

St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church-WELS
Sermon by Pastor Anthony E. Schultz
Epiphany 2. January 15, 2012 1 Corinthians 6:12-20



¹² "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. ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also. ¹⁵ 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! ¹⁶ Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, "The two will become one flesh." ¹⁷ But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit. ¹⁸ Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body. ¹⁹ Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; ²⁰ you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.

People of God – rescued from the flaming lake of fire in hell by the innocent blood of the very Lamb of God:

In 1562 a man named Arthur Brooke wrote down an Italian story – *The Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet*. About 30 years later an up and coming playwright named William Shakespeare wrote simply Romeo and Juliet. The story begins in the city of Verona – a street brawl between two warring families – the Capulets and the Montegues! The Prince of Verona intervenes – threatening the death penalty for anyone who continues to disturb the peace. I love his line – "On pain of death – all men depart!" How dramatic, "On pain of death – all men depart!" I like that! Romeo and Juliet – made powerful by painful tragedy – and then every little bit – what's called comic relief! In the middle of the most painful pressure and stress someone says something funny – like the funeral sermon I heard at Faith in Fond du Lac – where the pastor – a nephew of the saint called home to Heaven began by saying, "I don't know if you know this about Raymond – he had strong opinions!" People smiled out loud. You couldn't help it! Romeo and Juliet is about love. "But soft – what light in yonder window breaks? It is the east and Juliet is the sun. Arise fair sun and kill the envious moon who art already pale and sick with grief that thou her maid art far more fair than she!" Romeo and Juliet is a tragedy – that ends in suicide and death! Sometimes it seems like more and more this world is filled with tragedy – with broken hearts, broken families and sadness. Today God's Word talks about *hugs and kisses* and God's plan for this most wondrous gift. Today God's Word reminds us:

"Hugs and Kisses" Are God's Gifts!

- 1. Flee immorality**
- 2. Honor God with your body.**

The part of God's Word we are concentrating on today – is part of the Apostle Paul's first letter to the believers in the Greek city of Corinth! 1st Corinthians was one of the first letters we translated back at Northwestern College. President Carlton Toppe – the president of the college taught 1st Corinthians and wrote the People's Bible Commentary on 1st Corinthians. President of the Seminary Pastor David Vallesky wrote the volume on 2nd Corinthians. These

are both powerful letters about faith and forgiveness and the means of grace! 1st Corinthians chapter 15 is called the great resurrection chapter! **¹ Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. ² By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. ³ For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. ⁶ After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, ⁸ and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. ⁹ For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them – yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. ¹¹ Whether, then, it is I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed.** It is this Easter Gospel which is both the reason and the power that enables us to put our faith into practice – using God’s gift of hugs and kisses to glorify Him!

Morality was not very common at all in Corinth. In fact sins against the 6th commandment were so common – the name of the city was synonymous with the sin. Like Homosexuality and San Francisco – or organized crime with Chicago and New York or sinful excesses – *what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas!* To Corinthianize was to be with a prostitute! That’s how bad it was. So the Apostle Paul – by inspiration of the Holy Spirit wrote, ¹² **“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.** ¹³ **You say, “Food for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy them both.”** Christian freedom is a powerful thing! Because Jesus died and rose again – we are forgiven – freed from sin and all it’s wicked deadly power. We are free from guilt and regret and remorse. Christians can say, “Let it go!” – and really mean it. We can say, *“I refuse to let the painful and hurtful mistakes of the past to live rent free in my heart and mind and memory!”* We can literally forgive and literally forget! We are free to do all sorts of things. We are free to have all sorts of instruments to make music in Church for Jesus’ glory! Up in Emmanuel in Stratford – by Marshfield they have steel drums – drums made from oil drums with ball-peen hammer. In Nigeria they use brake drums for church bells and mufflers for percussion instruments. It hasn’t been that long since it was once thought you didn’t play guitars or drums or saxophones in Church! There are those who think any type of makeup is showy – that any kind of alcohol is sinful – that any kind of jewelry is sinfully drawing attention to yourself – that to braid your hair is sinfully showy – that any kind of tattoo is wrong – that ministers dasn’t wear any kind of gown – that for ministers to wear any kind of cross is wrong – as are stoles. We have great freedom in Christ – but we dasn’t ever use that freedom in a way that causes hurtful offense to our neighbor! There are so many real and obvious and painful sins – how wrong would it be – to invent and cause even more? It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Let us live in that freedom glorifying Him!

