

Part 8: Kisses Tell

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There are sometimes where you happen to come to church on a sermon that you wish you would have avoided. Finances, politics, circumcision...all of these are biblical themes that come up as we preach the through the Bible. That's the benefit of expository preaching, it forces us to let the Bible set the topic instead of our own tendency.

Today's scripture sets a topic which may make you long for a sermon on tithing because if you didn't pick up on it from KJ's reading, a primary theme in our text today is sex.

Now we might have some tendencies which immediately rear their head when we encounter this. We might want to blush, we might want to giggle, we might want to ignore. But my hope is that we actually look at this text with a humble seriousness because my guess is that regardless of where you are today you need to hear from this text.

There are two things that have happened in the last hundred and fifty years which shape each and every one of us and that is the oversexualization of culture and the desexualization of Christian discipleship.

For most of Christian history the church was bullish on the issue of sex and sexuality. It wasn't hidden or spoken of in hushed tones. It was seriously, respectfully and openly discussed as part of the Christian life applied differently depending upon if you were married or single. But for some reason in the 19th Century, Victorian sensibilities led to a privatization of Christian faith, specifically in the area of sex and sexuality.

So as the church continued to act like following Jesus as a whole was more of a private affair than a public one, so too did sex become something left to be pieced together in isolation instead of in the context of Christian discipleship.

As the church became increasingly mum on the issue, culture filled the void. When sex was publicly separated from the God who made it and gave it, culture was left with this neat tool with no instruction manual and made it into a god with no limits. Now sex is used to sell hamburgers and battery cables while at the same time it is part of what defines our very identity down to the pronouns used understand our own consciousness.

When we lose God's design, we are left with confusion and pain. That is felt in both the church and in culture. But as we've seen so far in the book of Proverbs, wisdom chooses to lean not on our own understanding but on God's. When God defines the boundaries it is for our joy even if it seems uncomfortable and it is for our freedom even if it seems confining.

There are some of us in here today who live as if sex is, if not God itself, God's salvation. Proverbs is going to help reign that in. There are probably others though who think that sex is too scandalous for God to care about, and here Solomon will help you think more clearly and biblically about that as well.

Our big picture today is not simply that God has something to say about sex, it's actually much bigger than that. Our main point today is going to be this: **The wise learn to find joy in faithfulness to God and his design for life.**

We are going to see this in the two divisions in our text today. First in verses 1-14 we are warned of **The Dangers of Faithlessness**. In that passage we will see the delusion of lust and the destruction of the sexually foolish. But then in verses 15-23 we are going to see **The Delight of Faithfulness**, which concludes with a call to you to consider your own life.

Now before we get rolling there's a couple hang-ups in this text depending upon your station in life. So I'm going to quickly address two questions you might have right off the bat.

The first question is how do you listen to this text as a woman? We've noticed so far in the book of Proverbs that it is written from the perspective of the male. So too in this text the man is called away by a lady, and he is called to rejoice in his wife.

This is not to say that only men struggle in this way, and that women are only seen in this way. I think God intended for you to read this not only with a keen eye on the men in your life, but also that you might do the work of switching characters. Consider the role men might have in your own life of calling you away, and privilege of finding sexual joy with your own husband. So feel free to apply this text to you.

The second question is how do you listen to this text as a single person? Let me give three quick answers. First, this text is relevant to us all because all of us have experienced sexual foolishness if not in deed then in thought. What's held up in this chapter is hope for the sexually wounded.

Second, this book prepares you for what may come. Remember this book was used as a training manual for young men to go out into the world. Pray that God might prepare your heart for the trials and joys this passage holds.

Lastly, this text this text is not finally about intimacy. This text assumes that the reader is married, and that faithfulness to that spouse is joyful and all other calls of other lovers are dangerous.

If you remember what we saw in Proverbs 3 and 4, we saw romantic language being applied to wisdom. The application of this text is not only to be true to your wife, but to be true to God's wisdom wed to you in Jesus Christ. All calls to sin, whether sexual or not, are adulterous calls which tear us away from Jesus who loved us on the cross and wants to bring us total joy in his intimacy.

