



A NEW HUMANITY: SEXUAL DESIRE

Introduction

Aloha everyone! If we haven't met, I'm Mark, and I want to welcome you to our service. Next week will be the conclusion of our series, *A New Humanity*, and I pray you have been blessed and challenged by these teachings of Jesus – I know I have!

These past weeks, we have been meditating on the greatest sermon ever told, Jesus' sermon on the mount. We learned that the sermon on the mount is not simply the ethics of Jesus or His moral code, but Jesus showing us an entirely new way to be human. In other words, Jesus is not after behavior modification, but with giving us an entirely new heart. How is your new heart coming along?

This is in fulfillment of what God spoke to the prophet Jeremiah, and Pastor Glen spoke on this a couple of weeks ago.

"But this is the new covenant I will make with the people of Israel after those days," says the Lord. "I will put My instructions deep within them, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be My people," (Jeremiah 31:33 NLT).

In the old covenant, God gave His people 600+ laws to obey and to follow. These laws showed them how to live for God and be holy but the people failed to uphold the laws of the Lord time and time again. It wasn't the laws fault. It was the people's hearts. But God said, the time is coming when I will write my laws on their heart. God was going to change our hearts. Through His grace, and forgiveness, and love, God transforms our hearts so that we're actually able to live for Him – not out of obligation or forced compliance but because of His love.

OG DISCUSSION QUESTION: Why were the laws unable to change the people's hearts? How are we now able to obey the laws of the Lord in the New Covenant?

Jesus came to establish the new covenant between God and His people. Throughout these teachings He's showing us what it means to live as people of the new covenant, people of His Kingdom – a new humanity. He's taking the laws that we know (the old covenant) and then He's elevating them (the new covenant).

"You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment,' (Matthew 5:21 NIV).

That was the old covenant – the 10 commandments. Then Jesus introduces the new covenant.

"But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, 'Raca,' is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell," (Matthew 5:22).

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Jesus is not simply after behavior modification or an outward religion. He is after a renovation of the heart. I would say, most of humanity is capable of not murdering someone. But who among us has never harbored anger toward someone? That is inhuman.

After Pastor Glen's message, Jesus has been revealing the anger in my heart. When I'm driving on the road and someone does something dumb, that anger comes out. Some of you might be aware of a certain individual in this area who has been causing trouble. He's damaged Church property and hurled profanities at several of our members.

One day I saw him laying down on the sidewalk and I was carrying my water flask as I usually do. And this thought entered my mind of how easy it would be to go off on him. He's destroying our property. He's cursing at our people. I could just go over there and go off on this guy. And I soon as that thought entered my head I heard the voice of Jesus say, "That's what I'm after. That right there." I had to repent and ask God to give me a new heart. How is your new heart coming along?

OG DISCUSSION QUESTION: What area of your heart is Jesus having you examine? Are there certain areas that are keeping you from loving more fully?

Because, at the end of the day, as Pastor Theresa shared last week, it all boils down to love. Love is the greatest commandment. All the laws can be summed up in love. For Jesus it's all about one thing: Love for God, and love for others. Mark, that's two things. In Jesus' mind it's one thing. They are connected. You can't have one without the other. In that moment of anger, I did not have love in my heart toward that brother. I saw him as less than human. I was giving in to a carnal feeling. Paul talks about this in his letter to the Corinthians,

¹ "Brothers and sisters, I could not address you as people who live by the Spirit but as people who are still worldly—mere infants in Christ. ³ You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere humans?" (1 Corinthians 3:1,3 NIV).

It was that phrase, 'mere humans' that caught my attention. Jesus came to usher in a new humanity that would be marked by His love and empowered by His Spirit but the Church Paul was writing to still lived according to the old humanity. He said, "Are you not acting like mere humans? Are you not still fighting, is there not still jealousy amongst you, are you not still giving in to carnal desires, are you not still living like the people of this world?" I feel like Jesus is putting my heart under a microscope and examining it. He wants to remove that root of anger, He wants to remove the fear of man that Pastor Theresa talked about last week, He wants to give us a brand new heart.



Message Disclaimer

This morning Jesus is going to address another area of our hearts – another core issue of humanity. We've addressed anger vs. forgiveness, we've addressed manipulation vs. authenticity, and today Jesus is addressing the area of purity vs. lust. I warned you at the beginning of this series that Jesus was going to get all up in our business but I want to address something before we dive in.

