

Faith Church Kingstowne
Sermon preached by Mike Bittenbender February 10, 2019
The Ten Commandments (7)

Exodus 20:14

Good morning,

The first text we will be looking at, the one that is printed in the bulletin, is Exodus chapter 20 verse 14. Another verse we will spend time with is Matthew chapter 5:27-28. We will have multiple others throughout so this morning could very possibly turn into some re-honing of our old sword drill excesses. When I say a reference, we see who can get there fastest.

Alright, Exodus chapter 20, verse 14, which can be found on page 54 of your pew Bible. I will read verses 1 and 2 and then skip to verse 14 to remind us who is speaking. Let us give our reverent attention to the reading of God's holy Word.

“And God spoke all these words: I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of slavery. You shall not commit adultery.”

And now moving to Matthew chapter 5:27-28:

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

May God bless the reading of His holy Word.

Since the last time I preached, which as you all I am sure can remember so vividly was on the 6th commandment, you shall not murder, I have had a number of people express to me how thankful they were for that sermon, and how it had helped them from murdering someone. I'm not sure what kind of reaction I am hoping for after this one.

This can be tough subject matter. I struggled greatly as to the direction I wanted to take this. Adultery can wreak utter havoc on families and on the offended spouses, that is the innocent party. Often, people are left asking themselves questions about whether because of an affair if that requires a divorce. I also found myself questioning, in light of God's top ten things to share with us, what made this act, or this aspect to sex so special? Ron Mehl posed the question this way.

“Why should God be so concerned about adultery in particular? Why should purity and faithfulness in a marriage be so very important to Him?” Because He knows that the home and the church are the two institutions ordained of God on earth to visibly model the love of God. It is in Satan's interest to mar and disfigure both of those models. In particular, Satan seeks the destruction of married love and the family. Kevin Deyoung put it this way, “It's about safeguarding the gift of marriage and promoting the flourishing of the family. In other words, the seventh commandment forbids more than just cheating on your spouse.”

Now, as we dive in let's get a little background. The Hebrew word *na'aph* occurs 31 times in the Old Testament with varying translations of adultery, adulterer, adulteress, adulterous, and woman that breaketh wedlock. It is interesting to note that typically in the Old Testament, the woman was the guilty party, not the man. There are a couple of added scenarios late in the law that keep man a little more accountable but it isn't till Jesus expands the commands that men are pointed to as liable. Another one of the ways in which the Old Testament speaks about adultery, not in the marriage context is that of Israel with God. Israel is accused of adultery with God. When the people of Israel turned their worship away from God to other gods, to idol worship, to idolatry, it was spoken of as adultery.

Jeremiah 9:2-3

“Oh, that I had in the desert a lodging place for travelers, so that I might leave my people and go away from them; for they are all adulterers, a crowd of unfaithful people.”

Ezekiel 16:15–35; Jeremiah 3:1–10, 5:7–9 and Hosea 1:2 all speak of the people of Israel leaving their worship of God for whatever gods the people who came into their lands introduced them to.

I bring this up because adultery is not only in the context of marriage but also our relationship with God and the two are intertwined. I also bring this up because you may sit there and tell yourself that you have never committed adultery physically, but there is much more to this than the physical act. No one can sit here or stand here this morning and not be found guilty of idolatry. Each one of us here is guilty of breaking the 7th commandment and we need to take it seriously.

Robert Morris says there are three ways in which we commit adultery. We commit adultery against the body, soul and spirit.

We commit adultery against the body when we engage in sexual activity outside of marriage. Jesus often, when discussing adultery also adds in the term sexual immorality. The Greek word for adultery, *moicheia*, is used 3 times in the New Testament. 2 of those 3 times it's used alongside the Greek word for sexual immorality, *proneia*. The third time it is used in John 8:3 in reference to the Pharisees who brought in a woman caught in adultery. There is another form of that Greek word, *moicheuo*, which is used 30 times in the New Testament and again many times in conjunction with sexual immorality. Adultery and sexual immorality are closely linked by Jesus. Sexual immorality, or *porneia*, is defined as “unlawful sexual intercourse, prostitution, unchastity, fornication” and refers to any sexual sin prohibited by the law of Moses.” Kevin Deyoung writes, “In condemning sexual immorality, Jesus was forbidding every kind of deviation from the related order, including adultery.”