To veer from God's word, God's wisdom, God's covenant of redemption in Jesus like veering away from your spouse into the arms of an adulteress. That is what we are being warned of.

So with that said let's look at our first point today which is largely a warning: **The Dangers of Faithlessness.**

The father opens this section on the dangers of adultery by address *the delusion of lust*. Read with me **Proverbs 5:1-6.**

If you look up in your Bibles at Proverbs 4:26, the call of the Father was that we might ponder the path of life. That's what this chapter is helping us do. And it does so here by exposing the alternate path.

And we see this really interesting contrast in verses 2 and 3, did you catch it? **Proverbs 5:1-3.**

When it comes to wisdom, understanding and discernment we need our lips to guard knowledge. Why? Because the lips of the forbidden woman, the strange woman, drip with honey.

What is the point Solomon is making here? So far in Proverbs we've seen how important words are, we are to write them on our hearts, adorn them as a crown, and cherish God's good words of grace to us. But here he develops this point in a new direction.

Lips are for speaking. But lips are also for kissing. And when he's telling us that our lips are to guard knowledge what he's showing is that who you kiss (or don't kiss) betrays what you know.

Your love life betrays your knowledge. To not kiss a strange or foreign woman shows that you know and love your faithful spouse. But to kiss the adulteress is to kiss the lips that boast false honey.

That's the true delusion of lust in this text isn't it? Whether it's what our eyes see on a screen, or read in a text message, or even feel in our heart of on our skin, this temptation looks good.

But here Solomon says, looks are deceiving. Have you heard the legend of how Greenland and Iceland got named? Iceland is actually a beautiful island, but they named it Iceland so that you wouldn't want to go there. Greenland on the other hand is this brutal wintry place, they named it Greenland so that people would think it's green and wonderful. But when you arrive you find you have been bamboozled.

This is what God is saying this kind of honey is. It looks good. But it's really not!

We all know foods which taste delicious which are ultimately bad for us, and we all know foods which don't taste very good but are ultimately good for us. The temptation to this kind of sexuality is neither of these things. We don't get a good taste and we don't get a good result.

The wonder of these texts is that it speaks to our hearts doesn't it. We've all seen the honey! The appeal of something on your screen, the playful glances perhaps of another co-worker, the dangerous day-dreaming of what could be? When we see the honey, we want a taste of it.

But look. What looks to be sweet is bitter as wormwood when tasted. What sounds soft as silk is sharper than a sword as it cuts you down. And what sounds like straightforward contentment is ever wandering chaos.

It looks good, but it's a delusion. Our world looks for sexual freedom because we think in it we have found the path of life, but it's not there. This lady is a sham.

But if you're still foolish enough to think that you can call your shot and be fine, he's going to lean in even more. It's here we see the ***destruction of the sexually foolish***. Read with me **Proverbs 5:7-14.**

We have two really strong magnets at our hose and I often play with them. I happen to think that I'm a fairly strong guy, and so I try to get these magnets to get so close to each other than I can feel them pull, but at the same time, hold them apart.

Yet there always comes a moment when I'm playing with them that they snap together. Now the issue isn't that I'm not strong enough to hold them apart, the issue is that the magnetic connection happens so quickly that I'm always caught off guard.

The issue with most sexual sin is not that you are too weak, but that you are too slow. That's why the Father's words here are: stay here, don't go there. Run from the house of the adulteress. Stay far from it. Think of the three token cases of sexual sin in the Old Testament.

In the face of sexual sin David was not delivered by his power, nor Sampson by his strength, but Joseph was spared by his speed, fleeing when he feared he drew near. So, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6: "Flee sexual immorality."

Consider what this looks like in your own life? What would it look like for you to take some steps back towards God's wisdom and away from this sin? The sad story of sexual sin is that most stories begin with the phrase: "It all happened so fast."

What awaits those who refuse to avoid this path? Ruin.

