

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Des Moines, WA
July 12, 2015**

Genesis 2:20b-3:7

Eight Deadly Sins: Lust

**Hymns: 189 – Ready Lord – 241
Closing: 333**

All Scripture quotations from NIV 1984

But for Adam no suitable helper was found. ²¹ So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. ²² Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. ²³ The man said, "this is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." ²⁴ For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. ²⁵ The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

¹ *Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'" ² The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, ³ but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"*

⁴ *"You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. ⁵ "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." ⁶ When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. ⁷ Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.*

It seemed like just a few months ago that girls had given the young teen the creeps; but now, things had changed so much. He couldn't so much as look at a girl without feeling flush with emotion. And as much as he tried, he couldn't seem to keep the lustful thoughts out of his mind.

It was much the same for the happily married man who was guarded enough to still shield his children's eyes when they walked through the wrong aisle at the gas station.

He, himself, wasn't looking, but the inadvertent web search opened his eyes to a world of anonymous adultery that pulled at him with desires that filled him with equal parts excitement and shame.

It happened also to the middle-aged mom, who turned on the reality show simply so she might be able to chime in on the conversation that captivated all of her friends. But as she watched, she couldn't seem to keep her mind from drifting to dreams of what it would be like to be caught in such a spontaneous and passion-filled romance.

It wasn't supposed to be this way; that hearts and minds should so easily flood with such illicit and, seemingly uncontrollable, lusts. The intentions were much more perfect; the designs much greater; the desires much purer. That is how it was in the Garden when God looked around and found that there was no suitable mate for the man.

There in the Garden, God created woman from the man and as he brought this compatible companion to him, he gave this command, "Be fruitful and increase in number." And to move them to accomplish that directive, God gave inside the man and woman a natural desire for the other sex. And their desire for one another stemmed from a desire to carry out the command that God had given to them. And in addition to those desires being God-pleasing... they were also wholly good. Genesis tells us that, "***The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.***" (Gen. 3:25) As perfect people in a perfect marriage created by a perfect God, Adam and Eve were in full control of their sexual impulses. Those desires led them to sex - a unique and intimate way to show their commitment and love toward one another.

Because those desires that filled Adam and Eve's hearts and fueled their actions were good and God-pleasing, God intended them to continue. As he wrote through Moses in Genesis 2:24, God stated that this special union between Adam and Eve was not for them alone; it was for every man that would leave his father and mother and be united to his wife.

But then it changed. The devil came and he capitalized on other desires in Adam and Eve, desires to be more than what God had made them; desires to be different than God had made them. And in the wake of their rebellion against God, something also happened to their relationship with one another and to those sexual desires that they held for one another. Genesis 3:7 tells us, "***Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were***

naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.”

Immediately, a flood of desires that they had never felt engulfed them. They were no longer able to direct those sexual impulses according to God’s will and to his glory. And if they were no longer able to do that, they knew what kind of sinful desires were filling their partner’s heart and mind. So, they covered themselves in a futile attempt to cover what was in their own hearts and to hide from what they assumed was in the heart of their partner.

Sin came and took captive the desires that God was pleased to give for the good of mankind, and look where it led.

As we page through the Bible, we see lust so consuming David as he looked upon a woman bathing that the king of Israel and ancestor of Jesus would use his authority to have an affair and eventually kill to feed his desires. We see men of Sodom and Gomorrah so enflamed by lusts that they would be driven to the point of knocking down doors as they yelled to Lot to bring his visitors out for sex. We see Solomon so consumed by unquenchable lusts that he would bring women in from around the world to attempt to satisfy his desires. And those are just the most familiar stories, go deeper into the Bible, and you will see the ugliness of lust in stories too dirty and sickening to share where children are present.

Keep looking and you’ll find in lives today that it isn’t too different. Though we can so often succeed at keeping the lust that burns within hidden from others, stats about affair and pornography along with human experience tell us that for many of us, those desires that run wild of God’s pure intentions for sexual desire burn within.

And we live in a world where lust can be fed in a host of ways. From the grocery store checkout line to the coffee barista to the limitless source of sex on the internet, Satan has an endless quantity of fuel to pour on those burning desires.

We also live in a world that minimizes the dangers of lust. Sex is something that is splashed upon our TV screens every few seconds. It is fodder for an endless array of jokes and conversations. And as the world encourages inhibition through the sexual revolution, how easy it becomes for us to dismiss the seriousness of immorality. Or maybe we just become accustomed to it.

But God is clear about the seriousness of the lust that fills so many hearts. And for that reason he condemns the very place where it starts. As he spoke about corrupted sexual desires, Jesus pointed out the seriousness of lust when he said, “Anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” (Matthew 5:28)

God made such a strong statement about something that seems to burn innocently inside of us because he knows exactly where those wayward and ugly desires lead. As he spoke through James, we hear this warning, “Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death” (James 1:15). When our hearts are filled with desires that burn to get out, God knows the destructive path to which it leads. And for that reason, he condemns those lusts in our hearts so we know just how serious they are.

Yet, then, after showing the seriousness of those sinful thoughts, God also always brings forgiveness for them.

Through the work of his Son, Jesus Christ, we have this assurance that we have been purified from all unrighteousness. Purify. That is a beautiful word when it comes to answering sexual sins, because so often it is sexual sins that leave us feeling as dirty with guilt as we can feel. But in his love, God brings purity to hearts made ugly by corrupt desires.

And in his love, he does not just bring the purity of forgiveness. But he also gives us ways to battle against those ugly desires. Through the gift of marriage, God continues to give a good and God-pleasing way to satisfy those desires. As God said in the beginning, Jesus repeated to the people of his day, and Paul repeats to all of us living in the New Testament, “For this reason...” Matt 19:5 and Eph 5:31). Marriage between one man and one woman continues to be God’s way for adults to carry out their desires. And he desires to have it honored by all... (Hebrews 188)

Yet marriage does not eliminate temptation. And so for the married, and for those who do not marry; for those who are too young to marry, and those who have sexual desires that can’t be satisfied by God’s design for marriage, God gives his counsel and encouragement as he says to “Flee from all sexual immorality...” and “Clothe yourselves with Christ, no longer thinking about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.”

And through the Spirit-worked New Man, God works in each of us the desire and self-control to live, not according to the cravings of our sinful, corrupt Old self, but according to a heart that wants to think about whatever is true... (Philip. 4:8).

As we live in a world where satisfying desires and feeding what feels good and natural is encouraged, the battle to maintain pure thoughts will be harder and harder. When lusts dirty our hearts and minds, may we find purity in the blood of Jesus. And as forgiven children of God, let us battle with strength and perseverance against the devil as he strives to corrupt and dirty those desires that are truly good and God-pleasing gifts from God. Amen.