We Commit adultery against the soul when we lust after others. Jesus expounds upon the command to not commit adultery by adding that “anyone who looks at a women lustfully, has already committed adultery.” the word lust and lustfully comes from the Greek word *epithumeo*. Other uses of the word *epithumeo* are lustful intent, desire, covet, long for. Deyoung notes that “Noticing that someone of the opposite sex is pretty or handsome is not a sin. The sin is when

this nothing becomes *epithumeo*.” “Even if we don’t commit the physical act with our sexual organs, we can still be guilty of sexual sin by means of our thoughts, our fantasies, our reading, our clicking and our affections.” When our eyes linger, when we long for something else, we break this command. Many other theologians point out that adultery can easily become a matter of the heart along with the soul. That what our eyes linger and lust for, our heart yearns for also. Jesus notes that out of the heart comes a whole long list of things that defile a person and makes mention of both adultery and sexual immorality.

Adultery affects our spirit. 1 Corinthians 6:17 says: “He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.” When you commit adultery, you leave. You leave your spouse physically, or emotionally, or spiritually. And when you leave you cleave to someone else. Jesus says when you are joined to Him you are one in Spirit. When you join your wife in marriage, two flesh become one. In this same way when you are in Jesus, you are one spirit with Him. You can’t take the members of your spirit with you on your adultery, you can’t take the spirit of the Lord with you in your adultery. When you leave and cleave, what you’re cleaving to is evil spirits and Jesus will not be part of that.

Committing adultery affects the body, soul and spirit. Proverbs 6:32 says “He who commits adultery destroys his soul. I cannot convey enough, how seriously God takes adultery, whether between a husband and wife or us and Him. God wants what is best for us. He wants us to enjoy marriage, He wants us to enjoy sex, He wants us to enjoy intimacy, He wants us to enjoy Him. When we hear the words, you shall not, our kneejerk, childish reaction is to say, “who are you to tell me not to do something?” or “man there is so much I can’t do if I’m a Christian.” I chose my wording carefully when I said childish. I said it because it is very difficult for children to put things into perspective, to see the grand scheme of things. God says don’t do this, yes, but it is so that we can enjoy all the goodness about marriage, sex, intimacy, and our relationship with God in pure and unadulterated ways. When we have sex outside of the confines of marriage we rob ourselves of potential that God has in store for us. The detriment that adultery can cause on a marriage is huge. Many marriages after adultery fail. Now, Jesus uses adultery as a legitimate reason for divorce, but it doesn’t have to end in divorce. I want to echo Neil’s words in his Pastoral letter he sent out last week and apply them to adultery. Adultery is inexcusable, but it is not unforgivable. Overcoming an affair in a marriage hurts and it’s painful. No one should ever have to go through it. But there can be healing, there can be redemption in it. It is not easy, it is not quick, and both parties, both the guilty and the innocent parties must be committed to getting through it.

The redemptive work of Jesus and the Holy Spirit cannot be limited. If you are sitting here this morning, and find yourself wandering, there is hope. There is power in the repentance of sin. We know that when we confess with our hearts God is faithful to forgive. Let me be clear, God is faithful to forgive.

Ron Mehl gives this quote towards the end of his chapter on the 7th commandment. “I think I could safely say that we have all failed in this command. Is there anyone who has never allowed an impure, adulterous thought to linger on the screen of the mind? And the Lord tells us that if we have committed adultery in our mind, it is the same in heaven’s eyes as if we’d already followed through on the act.”

I want to close by pointing out that Jesus Himself was confronted by the Pharisees with a woman caught in the act of adultery. You can find this passage in John chapter 8.

“1 but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.

2 At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. 3 The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group 4 and said to Jesus, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. 5 In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?” 6 They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. 7 When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, “Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” 8 Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.

9 At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. 10 Jesus straightened up and asked her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?”

11 “No one, sir,” she said.

“Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin.”

Although Jesus condemns adultery, and rightly so, He does not stone this woman. He commands her to repent, making that 180 degree turn away from sin and leaving it behind. That is the charge for everyone sitting here this morning. Whether you are in the middle of an affair, engaged in adultery of the heart, engaged in any extra-marital/pre-marital, *proneia* kind of sexual immorality, whether you’re engaged in idolatry by allowing something in your life to take precedence over the Creator of the universe, repent, and turn away from it. Allow the redemptive power of Jesus and gospel to transform your life. Call it out, don’t allow Satan to work in the darkness, don’t keep it in darkness to survive, call it out, repent of it, and go and sin no more.