Some of you are here and you identify as a follower of Jesus. You are a disciple of Jesus and you are all in – That's awesome. Others of you may have been exposed to religion, maybe while you were growing up, and perhaps you're returning to Church and still wrestling with aspects of what Jesus and the Bible says. We are so glad that you're here. Some of you are processing religion and this whole Jesus thing for the very first time! We are so glad you're here. Others of you are here and you're not invested at all. Maybe your friend invited you and promised there would be refreshments after or promised you lunch! We are so glad you're here. It's important to know that the primary audience of this teaching were people who were invested in Jesus and seeking to follow Him. If that's not you, we're glad that you came, we're glad you're here, but you're not really the primary audience for this teaching. If you are new to the faith or still seeking, I would say your primary focus right now would not be today's topic but figuring out more of who Jesus is. I don't want you to get hung up on some of these issues before you've come to grips with who Jesus is. Sometimes in Church we put the cart before the horse so to speak and we want new believers to get all of these things figured out before they've even had time to get acquainted with Jesus! Jesus says, just come to Me, as you are, and I will sort out the rest. Regardless of where you are in your faith, I pray that today's message stirs up a lot of good conversation and discussion.

Adultery

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery,' (Matthew 5:27 NIV).

What is Jesus doing? He's quoting the 10 commandments. He's saying, "You're familiar with the old covenant. Now here's the new covenant.

"But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart," (Matthew 5:28 NIV).

Let's unpack this statement. First of all, what is Jesus not saying? He's not saying it is a sin to find someone attractive. It is not a sin to notice attraction. If that were the case, we'd probably have to walk around blindfolded all day. The world is full of beautiful people. So Jesus isn't talking about noticing someone or finding someone attractive. Jesus is more concerned with what happens after that. Look how the English Standard Version puts it,

"But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart," (Matthew 5:28 ESV).

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He's saying, "Guys, when you look at that woman, what is your intent? Jesus has a way of getting at the heart of the matter doesn't He? What is your intent? Are you simply giving God praise for His beautiful creation? Or is there something more going on? When you're walking down the street, watching that show, scrolling through your feed, browsing the web, what is your intent? What is going on in that moment?"

OG DISCUSSION QUESTION: *Why do you think this issue matters to Jesus? What connection does this have to the greatest commandment?*

Biblical View vs. Worldly View of Sex

Before we continue on, I feel like I have to provide some context for why this issue matters to Jesus.

When it comes to sex, the Bible and the world are diametrically opposed. This is one of those areas where it will feel like driving on the opposite side of the car or the road. I cannot emphasize this enough. Paul had to address this gaping chasm of beliefs in the Corinthian Church. Corinth was like many places in America today so see if you recognize some similarities in their thinking,

"I have the right to do anything," you say—but not everything is beneficial. "I have the right to do anything"—but I will not be mastered by anything," (1 Corinthians 6:12 NIV).

This was the Corinthians' first argument. What's the big deal? It's not like I'm doing anything illegal. It's not like I'm breaking the law! Everybody does it. It's accepted. But look at Paul's response. Just because you have the right, doesn't make it right. Just because you have the freedom, doesn't mean you're walking in freedom. There are many things this world promotes and endorses that will lead to your destruction. The enemy wants to seduce you to reduce you. Paul's saying, "Who are you going to let determine what is right or wrong? The world, yourself, or God? Whose Kingdom are you a part of?" There are so many Christians who shape their values, their beliefs, and their choices, not on what God's Word says but on what society says.

"You say, "Food for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy them both." The body, however, is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body," (1 Corinthians 6:13 NIV).

In this argument, the Corinthians are likening sex to any other human appetite. They're basically saying, "When you're hungry, you eat. When you're thirsty, you drink. When you feel the urge, you..." Come on Paul, you're being a prude. You're making a mountain out of a molehill. It's just sex. Besides, "God will destroy them both." YOLO – You only live once. Do you see any similarities to how they were thinking and how people think today? And Paul is saying, you are so much more than just flesh and blood. Life is about so much more than self-gratification and fulfilling earthly appetites. You're thinking like the world. That is being merely human. We were

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created for God. You have a spirit. You were created in God's image. You were created to connect with God and to experience His holy Presence. Paul is saying, sexual immorality (sex outside of God's boundaries) corrupts our ability to connect with God and to connect with others. What is the most important thing for Jesus? To love God and love others. When you look at someone lustfully, you are using that person to fulfill a self-gratifying need. You are dehumanizing them by reducing them to body parts. You are saying, in that moment, you exist to fulfill my wants and desires. It reduces a person from their personality, their dreams, their talents, and their experiences, to merely an object. It's objectifying. And because it distorts your ability to love, Jesus won't tolerate it.

