

St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church-WELS
Sermon by Pastor Anthony E. Schultz
6th Sunday after Epiphany (series A.)
February 16, 2014 Matthew 5:27-32



²⁷ “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ ²⁸ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. 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. ³¹ “It has been said, ‘Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.’ ³² But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her the victim of adultery, and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

Children of our Heavenly Father – precious in His sight for Jesus’ sake:

It was back in 1795 that a man named Johann Wolfgang von Goethe first published what many consider the first *Kunstmärchen* – that is an *artistic fairy tale*. It’s called The Green Snake and the Beautiful Lily. It starts with two will-o’-the-wisps. Do you know what a will-o’-the-wisp is? It’s kind of imaginary – like the quivering flame of a candle – that is in fact a fairy. Kind of like Tinkerbell – and so? Well, two will-o’-the-wisps wake a *ferryman* and ask to be taken across the river. The ferryman takes them – and for payment they shake gold from themselves into the boat. This is *bad* – the ferryman says – for if the gold had fallen into the river – the river would overflowed. So – he demands as payment – 3 artichokes, 3 cabbages and 3 onions – and the will-o-the-wisps are off to find them. Meanwhile the ferryman takes the gold up to a high place – and hides it in a rocky cleft – where a green snake eats the gold and realizes he now glows in the dark. After that it gets a little complicated. Eventually there is a handsome prince – and a beautiful Lily – except if you touch her you die – and a bridge – which is all metaphorical for the great divide between this physical life which we realize with our senses – and the ideal aspiration we have – to live happily ever after. There are – in fact all kinds of people –

who in their heart of hearts want to kiss the right frog – and the frog becomes the handsome prince – and they quite literally ride off into the sunset and live happily ever after. What happens all too often is people go on countless dates – get engaged – plan expensive and extravagant weddings – and before you know it – endure painful divorce – the last thing they ever wanted. Today God’s Word is again exceedingly practical as it reminds us:

LesI. Jesus first loved us!

II. Jesus enables us to love and forgive one another.

Today is the 6th of 4 Sundays where we read from Matthew Chapter 5 – the first of three chapters of the Sermon on the Mount. The mount is really more of a grassy hillside – on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee. It is a kind of natural amphitheater – covered with long grass – filled with wild flowers and little sparrows. It was here that Jesus taught his disciples. Not just the 12 – not just Peter, Andrew, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew and the others – but all kinds of people who put their faith and trust in Jesus. There were lots of people who heard Jesus preach and teach – and by the power of the Holy Spirit – put their trust in Him. Jesus is talking to believers about their sins – and about fruits of faith – about putting their faith into practice. Jesus is showing them that we cannot save ourselves by being good. Not only is the gross wickedness of smashing a commandment sin – even the sinful thought and desire is damnable!

Today God’s Word is talking about marriage and family. God invented family in the very beginning. God’s Word says, **“Then the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.”** That’s how God made man. **The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.** Before there was sin – in the flawless wonder of Paradise – there was work! Work in a gift and blessing from God – to get up in the morning – and to work – inside or outside the home – or to study in school--work is a blessing. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, **“For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: ‘The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat.’ We hear that some among you are idle and disruptive. They are not busy; they are busybodies. Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the food they eat. And as for you, brothers and sisters, never tire of doing what is good.”** 2 Thessalonians 3:10-13 In the beginning God said, **“It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a**

helper suitable for him." Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals." Again it is important to realize this happened about 6,000 years ago – not millions and millions of years ago. Don't be misled when it's reported on the Internet that they have found 800,000 year old footprints in England. Don't be misled by museums that have people – dragging their knuckles – slowly but surely discovering fire, language, wheels and more! God made Adam – with the mind and insight to see the world's most wondrous zoo parade – and to give a name to each kind of creature – according to what made it unique!

But for Adam no suitable helper was found. 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. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. 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." " That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh. Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame. Genesis 2:20b-25

Jesus preached. Jesus said, ²⁷ "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.'²⁸ **But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."** Painting with a very broad brush – people in Jesus' day said, "You are not supposed to have 'hugs and kisses' with anyone except your spouse."

