

Reeks: 'n god wat god is
Titel: *When Sex is so much Less*
Prediker: Trevor Hudson
Datum: 27 Maart 2011

Good morning. It's good to be with you. Thank you for the interest when this topic comes up, your [unclear] says the preacher's somewhere else. Hey, I find that interesting, I really do. Our reading today comes from one Corinthian, chapter six and seven, and just inside of the leaflet that you... the brochure that you get, you have a leaflet and you'll have the reading there, there's also some place for you to make one or two notes if you would like to do that.

So I'm going to read from Paul's letter to the Church of Corinth, and he's offering them some counsel with regard to issues of sexuality, the place of sex in our lives. I find him very helpful. Just listen to his words.

Some of the Corinthians were saying these words, I have the right to do anything, but not everything is beneficial. I have the right to do anything, but I will not be mastered by anything. You say food for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy them both. The body however is not made for sexual immorality, but for the Lord and the Lord for the body. It's a wonderful sentence, that.

By his power God raised the Lord from the dead and he will raise us also. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never. Do you not know that he who unites himself with the prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said that two will become one flesh, that whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit. Flee, flee, get away from, run from sexual immorality.

All other sins that a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body. Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit? Who is in you, who you have received from God? You are not your own, you were bought with a price, therefore honour God, honour God, bring glory to God with your body.

Now, for the matters, and we say in this to the Corinthians that you wrote about to me. Some of you were saying it is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman, but since sexual immorality is occurring, each man should have sexual relations with his own wife, and each woman with her own husband. The husband should fulfil his marital duty to his wife and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but yields it to her husband, in the same way the husband does not have authority over his own body, but yields it to his wife. Do not deprive each other, except perhaps by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self control.

I say this as a concession, not as a command. I wish that all of you were as I am, but each of you has your own gift from God. One has this gift and another has that gift. We thank God so much for those words from scripture today and we ask that God will speak to us through them, each one of us, whether we're single, whether we're married, whether we're young, whether we're old. Amen.

Friends, at the moment we're in a sermon series, a series of messages that will take us through the spirit of Lent and will take us to Easter, Good Friday and Easter Sunday, and the series is titled, [unclear], and one of the things that we have been learning, one of the things, I hope we've been learning many things, but one of the things that we've been learning is that idolatry, idol worship is not only something that happened years ago amongst so called, unsophisticated people, idolatry, idol worship is something which is alive today, and it's alive in your life and your heart, and it's alive in my life and my heart, and it happens whenever... listen carefully, it happens whenever something or someone other than God takes that central space in our life where only God belongs, that's idolatry.

And the tricky thing is that very often a good thing can become an idol, a very good thing, family, family is a wonderful gift, it's a gift from God that can so easily become an idol, and you hear people say, I just live for my family, only my family, and you almost have a sense that people have made those that they love their idol, and it's so dangerous. Success, nothing wrong with success, but it can become an idol when it takes that central space in our life where only God belongs.

Sport, there's nothing wrong with sport, except from a [unclear] move, there's nothing wrong with sport? Nothing wrong at all, but it can become an idol when it takes that central space in our lives which only belongs to God.

Idolatry is still alive and well. Now, it's against this background that I want today to explore the feeling of sexuality and sex, because so often we can lose the state of [unclear] on sex and on our sexuality, and it's very easy in a society like ours, it's very easy for sex, for sexuality to become an idol in our lives, and I want us very carefully today to get some perspective, I want us very careful today to go through this passage which Paul writes to the Church in Corinth.

Now, let me just give you some background quickly. Corinth, Corinth was a sexually obsessed city, sexually obsessed; let me tell you, eating sushi off naked bodies had nothing with what went on in Corinth, nothing, nothing at all. We know today from historians that in that city there was a temple that was devoted to the Goddess, Aphrodite and I was doing some research on that temple in preparation for today, that when Paul wrote this letter, there were most probably about a thousand prostitutes, male and female, operating from that temple in the city of Corinth, that is almost 1 out of every ten people who lived in Corinth was a prostitute.