Look at verse 9: Your honor goes to others. It seems each year we read of more and more Christian leader's whose legacy of ministry is stripped from them as they engage in sexual sin.

But it's not just an immaterial burden, Solomon says your hard earned wages will end up with another.

I did some research this week and found an article which said the average affair costs \$444 a month. You enter into these things thinking that it will be costless, but there's a cost for sure. In fact in 1999 the private counsel hired to oversee the allegations against President Clinton and his sexual misconduct brought up a bill of \$6.2 million dollars in six months. That's \$34,000 day.

Sexual sin robs you of honor, it robs you of wealth, but that's not all. It robs you of life: **Proverbs 5:11-14.**

Augustine, whom we spoke some of last week, was quite the philosophical ladies-man prior to his conversion. He spent most of his time chasing women from the young age of 16 and even before his conversion he felt the physical toll this had on his body and spirit.

He went onto say this of sexual foolishness: "With these various and shadowy loves, my beauty consumed away." He's saying it wasted away my physical spirit. It was exhausting. I never found what I was looking for, but I always found another thing to look at.

There will be at some point for all who walk this road a tragic end where you realize the wasted life of sexual sin. In that moment it's not the woman who gets the blame, but the foolish heart that instead of listening like verse 7 said, refused to listen. Instead of inclining themselves to understanding like in verse 2, refused to incline.

The result was that even though, like a good Jewish man, they went to the temple with the assembly of the people, he knew that he was in ruin. He knew he didn't belong.

So here he sits, robbed, exploited, hurting, and in utter ruin.

Does this make you think of another story in the New Testament? The story of the Prodigal Son who rejected his Father, refused to live as a son should live, and ran away to spend his fortune on women and whisky.

This man had a moment like this too. He sat in the pig pen, so hungry and so penniless that his greatest hope would be that the pigs wouldn't finish their means so that he could have some. In that moment he realized that there was only one solution: to go back to dad's.

He pieced together this big apology and was going to be content to just work as a servant in his father's house. But before he could finish his script his father embraced him and said, "Throw a feast, I'm so glad you've come home."

Here in the assembly of this congregation to varied degrees we might all be this man in Proverbs 5, at ruin knowing what our hearts have chosen. Trapped by what seems to be the defining foolish errors of our hearts. But what can bring us out: Only the Father.

How does this man in Proverbs 5 get out? By discipline and warning, but also by the joy that comes in living as the Father designed. The prodigal son was meant to live as a child of the father not a beggar to the pigs. So too is a spouse meant to live in freedom to his spouse and not slavery to lust.

We are going to circle back to how the Father saves us from this but first we are going to see our second point: **The Delight of Faithfulness.**

Read with me **Proverbs 5:15-23.**

Now there's a lot of imagery in this text. And while it might take some time for the discerning to sit down and parse through the metaphors, it doesn't take a wordsmith to realize two things: God cares about sex between a husband and a wife, in fact the husband is commanded to rejoice in her nudity, and that sex between a husband and a wife is an intoxicating joy and gift from God.

So intoxicating that the embrace of this faithful wife makes the intoxication of the strange woman seem like an odd an unneeded risk.

Now this is the part where this calls us to both think more about sex and less about sex.

God made us creatures with a capacity for sex and it is God's joy when we are able to use that in the right way that God created it, which is between a husband and wife in marriage.

The church shouldn't be squeamish about this. That's not to say we should be lewd and coarse with it. But it shouldn't be odd to include this aspect of our humanity into our discussion on discipleship and marriage.

My hope is that as a young church we have lots of newly married couples who need help in this area because they didn't come together as experts but as novices. But because of that we should be a church mature enough to deal with those issues in the context of discipleship. Otherwise we let culture disciple us on sexual issues and they do not ponder the path of life.

Sex is important to the Christian and sex needs to be spoke of in the church. In fact legend has it that in the Puritan churches in early America, if a wife came to the elders and said that her husband wasn't fulfilling his marital duties that the church would go so far as to excommunicate him if he continued. Let's be a church who isn't ashamed to talk of sex's joys and sex's abuse.