I often talk about human sexuality like fire. It's easy to picture because we often associate passion with fire. But let me ask you a question. Is fire good or bad? It depends, doesn't it? In the right context and in the right application fire can be extremely good. It can warm a home on a cold night, it can provide light in dark places, it can be used to cook a meal, it can even sterilize and cleanse something from impurities. When fire is contained within its proper boundaries, be it a fireplace, or a lamp, or a candle, it can be extremely good. The same is true with sex. Within the right boundaries, which the Bible tells us is marriage, it can be a very good thing. But there's another side to fire isn't there?

When I was in college, I used to come home for the summer and work for a contractor on the North Shore. One of our first jobs was to demo a townhouse on the West Side. Apparently, a man had fallen asleep watching tv with a cigarette in his hand and ignited his entire house as well as the neighbors homes. I'll never forget the blackened walls, the pungent burning smell, the family photos and belongings, destroyed. I witnessed first-hand the devastating effects of an uncontrolled fire. In the same way, as a Pastor, I have witnessed, first-hand, the devastating effects of sexual immorality in people's lives. I myself was addicted to pornography for many years and it distorted the way I viewed and treated women. I've seen it tear apart marriages. I've seen it separate children from their parents. Sexual immorality is the source of some of the greatest forms of dehumanization on the planet. I'm sure most of us are aware of the devastating realities of sex-trafficking. Our very own Hawaii is a hub. And where do all of the acts of abuse, and betrayal, and violence begin? It all begins in the heart. Jesus is intolerant toward anything that violates the greatest commandment to love God and love others.

OG DISCUSSION QUESTION: *Why do you think God says the only context for sex is marriage? Why doesn't he include a loving committed relationship?*

Our world is obsessed with sex. We've made an idol out of it. The adult film industry brings in more revenue than the NBA, NFL, and MLB combined. In America, it brings in more than NBC, CBS, and ABC combined. It's America's favorite past-time.

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"But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart," (Matthew 5:28 ESV).

Jesus is clearly speaking to a specific audience here. As Tim Mackie puts it, "Which gender has turned sexual desire into a tool of violence, degradation, and abuse throughout history?" Jesus is speaking to Kingdom men about what it looks like to truly love our sisters in Christ. He is challenging us to be the protectors. He is showing us that His Kingdom is a place that is safe for women and that we need to do whatever it takes to overcome this.

Conclusion

²⁹ "If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. ³⁰ And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell," (Matthew 5:29-30).

Jesus takes this issue so seriously that He even resorts to violent imagery. He isn't speaking literally, He's using hyperbole to drive the point home. Your eye represents the way you see the world. Your hand represents your actions. He's saying, if you have something in your life that is distorting, or corrupting, the way you see or treat others, men – the way you view or treat women, whether it's social media, or television, or movies, or certain websites, then we need to be willing to take extreme action to remove that thing from your life. You can survive without an eye, but how many of you would agree that it would be a radical inconvenience? Jesus is saying, you need to be willing to be radically inconvenienced if there is something that is causing you to stumble. For some of you, you may need to exchange your smart phone for a dumb phone. I know a brother in Christ who still used one of those old Nokia phones that only sends texts and phone calls. Today we would think that is extreme. We would say that is a radical inconvenience. He would say, it's saving his marriage. It's allowing him to walk in freedom. It's bringing healing to his heart. Many of you know that I have history-tracking software on all of my devices that sends a weekly report to my wife. The world might see that as a breach of my rights or my freedoms but I see it as contingent to my freedom. Are you willing to do whatever it takes be free from sin? Are we willing to do whatever it takes to walk the way Jesus is asking you to? Do you really want Jesus to transform your heart? It's going to require radical obedience on our part.

This is what it means to be part of a new humanity. You are a new creation in Christ. God has written His word on your heart and is giving you the ability to live it out now. The only thing that can stand in the way of Jesus transforming you is you. I pray that You would allow Him to complete the work He began in you.

OG DISCUSSION QUESTION: *Is there an area of your life that is causing you to see or act in a way that is unloving to God or others? What radical step do you need to take to remove that from your life? How can your brother and sisters in Christ pray for you and keep you accountable?*