Now, you can imagine when someone, when a person became a follower of Christ in a city like that, you can imagine how tricky it was for them to begin to work out what it means to follow Jesus Christ, within such a sexually obsessed culture. And so Paul writes and he gives guidelines to them and even though he's writing to people in Corinth many years ago, God, I believe, can use these words to speak a word to us today, that I think can be life giving, and I'm hoping that that will happen for each one of us today. I want you to notice a few things, the first thing that Paul wants those Corinthians to realise. The first thing, that when it comes to matters sexual, when it comes to sexuality, we are not just animals. There were obviously some Corinthians who believed that if you had sexual needs, whatever they are, you just fulfil them. Just look at the scripture and you can see what was going on in some of their minds. Some of them were saying, I have the right to do anything, but not everything is beneficial, I have the right to do anything, but Paul says, I will not be mastered by anything, and then they would often say, you say food for the stomach, the stomach for food, and God will destroy them both.

Do you see what was going on in the Corinthians mind? If you have physical needs, you meet them, food for the stomach, the stomach for food, but when we reduce ourselves to animals, sexuality gets reduced to just biology and needs and urges, it becomes so much less. Have you noticed how often whenever people begin to behave in ways that are not appropriate, we use animal language, have you noticed that? When someone really goes crazy at a party, what do we say about that person? He's a real party animal, hey, he's a real party animal. And so we listen to songs like, Man Eater, interesting, hey, animal language, and we go watch a movie called what? Basic Instinct.

You see it reduces us, it reduces us all the time to the level of the animal and Paul counters this and Paul says to them, no, look at... look what he says to them... look what Paul says to them, do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit? Do you not know that? You're far more than an animal. A temple is such a powerful image. A temple is a place where God and people come together and Paul is saying to them, your bodies... your bodies are living temples of the living God. Do you believe that about your body? Do you want to just... can I just invite you... and I'm not treating you as children, I just want to invite you to say this with me; my body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. Can we say that together? I'd love you to get the feeling of that.

My body is a temple of the Holy Spirit and the body of the person sitting next to you is a temple of the Holy Spirit, and when I begin to have that perspective it begins to change things. So that's the first thing that Paul wants them to know, and then Paul goes to another extreme, he says, you're not animals, but also he says to them, you're not angels, you're not angels. There were some Corinthians, some Christians there who were so spiritual that they denied totally their own sexuality, their own sexual longings and their own sexual needs. Look at this, he says, now for the matters some of you wrote about, some of them would say it's good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman, they just thought they were angels.

Now, the church hasn't got a good history with this, over the years, especially in the past, the church struggled to deal with sexuality, and they said some terrible things. I was reading a book by Phillip Yancey, who was describing in the early years of the church some of the rules and the regulations that went out in local congregations. You weren't supposed... married couples were not supposed to have intimacy on a Friday, because that was the day Christ died. You weren't able to have intimacy on a Sunday, because that was resurrection day. You weren't able to have sexual intimacy during Lent, because that was the time you were supposed to prepare for Easter. You weren't allowed to event, anyway, in the end there were 44 days when it was okay, 44, and some of you are saying under your breath, thank goodness I don't live then, and some of you are saying, where can I get hold of that calendar? Now, notice how Paul responds to this, Paul is such a wonderful teacher. Notice what he says and how he encourages couples to be... to be deeply responsive to each other. He says the husband should fulfil his marital duty to the wife and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but yields it to her husband in the same way the husband does not have authority over his own body, but he yields it to

his wife. And you get this beautiful picture, Paul is not saying, sex on demand, he's not saying that, but he's encouraging couples into a deep awareness of the needs and the longings of their partner.

Now, can you see what Paul's doing? We're not animals, we're not angels, we live in the tension between. We are created in God's image. God's holy spirit lives in us, but we are sexual beings, that's how we've been made, male and female. It's part of who we are; each one of us has been given that energy to commit, to give life, to delight, to become a co-creator with God.

Can I say something today? Sexuality is far more than sex, sexuality is far more than sex. Don't settle for less. It's that deep energy of giving life, receiving life, delighting, celebrating, creating. I've put together some images here; you may just want to watch them. Look at sexuality in its full bloom. A mother pouring her life into her new child, that is sexuality in its full bloom, it looks beautiful. Another image, here is an image of a grandfather just pouring his life into his grandson; it's sexuality in full bloom. Here is another image for you, it's an artist creating with God, absorbed in a moment of creation, it's sexuality in its full bloom. Don't settle for less.