Sometimes people make the distinction – "hugs and kisses" before marriage with anyone is 'fornication'. "Hugs and kisses" after you are married with someone/anyone not your spouse is adultery. The sad thing is – back in Jesus' day – many people thought anything less than actual "hugs and kisses" was not breaking the 6th commandment. Jesus makes it very clear, **"I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."** Jesus is concerned about the thought--the emotion – the lust that infects eyes and hearts and emotions. The lust – that festers – like an infection. A lust that is pondered – until the moment comes – when you are all alone with the

object of your sinful desire – and then that emotion is acted upon. That is sin, too! When Jesus' love fills your ♥ Jesus will make you strong – even when you are tempted. Jesus can make you like Joseph when Mrs. Potiphar tried to tempt him for “hugs and kisses”. God's Word says, **“Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance. And after a time his master's wife cast her eyes on Joseph and said, “Lie with me.” But he refused and said to his master's wife, “Behold, because of me my master has no concern about anything in the house, and he has put everything that he has in my charge. He is not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me except yourself, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?” And as she spoke to Joseph day after day he would not listen to her, to lie beside her or to be with her.** Genesis 39:6b-10 Jesus made Joseph strong to resist temptation. And Jesus is the one who will keep us strong, too.

³¹ **“It has been said, ‘Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.’** Sometimes you hear people say--divorce is a terrible problem today. The fact is – divorce was a terrible problem already back in the days of Moses and the children of Israel on their way to the Promised Land. There were so many on again/off again marriages – that finally for some semblance of decency and order – Moses said – **“When a man takes a wife and marries her, if then she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, and she departs out of his house...** Deuteronomy 24:1 ESV and this happens again and again – this is because of sinful ♥s! This causes harm to the family – harm to children and grandchildren – harm to the church and harm to the nation! Every husband and every wife are sure to make mistakes. Some mistakes are irritating and frustrating and some mistakes are terrible moral lapses – causing untold heartache and pain. What can you do to prevent that? Choose wisely – in the very beginning! If you are going to get married – to have “hugs and kisses” within the bond of marriage like God planned from the beginning – be very careful who you marry! If you marry someone who loves Jesus more than life itself – you will be marrying someone who will have from Jesus the determination and the ability to love and to forgive – that only Jesus can give. Marry someone who loves Jesus more than life itself – and you will have a spouse who will make mistakes – but when they do – they will confess them and admit them –

and repent of them – and pray for Jesus’ help to do better in the future! When husbands love Jesus they will appreciate the Scriptures that say, **²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her ²⁶ to make her holy, cleansing her with the washing of water by the word. ²⁷ He did this to present the church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or anything like that, but holy and blameless. ²⁸ In the same way, husbands are to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ For no one ever hates his own flesh but provides and cares for it, just as Christ does for the church, ³⁰ since we are members of His body. ³¹ For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. ³² This mystery is profound, but I am talking about Christ and the church. ³³ To sum up, each one of you is to love his wife as himself, and the wife is to respect her husband.** Ephesians 5:25f HCSB.

When you read your Bible every day and come to Church each Sunday – and Lord’s Supper as often as you can – the Gospel in your ♥ will make you strong against countless temptations. When Jesus tells you again and again He has forgiven you – how can you turn around and not forgive the people in your family and the people in your life?

In 1811 a man named Friedrich de la Motte Fouque’ wrote a novella – a very short novel called Undine! Have you ever heard of it? Undine? It’s one of the very first fairy-tales. It’s about a water spirit – who falls in love with a knight named Huldebrand – in order to gain a soul. The condition of the marriage is – knight Huldebrand must not see her on Saturdays. Saturdays – you ask? Because on Saturdays – she resumes her shape as a mermaid. Undine is such a wonderful story it has inspired no less than 6 operas – 3 great pieces of music, 3 ballets, two movies and all sorts of short stories and poems and pieces of literature – and all sorts of paintings and sculptures! Did you know that? There is something about the human ♥ where we want to see people fall in love. We long for romance – whether they find pain and suffering along the way – as in the case of Undine – where *they live happily ever after*. We can and will live happily after – not imaginary or make-believe or pretend – but in reality – when we live in the warm light of Jesus’ forgiving love. God bless your family – by grace alone for Jesus’ sake. Amen!

To God alone all glory!