Husbands and wives, your frequent and joyful sexual intimacy is a gift from God that should remind you that everything is better when used as God designed it. Just as lips confess, so too does marital intimacy. What does your marriage bed actually betray about your thoughts on God? The solution here isn't in fixing the amount of more or less, but instead understanding that even intimacy is connected to following Jesus.

And yet, this is where we think less of sex, the answer to the call of sexual sin is not only marital sex. Wives do not think that if you have frequent enough sex with your husband you will keep him from sexual sin. Don't think that if your husband sins sexually that it's a failure on your part.

Remember here, the lady in this text is the metaphorical lady wisdom. She is the perfect, faithful, satisfying spouse. Yet the fool still erred. Look back at: **Proverbs 5:12-13.**

It was his fault. The problem was not the failure of lady wisdom, the problem is that despite how good God's intentions are for our world, the sinful heart still wanders.

Charles Bridges said this on this text: **"Where contentment is not found at home--drinking out of our own cistern, it will not be found abroad."**

In other words if the sex you have with your wife is not enough to solve your sin issues, and it won't be, then maybe sex isn't ultimate. Maybe the problem isn't sexual dissatisfaction, maybe it's the dysfunction of your heart. Maybe we've tried to make sex into a god, when God actually has offered himself to us.

Sex doesn't save us from the bitter end which might follow the sexually foolish. Only the perfect savior can.

The word translated in Proverbs 5 as "forbidden" woman is just the word "strange." Going after this woman is strange when we are married to wisdom.

In Deuteronomy God is reminding his people of how well he loved them and how involved he was in their lives. He brought them out of Egypt, he parted the Red Sea, he spoke to them in fire on the mountain, he brought them manna from heaven, and water from the Rock. And yet the people kept running to what Moses called, "god's you never knew."

In Deuteronomy 32 it says that Israel provoked God to jealousy by going after strange gods.

The problem wasn't with God's faithfulness in Deuteronomy, nor was the problem only in the existence of strange gods. The problem was with the unfaithful and unwilling hearts of his people.

In our sexuality and in our spirituality, unless the heart is fixed we will always eat the fruit of strange gods. Augustine reflected on this painful division of his heart and his actions but then said this: "I was in the habit of satisfying an insatiable appetite and tormented while it held me captive...and there I was, until you, O Most high, not forsaking my dust, did come to my help by wondrous and secret ways."

You see this text concludes with not us pondering our path, but God. And God the father says, "I've seen it all and the wicked will perish, the fool will die if he remains undisciplined on the path." But for us who see this, there is a better path.

This is where the wondrous and secret ways of Jesus Christ gives hope to the sexually and spiritually foolish.

In the Old Testament God's wisdom is personified as the lovely wife who is able to satisfy, but in the New Testament God's wisdom is incarnate in Jesus Christ who becomes the husband who not only satisfies us in our union to him but actually cleanses us. Jesus comes to help us.

Read with me **Ephesians 5:25-27**.

Proverbs 5 is showing the joy that comes from sexual intimacy between a husband and a wife, but ultimately it is showing that the fool at ruin in the congregation is finally and fully satisfied by being wed to Christ himself.

There is the intoxicating joy that comes from knowing Jesus without guilt or shame because on the cross he takes it from us.

What do we do with this text married or single, male or female, we go to Jesus with the full weight of our sexual foolishness and we give it to the faithful spouse who can do something about it and finally bring us into the delight of true intimacy in him.

Just as marriage is where sexual intimacy is made joyful, the gospel of Jesus Christ is where the whole of our life is made whole.

What we think about sex betrays what we think about God, and what we experience in the confines of marital sex reminds us of the joyful path that each and every one of us can enjoy by choosing faithfulness to God's design for all of life. This starts by seeing the beauty of Jesus our husband and ends by pulling every aspect of our life, sex included into the joy of God's design for it all.