Look at this image; it's a rescue worker going through the debris of the tsunami in Japan, rescuing a child, giving life, protecting life, sexuality in its full bloom. Here's another image, it's an image of two women who maybe have never slept with a man, who've never borne children, delighting in life having an ice-cream, it's sexuality in its full bloom. Here's another image, people gather around a graveside comforting each other, giving life to each other even in darkness and pain, it's sexuality in its full expression. Our maleness our femaleness.

Look at this image, it's an image of two people who've maybe been married a long time just having fun together, it's sexuality in its full bloom. And here's an image of just some young people just enjoying life, feeling the energy of life, celebrating life, it's sexuality in its full bloom. Don't settle for less.

One last thought, one last thought. Paul gives us a beautiful image of what sexual intercourse is all about. He uses a wonderful word, look at this, a wonderful word, he says that two become one flesh. Our culture doesn't teach us this. God does. That sexual intercourse... does this make sense? Is a life uniting act, it unites two people, spirit, mind and body; it's an intermingling of soul and body.

I was watching Vanilla Sky the other day on DSTV, and there's a moment when this woman who's been... they'd been in a relationship with another guy and there's a break up and she says to him, she says, you know, when we sleep with each other our body makes a promise whether we know it or not, because in that moment it's a uniting of two people profoundly, deeply, and that is why Christian teaching places sexual intercourse within a covenantal relationship between two people of deep faithfulness and fidelity and love and respect. That's why, because it's a life reuniting act, and some of you are single and you're saying to me, Trevor, but what about me then, and how do I express my sexuality in relationships? And this is not a time for rules and regulations, but let me say this; our sexual expression needs to grow at the same time as our commitment to the other person. It grows together, it grows together.

Let me bring things to a close. I am deeply aware that when I speak about these things it evokes very deep feelings and longings and yearnings and shame and regret, I'm so aware of that, but I want to end on this note. Christ meets us where we are sexually and he always meets us with grace and invitation and challenge, he always, wherever we are, he meets us, he wants to meet us, with grace, with invitation, with challenge. Right now some of you are in a sexless marriage, there's been no intimacy, no touch, for months, maybe for years, Christ meets you there with grace, with invitation, with challenge.

Some of you as you've been listening to me have said, Trevor, it's too late, I have slept with too many people even to remember, and in your shame, Christ meets you, with grace, with invitation, with challenge. Some of you lost your innocence when you were a young child with an abusive father or uncle, and there was a stain across your sexuality, and in that memory today Christ wants to meet you, with grace, with invitation, with challenge. Maybe there's someone here today who wants no less than a child, and you've come to church, and I just want to say I'm so glad you're here friend, and in your pain and regret and guilt, Christ wants to meet you today, with grace, with invitation and with challenge.

Someone here fell pregnant when they were 17 years of age, 20, had an abortion, no one knows about it, it's a secret that you've carried for years, Christ meets you in that moment with grace, with invitation, with challenge. Some of us are living with unmet longings and yearnings and needs and we long to be touched and held, and there's no one in our life to do it and in that loneliness, Christ meets us, with grace, with invitation, with challenge. Christ wants to meet you friend, wherever you are, wherever I am, Christ wants to meet us today, with grace, with invitation to something new, something beautiful, to challenge. Let him meet you today.

Dear God we've been talking about deep things today and this morning. We've been talking about things that touch us at the very core of our identity and we are so grateful Lord, that wherever we may be on this journey, you meet us and your first word to us is always a word of grace, always, and then Lord, you invite us into something new, deeper, richer, more beautiful, you speak a word of challenge. Thank you Lord for the way in which you've made us. Help us Lord to give expression to our sexuality in full bloom, as we connect, as we give life, as we receive life, as we delight in every moment that you give us, as we create with you, bring us alive Lord today with your spirit, may we become fully alive in our spirits, but also in our bodies. This is our prayer and our longing and we offer to you our prayer in the name of Jesus and for his sake. Amen. Friends, may the wild, wild joy of Jesus Christ be with you.

© Mosaïek

