the Biblical view of sex and marriage.

The Gentiles, however, made Las Vegas look like a convent. Pagan worship often involved sleeping with prostitutes. In fact, much of the language that Paul uses when we think he's simply speaking about homosexuality implies ritual male prostitution and the Greek and Roman practice of pederasty. I'm no expert on that topic, I'm just pointing out that the Bible is not outdated and definitely not prude.

<sup>ii</sup> Jesus says, “It was said, ‘whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate.’”

It was said, but neither Moses nor God said it.

What God said through Moses in Deuteronomy 24:1 is “When a man takes a wife, if... he has found some indecency in her, and he writes a certificate of divorce...” then the following shall happen.

It's interesting that the word we translate “indecency” is used 54 times in my bible and all but two of those times it's translated naked or nakedness and it clearly means “genitalia.”

Moses is saying, “If a man has a problem with his wife's naked genitalia and writes her a certificate of divorce...”

You see it's not a criticism of the woman, but if anything, it's a criticism of the man.

Genesis teaches that the good husband doesn't reject his bride's incompleteness or need, but fills his brides need with himself in the sacrament of the covenant of marriage producing life.

He doesn't cover her in shame but covers her with himself.

Later Jesus will say, “God allowed divorce because of your hardness of heart.”

Here Jesus says, “To divorce your bride on the grounds of anything other than sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery.”

Understand? If you divorce on grounds of adultery you can't make her commit adultery because she's already committed it.

But in that society a divorced woman was basically forced into another relationship or prostitution, and Jesus calls that adultery.

Then he says, “To marry a divorced woman is adultery.”

And that must be because in Jesus eyes she's not entirely divorced but still married to her husband.

<sup>iv</sup> And the more I considered Christianity, the more I found that while it had established a rule and order, the chief aim of that order was to give room for good things to run wild. -- G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy: The Romance of Faith*, p. 95.

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v What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. –Mark 10:9 (KJV)

vi Exodus 20:1-17 (RSV... I'm partial to the word "Ass.")

vii If not, it means that you don't want to be your true self...  
And you don't want to be saved from your old self...  
and the outer darkness, that will be consumed by eternal fire.

viii You actually can't make love, but Love is making you and he's doing it with a covenant of marriage, the New and Eternal Covenant—the Gospel.

ix Ephesians 5:31-32

x In Luke Jesus says the thing about not getting married in heaven, and then he adds this really bizarre line, "nor can they die anymore."

I think he's saying, "marriage on earth is a lesson in dying to yourself."

But marriage in heaven is constantly losing yourself and finding yourself in another—it is eternal, incorruptible and ecstatic life.

The moment you lose your life you find your life.

The moment you bleed out, the entire body bleeds in.

Larry Crabb used to say, "most marriages are like two ticks on no dog."

But the marriage for which your destined is all dog, or I should say all Jesus, all one body animated by one spirit, carried by one river of life to all the members or that one body, which belongs to you.

xi I think our present outlook might be like that of a small boy who, on being told that the sexual act was the highest bodily pleasure should immediately ask whether you ate chocolates at the same time. On receiving the answer, "No," he might regard absence of chocolates as the chief characteristic of sexuality. In vain would you tell him that the reason why lovers in their carnal raptures don't bother about chocolates is that they have something better to think of. The boy knows chocolate: he does not know the positive thing that excludes it. We are in the same position. . . . Hence where fullness awaits us we anticipate fasting.

C.S. Lewis, *Miracles*, p. 159-160, as quoted in *The Quotable Lewis*, p. 283.

xii Acts 21:13

xiii Acts 20:35

xiv I've believed it in moments of ecstatic communion with my wife.

And I think I've even believed it in moments of sacrificial love for my kids.

With each of my kids I have one or two sacred moments that I wouldn't trade for anything in this world.

Each moment was a moment in which they suffered—usually because of pain that they brought on themselves—yet, I chose to suffer for them and with them, and was and still am profoundly blessed.

I hated the pain, but absolutely cherished the communion of my heart with theirs—that communion is literally my life... and that is what heaven is made of.

In her famous vision Julian of Norwich saw that, in her words, "[Jesus] suffered more pain than all men who ever existed from the very beginning to the very last day" and then she heard Jesus say..."

"To have ever suffered the Passion for you is for me a great joy, a bliss, an endless delight; and if I could suffer more I would do so."

I'm just saying maybe it actually is more blessed to give than receive...

And so, maybe Jesus actually did lust in lust, to give his life to us... And

can't wait for the day that we would lust in lust to give our life to him...

xv The height of human lust is rape... which results in desecration and death

The height of divine lust is the sacrament of communion in the covenant of Grace... that results in creation; that is, life; and even babies.

xvi You need a new heart, and you need a new psyche.

Jesus said, "he who loses his psyche for my sake will find it."

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At the foot of this tree you lose your psyche and find it.  
You find a new desire. That's the secret of a good marriage.

"I see,' said Psyche in a low voice. "You think it devours the offering. I mostly think so myself. Anyway, it means death. Orual, you didn't think I was such a child as not to know that? How can I be the ransom for all Glome unless I die? And if I am to go to the god, of course it must be through death. That way, even what is strangest in the holy sayings might be true. "To be eaten and to be married to the god might not be so different.' We don't understand." --C. S. Lewis, *Till We Have Faces*, p. 72.

