**June 9th 2024 Second Sunday after Trinity**

**Text: Matthew 5:27-32** 0725

**Theme: Guard Your Heart.**

May the God of grace purify your hearts and minds that we may be His children in thought, desire, word, and deed. Amen. Dear friends in Christ: The moral condition of the world at present is utterly contemptible, parallel to some of the darkest of times in the history of the world. It hearkens back to the dark ages, to post industrial Europe, to the pre-flood world. What has become common and acceptable behavior and moral standard is entirely foreign to the Law of God, and to Christianity overall. Corruption runs rampant in the political sphere, with justice ignored, with many crimes going entirely unpunished altogether, and obvious crimes being swept under the rug and ignored. The lives of the world’s citizenry are also in horrific condition. The poor are utterly ignored, even by those whose work it is to look after them; prostitution runs rampant, not only in the traditional sense, but also in the modern, propagandized sense. For example, things like only fans are just digital prostitution, legalized and declared to be some thing else entirely. Abortion is rampant in our country and across the world. Millions of infants are slaughtered by the year and many close their eyes to these horrific and immoral deeds, and even legislate and promote such evil. However the hidden abortion industry are those contraceptives which are sold as pregnancy prevention methods, but which are, in fact, abortifacients, meaning that they abort a fertilized egg, killing a life.

Now all of these things are terrible, immoral, contemptible. However, the area of life that is in the worst condition of all is the estate of marriage. This horrific condition of the estate of marriage around the world poses a grave danger to our marriages and to our souls. That is the reason for this sermon today, because what is common and acceptable to the world is abominable to God, is sinful, and leads to eternal damnation. Our text is taken, like last Sunday, from Jesus’ sermon on the mount. It is a warning to Christians to guard their hearts, to keep their bodies and minds in subjection, lest the devil gain an advantage over them and lead them down the path of destruction. Marriage is a very fragile thing, it must be nurtured and cared for, it must be guarded jealously to keep it healthy. I want to speak directly to those who are married, and to those who will soon be married, and to those who are in the time of their lives when they are looking for a spouse. To all these the Scriptures declares: *“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loves the church, and gave Himself for it.” (Eph. 5:22-25)* Paul shows the proper, healthy, and guarded marriage of a Christian man and a Christian woman. It is a beautiful creation of God. But, as is always the case, the devil seeks to destroy the works of God including the work of uniting husband and wife. Let us all then guard our hearts in our marriages, and assist those who are married to guard their hearts, and encourage those who will be married to guard their hearts, so that here, in this congregation at least, the blessing of God may rest upon us and upon our marriages, and that the devious plan of the devil be overthrown. Let us then hear the Word of Lord concerning guarding our hearts. We will do so according to our text for today which is found in the fifth chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew beginning at verse twenty seven.

**Quote text here.**

Let us pray, O most glorious Lo0rd God in heaven, we thank Thee truly for the blessed estate of marriage which Thou hast given unto us. Help us to treasure it highly, not deeming of little or no value, but cherishing it in our hearts. Keep us from a wandering eye or a wandering heart, both of which destroy the bond Thou hast established between husband and wife. Grant, O Lord, Thy heavenly protection for our marriages, that they not be ripped apart by infidelity, lust, or other shame and vice. Cleanse our hearts, by Thy Spirit, that we not be led away by our own lust and enticed, conceiving in us sin, which sin leads to eternal death. Help us to combat the errors of the world about marriage, lest they creep into our own lives and into the church and cause great shame unto Thy kingdom, and profane Thy holy name. Grant us purity in our marriages, and if there be any impurity therein, grant true sorrow and repentance unto them, and forgive them. Grant unto those who have endured the pain of infidelity peace of mind and heart, offering forgiveness unto the guilty, as God has for Christ’s sake forgiven us. Grant, O Savior, eternal life unto us, according to Thy mercy and grace. Amen.

Guided then, by the Spirit of God, let us learn to guard our hearts and marriages:

1. **From lust.** We read verses twenty seven through thirty of our text: **read verses here.** This portion of the sermon on the mount could be termed the ‘but I say unto you’ portion. This because Jesus goes through a series of misconceptions regarding the Law of God, and how sin can be present, even if the letter of Law has not been broken. The letter of the Law of the Sixth Commandment is that Thou shalt not take one to yourself in sexual acts who is not your spouse. Yet Jesus clears up a great misconception, declaring that even looking on a woman to lust after her is adultery already in your heart. You see, the misconception is that God only forbids the DEED of adultery, but not the inner motions of the heart. This same idea is bandied about today with sayings such as: ‘I can window shop if I don’t buy,’ or ‘you can look but don’t touch.’ Yet these coverings are all removed by Jesus Himself in this sermon, showing that looking, thinking, lusting in one’s heart is substantially the same as carrying out the very act itself. Thus, we come to realization that Jesus is here looking at the condition of the heart within a person, and is parallel to Jesus’ words: *“that which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, and evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man.” (Mark 7:20-23)* When a Christian then hears these words, he knows and understands that though the act may never have been carried out, sin is still present, for his flesh and his heart defile him. Thus if a man looks at a woman who is not his wife, and impure thoughts arise within him, that is the same as committing adultery with her, at least in his own heart, the same is also true of women towards men.

