

Good morning. We are continuing our study in the Sermon on the Mount, a study in which we have seen Jesus Christ describe the characteristics of a Kingdom of God citizen, and a study in which we are now seeing how high of a standard God really demands of those who are citizens of the Kingdom. The inherent question in Christ's teaching is, "how can anyone enter the Kingdom of God?" You may remember that same question asked by Jesus' disciples when Jesus noted how hard it would be for the rich to enter into the Kingdom of God. If the standard of Jesus' Kingdom citizen leads to that question, then the glory of the mercy of God is to provide a means through which that standard can be achieved for us, and applied to us. And so is the glory of Jesus Christ made manifest. He is God's mercy to us for life and transformation. In this text Matthew is concerned with teaching us how high the standard of God's righteousness is in regard to sexual purity. The last time we met we considered how high God's standard is in regard to the emotion of anger is.

C.S. Lewis, who was writing in England and commenting on the brokenness of sexuality in his country, gives a good commentary that can be applied to us in the United States. He gives the analogy of the culture of strip clubs and contrasts this with other appetites. "Suppose you came to a country where you could fill a theatre by simply bringing a covered plate unto the stage and then slowly lifting the cover so as to let everyone see, just before the lights went out, that it contained mutton chop or a bit of bacon, would you not think that in that country something had gone wrong with the appetite of food? And would not anyone who had grown up in a different world think there was something equally queer about the state of the sex instinct among us?" (GMBoyce, 90)

Let's consider Christ's teaching under the point, **.I. Lust and life**. Here in verse 27-30 consider that He was speaking to people who were religious. This was not a college spring break crowd. That He is raising it with them underscores that this religious crowd had already adjusted the standard of righteousness. So we hear Jesus say, "**you have heard it was said,**" and then Jesus quotes the Ten Commandments. He contrasts the intent of the Ten Commandments with the teaching being given about the Ten Commandments, and He does that by saying, "**But I say to you, anyone who looks on a woman with lustful intent...**" **The religious teaching was satisfied with the control of the outward expression**. But Jesus demanded that this deal first with the heart.

The words "**looks at a woman**" communicates an **active gaze**. It isn't a noticing that a woman is attractive and leaving it there. It is a look that inspires the erotic with that person in mind. In the Old Testament we have several examples of what this looks like. When Joseph is a slave to Potiphar we are told that Potiphar's wife **cast her gaze on Joseph**, and then she began her sexual pursuit. It resulted in a malicious lie and Joseph in prison for something he didn't do. When David sinned with Bathsheba we are told that in the late afternoon he was on the roof of his house, and he saw a woman bathing who was very beautiful. David took time watch her bathe instead of turning away when noticing that this woman was in a compromised situation. The lust then birthed a plan to have her, and it ended with a murder. We have all been in positions where we've found ourselves in embarrassing situations. **It is those people who dignify us with aid, instead of exploiting us, that we are grateful for**. Those are two examples in the O.T. **of the intent of the look** that is sinful. It is one thing to notice someone attractive in daily life. It is another thing to begin to saturate our minds with sexual experiences with that person in mind. That is the point here. Lust is not only a breach of God's commandments; lust is a destructive emotion to any relationship. I was in grade school when a friend produced a pornographic magazine from his dad's closet. I immediately asked why his dad had that magazine. Apparently my friend had the same question because he and his dad talked about it. His dad said he was using it to aid in his intimate desire for his wife. Needless to say, the marriage did not last. He was already mentally committed to adultery. Lust destroyed that marriage. However progressive and open we say our relationships are, we know deep down that lust dishonors the relationships that we are in, and it is a form of devaluing the person upon whom we cast our gaze. For example, it is not uncommon to hear phrases like, they didn't have a physical affair. They had an emotional affair. What does that mean unless we recognize that there is a personal space where my mind and heart are connected with someone on a level that should be reserved for my wife, or if you are a woman, your husband? Now, the hard part of this sermon from Jesus is that He is identifying the thought as if it were the action, the heart intention as if it were the physical act of sexual sin.