God’s Word says: **The body, however, is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.** ¹⁴ **By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also. ¹⁵ 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! ¹⁶ Do you not**

know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, "The two will become one flesh." When the LORD made people—he made them male and female—from the beginning. When Adam met Eve—there in the Garden of Eden was the first wedding. God's Word says, **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 then 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 **That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.** ²⁵ **Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.**

Genesis 2:20-25 This was God's plan from the very beginning. A very literal person God named Adam and a very literal woman Adam named Eve—were the first two people. They were married in a very simple outdoor wedding—in the Garden of Eden—where God pronounced them husband and wife.

We talk about marriage in Word of God class, in Christ Light, in Sunday School and Adult Bible Class and in Teen Bible Class. And yet—in many ways—we don't have lots of instruction in marriage. We have the example of our parents. It used to be—Grandparents and Aunts and Uncles lived with us or on the next farm or next door. Now days—not so much. So what do we need to remember? The fundamentals! When you are young—it's good to go out in groups—whole clumps and bunches of your peers—meeting lots of people! It's good to go out in groups where you can talk to lots of people—to get to know them! To learn if they share a common faith with you in Jesus—a respect for the authority of God's Word. If they don't know God's Word—you can share law and gospel with them! Go on lots of dates—maybe hold hands—maybe a little kiss on the cheek at the end of the night. When you take someone out on a date—and buy them a movie ticket and buy them popcorn and buy them a pizza and a soda—what you have bought is a movie ticket, popcorn and snacks! You have not bought a bunch of kisses! Good things do not happen past midnight! On a Saturday night it's good to be home and sleeping—so you can get up and be awake for Church! "Hugs and kisses" are a gift from Jesus intended for people who are married! Not for people who are dating and not even for people who are engaged to be married—but for people who are married! It is exceedingly hurtful and wrong when people do what they know is sinful. Again and again there are painful consequences when people forget God's plan for marriage. It has been said again and again—this month—January—even this week—the 12th to the 19th—is when more and more families fall apart! Why would this be? Is it because we are supposed to be so happy from Thanksgiving to New Year's we can't help but giggle—and when we see "It's a Wonderful Life!"—and we think mine isn't—that we want to start all over? This is when we need to remember our oath—our vow before God and many witnesses—"for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health." To remember *what God has joined together let man not separate!* To remember when we become married—two people become *one in Christ*. We need to choose wisely—when we become married. We need to love and forgive from the heart—the way Jesus always and completely forgives us!

¹⁹ **Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own;** ²⁰ **you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.** Honor Jesus with how you use your body! Again—if our life is confusing—we need to return to the fundamentals! There is nothing more fundamental in all of God's Word concerning marriage and the family than the Apostle Paul's words that are a part of every wedding ceremony. Ephesians chapter 5--²⁵ **Husbands, love your**

wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ²⁶ to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, ²⁷ and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. ²⁸ In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church – **Husbands – love your wife like Christ loved the Church!** That means love her enough to die for her! How often does that happen? This week was the one year anniversary of the shooting at the mall in Tuscon, AZ. They showed the victims – the people that were gunned down. They showed the picture of the little grandpa – with his grey and white beard – the little grandpa that used his body to cover – to shield his wife. The little grandpa in an instant – without hesitation gave up his life to protect his wife! That’s the kind of love God’s Word is talking about! Love like that – means a love that translates into living for your wife. Putting her safety – her happiness ahead of your own! To love your wife like Christ loved the church – requires a strength and self-discipline that can only come from Jesus. He is the ultimate Example and he is the ultimate strength to remember “hugs and kisses” are gifts from God. We will remember that – and live like that – for Jesus’ sake. Amen!

To God alone all glory!

Rev. Anthony E. Schultz