Nothing can destroy a marriage, or a soul, as badly or swiftly as infidelity can, even infidelity of the eye. Pornography, flirtation, and lusting in one’s heart tears the fabric of love and trust between the two, which is impossible, at least from a human perspective, to restore. For this reason it must be of utmost importance to guard our hearts against this type of invasion into our marriages, or into a future marriage of those who are not yet married. Keeping your heart pure and your eyes away from lust is necessary. First because it protects the trust of the spouse, but also it guards against sin unto death. Hear what the apostle James says concerning lust: *“every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.” (Jms. 1:14-15)* If lust is left to linger in a heart and entertained, it will eventually lead to a carrying out of the act itself, and if remaining in such a lustful, sinful, impenitent state it will lead a soul to eternal death. This is the path that Satan attempts to lead all of mankind down, using the purity of sex within marriage, and twisting it outside of marriage to the devastation of a person’s soul, and causing great harm to many other souls as well. Take caution, dear Christians.

Now, it is necessary not just to warn against the danger of lust, but also to give tools to help avoid such a lust, and to restore a soul and a marriage which has endured it. Scripture gives us these tools. First prayer is necessary, for the Holy Spirit can cleanse a heart, purifying it, and keeping a person from a lustful eye. Second, we should remove our eyes or hands and cast them away from us should they cause us to sin. Now Jesus is not speaking of self mutilation, but shows the importance of purity, that even our own bodies are less valuable. Yet the true teaching is to make it as impossible as we can to lust. We are to be careful not be alone with the other sex. Now further, remaining in the Word of God helps to curb the flesh, to mortify it so that our flesh does not get the better of us and lead to further sin. Now it may so happen that one here struggles with a wandering eye or sinful thoughts. It may be that adultery has already crept into a marriage whether in thought or deed, and is eating away at the marriage and causing pain for one or both. In these situations it is important that those guilty truly sorrow over their sin and repent sincerely for it, which includes the intention to cease from that sin. However, recovery is not impossible with God, and a marriage is not necessarily over. But renewal is necessary. Renewal of the marriage which begins with renewal of the soul. If repentance and forgiveness are both sincere and ongoing, then a marriage can be restored. It may be wise in such situations to seek help from a pastor or Christian friend who can help in your struggle. We must then guard our hearts, and marriages by prayer and God’s Word, but additionally we must guard our hearts:

1. **From adultery.** We read verses thirty one through thirty two of our text: **read verses here.** We have already discussed adultery as it is seen in fornication by a spouse. But here we see Jesus apply the word to something which is quite common today. That of divorce except for the cause of fornication. Today it is very common for married people to divorce for any and every reason, even when there has been no infidelity. God has given two and only two exceptions to the command to remain married for life. The first is for fornication, the second for abandonment. Now if neither of these is present then they are to remain married. Now as applies to Christians what we have here is the idea that if a person has been divorced and not because of fornication, then they are no longer, in the eyes of God, eligible to married again to another. In God’s eyes they are still married to the first, and cannot therefore marry another. It is interesting that this is included here, following the conversation about lust, for Jesus knows that many, especially in our day, will divorce when they tire or their spouse, so that they might fulfill their lust with another while maintaining their outward piety. Yet Jesus gives no such out for lust, but declares that it is also adultery, and causes the other to commit adultery as well if they be married to another, for the first marriage was never truly dissolved, because marriage can only be dissolved by Him who united, and that is God.

I urge everyone here to guard against the worldlimindedness which infects our hearts and minds. Seek help if you need it, do not let it fester within your heart or mind for it will grow and will have detrimental effects on you, your spouse or future spouse, and lead to all manner of fornication and could lead to eternal damnation.

Let us, then, dear Christians, guard our hearts and our marriages, that we may be children of our Father in heaven, and that Satan may never lead us down the path of destruction paved with lust and fornication. O Lord grant us purity and strength by Thy Spirit in Thy Word. Amen.