If you lose your "psyche" for the sake of Love, you will find it taught Jesus.  
He is the God of Love (not unlike Eros or Cupid) and we are his Bride.  
The Greeks dreamt of what was true: We are destined to be married to Love.

<sup>xvii</sup> "For I received [*lambano*] from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed [*paradidomai*] took bread, <sup>24</sup> and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." <sup>25</sup> In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood..." -1 Corinthians 11:23-25

"Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give [*didomai*] than to receive [*lambano*].'" -Acts 20:35

## **Divorce and Remarriage (to each other and to God) in Scripture** [Handout at Service]

<sup>27</sup> "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' <sup>28</sup> But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart... <sup>31</sup> "It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' <sup>32</sup> But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery. - Matthew 5:27-32

<sup>3</sup> And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?"  
<sup>4</sup> He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, <sup>5</sup> and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? <sup>6</sup> So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." <sup>7</sup> They said to him, "Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?" <sup>8</sup> He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. <sup>9</sup> And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery." - Matthew 19:3-9

<sup>5</sup> And Jesus said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. <sup>6</sup> But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' <sup>7</sup> 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, <sup>8</sup> and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two but one flesh. <sup>9</sup> What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." <sup>10</sup> And in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. <sup>11</sup> And he said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, <sup>12</sup> and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery." - Mark 10:5-12

<sup>18</sup>“Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery. – Luke 10:18

<sup>8</sup>To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is good for them to remain single, as I am. <sup>9</sup>But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion. <sup>10</sup>To the married I give this charge (not I, but the Lord): the wife should not separate from her husband <sup>11</sup>(but if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and the husband should not divorce his wife. <sup>12</sup>To the rest I say (I, not the Lord) that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. <sup>13</sup>If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him. <sup>14</sup>For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. <sup>15</sup>But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved. God has called you to peace. – 1 Corinthians 7:10-15

<sup>34</sup>And Jesus said to them, “The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, <sup>35</sup>but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage, <sup>36</sup>for they cannot die anymore, because they are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection. <sup>37</sup>But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the passage about the bush, where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. <sup>38</sup>Now he is not God of the dead, but of the living, for all live to him.” – Luke 20:34-38, Matthew 22:30, Mark 12:25

<sup>14</sup>When the hour had come, He sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him. <sup>15</sup>Then He said to them, “With *fervent* desire I have desired [Literally translated: “in lust I have lusted”] to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; <sup>16</sup>for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” <sup>17</sup>Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, “Take this and divide *it* among yourselves; <sup>18</sup>for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.” – Luke 22:14-18

<sup>27</sup>For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. <sup>28</sup>There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. – Galatians 3:27-28

<sup>7</sup>In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, <sup>8</sup>which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight <sup>9</sup>making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ <sup>10</sup>as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. ...<sup>4</sup>There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— <sup>5</sup>one Lord, one faith, one baptism, <sup>6</sup>one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. ...<sup>25</sup>Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, <sup>26</sup>that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, <sup>27</sup>so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. <sup>28</sup>In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. <sup>29</sup>For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, <sup>30</sup>because we are members of his body. <sup>31</sup>“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” <sup>32</sup>This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. <sup>33</sup>However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband. - Ephesians 1:7-10, 4:4-6, 6:25-32

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<sup>6</sup>The LORD said to me in the days of King Josiah: “Have you seen what she did, that faithless one, Israel, how she went up on every high hill and under every green tree, and there played the whore? <sup>7</sup>And I thought, ‘After she has done all this she will return to me,’ but she did not return, and her treacherous sister Judah saw it. <sup>8</sup>She saw that for all the adulteries of that faithless one, Israel, I had sent her away with a decree of

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divorce. Yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but she too went and played the whore. – Jeremiah 3:6-8

Thus says the Lord: “Where is your mother’s certificate of divorce, with which I sent her away? Or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities you were sold, and for your transgressions your mother was sent away. – Isaiah 50:1

<sup>14</sup>“Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her. <sup>15</sup>And there I will give her her vineyards and make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. And there she shall answer as in the days of her youth, as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt. <sup>16</sup>“And in that day, declares the LORD, you will call me ‘My Husband,’ and no longer will you call me ‘My Baal.’ <sup>17</sup>For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth, and they shall be remembered by name no more. <sup>18</sup>And I will make for them a covenant on that day with the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the creeping things of the ground. And I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land, and I will make you lie down in safety. <sup>19</sup>And I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. <sup>20</sup>I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. And you shall know the LORD. – Hosea 2:14-19

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. <sup>2</sup>And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. – Revelation 21:1-2

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<sup>22</sup>And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, <sup>23</sup>except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me... <sup>35</sup>In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, ***‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’*** <sup>36</sup>And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. <sup>37</sup>And there was much weeping on the part of all; they embraced Paul and kissed him, <sup>38</sup>being sorrowful most of all because of the word he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they accompanied him to the ship. – Acts 20:22-38

<sup>11</sup>You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore. – Psalm 16:11