Knowing how this, let's identify areas in our culture where we are apt to fall. I do not mean here to make a legalistic list. I simply want to review areas of our culture that are significant stumbling blocks to biblical sexuality. How common place it is for our society to read salacious material. There the mind's eye can feast on lust and feel legitimized by the fact that we haven't

actually engaged in sexual sin. Our culture is always looking for new ways to inspire the erotic, and to celebrate the physical expression of the erotic outside of God's design. Not according to Jesus. What about movies? It is common place for media to display people performing sexual acts. Anywhere where it is common place for men and women to celebrate immodesty for the purpose of enticing lust is a place that dishonors Christ's teaching. Jesus says in **Matthew 18** that those people who cause others to stumble will have great judgement. **James 1:15**, "Desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death."

.II. So how does Jesus tell us to overcome these scenarios? Well, it is **first** to recognize that we fall short this way. **Secondly**, it is to be drastic in our actions against sin and recognize that we will pay for our sin if we have not rested in forgiveness. Even then, there are some sins in which we are forgiven, but the consequence of those sins we bear for the rest of our lives. Many years ago I had a conversation once with a man who had been unfaithful to his wife. He sat before me very broken. He longed for the joy and peace of a stable home where he could see his children grow every day, and where he could see his wife blossom more and more in her Christian walk. We recognize that we can fall this way. *We recognize that we have to be drastic in our actions against sin. And we recognize that there is judgement for sin.* Christ's grace is no a license to sin. It is the power to finally be who I could not be outside of Christ. With the issue of drastic responses to our sin, Jesus uses **allegory** to communicate the way in which we must protect ourselves from sin. We know it is allegory for several reasons. The most obvious reason is that I can still lust if I am blind. **Jesus is essentially saying, be radical in your fight against your sin, because the consequence of a life of sin is God's judgement in hell.** So to use a physical example we might understand in our day, if all I do is find myself looking at porn on my phone when I am alone, then I am going to change the kind of phone that I have, or I am not going to have a phone at all. The encumbrance is worth the avoidance of sin. And with that we recognize our commitment to God's standard. Do I think lust is a big enough issue to warrant diligence to avoid lust? Is reflecting the glory of Christ worth your fight against sin? The problem with God's standard is the height of the standard, and the vigilance He demands. Everything is on the table. If all I have is lust filled failure when I go to the beach, then I find another place to vacation. If all I have is lust filled failure when I go to the gym, then I figure out another way to get exercise. If all I have is lust filled failure when I read those kinds of novels, I read something different. Is reflecting the glory of Christ worth your fight against sin?

The scripture also gives us other ways to fight this sin of lust, and that is to fulfill the sexual appetites in the way in which God requires. So if we consider what God has revealed we will understand that, first of all, God is the creator of our sexual desires. When they were created they were created good. Sin has warped our understanding of these things. **But what did God intend with the sexual expression?** **First**, He intended intimate and distinguished unity. This is given in the idea that a husband and wife would be one flesh. It is a unifying act of intimacy. **Secondly**, He intended multiplication. Biblical sexuality reflects the creative power of God to produce image bearers. We do not give birth to dogs or monkeys. We give birth to bearers of God's image. **It is a sacred act of intimacy.** **Third**, God gives us a whole book in the Bible in which biblical sexuality is celebrated. Highlighted there is the importance of singular affection, of communication, of planning, and of celebrating this relationship. So, Biblical sexuality is an intentional act of intimacy. **Fourthly**, God says through Paul that biblical sexuality is a protection against sexual sins. We can succeed in a battle against sexual sins because in marriage we have a place in which those desires can be realized. Do not defraud one another of the means and reason for biblical sexuality. Fifth, the word of God is our transforming agent. It shows us how to live in a broken world. **Ps 119:9, ^{ESV} 2 Corinthians 10:5 We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.**

Dear friends, something has gone deeply wrong in our culture regarding sexual sin, and it is a deeper wrong than we can overcome because it is a wrong of the heart. Only God can transform that. If you say you are a Christian and are living in disregard to the sin of lust or the active expression of sexual sin, please note that Jesus says your end is not heaven, your end is judgement. The Christian is the one who lives in the battle, though sometimes failing, and the Christian looks forward to the day when in God's presence we will be rid of this mortal fight. And there are truest aid in battling sin is seen, when Jesus Christ is our treasure, we do what He did for us, He gave everything up so show is how much He loved us. He even gave His life. The **greatest and most effective way to conquer sin is to love Christ more deeply**, then, giving up what He came to save us from is our urgent commitment. Amen