



Genesis 2:19-25 – Sex
A Sermon Preached by Rev Philip Sowerbutts
At Castle Church, Stafford on 16th January 2011

The story's told of a Minister who was getting fed up that all his sermons were falling on deaf ears. When he got home from church one Sunday, he said to his wife; "It's hopeless, they don't listen, they don't care, I could literally preach about anything and it wouldn't make a difference." His wife looked at him and said "well, why don't you put that to the test? Preach about something bizarre and obscure next week." So he told his wife that he'd planned his next sermon on the grand theme of 'riding a bike.' And so, next Sunday morning, the service started as usual, they sang a hymn said a few prayers and the ministers wife led the small children off into the vestry for crèche. As he climbed the pulpit to deliver his sermon on 'riding a bike' he suddenly had inspiration..... he would preach on sex! He put his 'bike-riding' notes to one side and preached the most unbelievable sermon all about sex. It was funny, moving, challenging and the congregation listened with rapt attention. After the service over coffee, one of the ladies went up to the ministers wife and exclaimed "I must say, your husband was absolutely fantastic this morning, the best I've ever heard him." The Ministers wife looked back at her puzzled and replied; "I don't know why, he's only ever done it twice and one of those times he fell off!"

But, I suppose if any subject's taboo, if there's any subject that you shouldn't talk about publicly, it's definitely sex. That's a subject for behind closed doors isn't it? Well, you'd be absolutely amazed how much the bible talks about sex! It's probably in the top 10 subjects mentioned in both the old and the new testament. But, for one reason or another, you hardly ever hear it preached on! Why? Well, I suppose the preacher might be embarrassed to talk about it, or the congregation might be too embarrassed to sit and listen. I hope that's not the case with you this morning!

So then, where do we start? Well, we need to start at the beginning..... literally! The bible starts talking about sex in Chapter 2 of Genesis! Put into context, we read in the first couple of chapters of the bible that God's the one who created everything. Now I don't want to get sidetracked into a debate about whether God created the world in 6 days or not, that's not what we're talking about this morning. But, let me just say that if you were to read these chapters in the original Hebrew, you'd see that *most* of it's written as a poem, not a science text book. That's not to say it is or isn't historical truth. I think, if God really is God, then He could do things in *any* way He wanted! He could create the work in 6 seconds if He thought that best! No, to get hung up on *those* sorts of questions is just to miss the whole point of the passage and that is, that God is the one who brought the earth into being. He's the one who creates, and who sustains *all* of His creation. And we read, that after He made everything, God saw that it was 'good' And when he gets to the very pinnacle of his creation, humans, we read that God says it was '*very good*'

And so God gave Adam this garden, Eden, which we read, was the most fantastic place it was literally perfect and everything in it was utterly perfect! On top of that, man had a fantastic, perfect relationship with God His creator. Things just couldn't get better than this! And, in our passage this morning we saw how God created woman as a *companion* to be with man. And as they lived together in this garden, that too was just perfect. Their relationship with each other was utterly perfect. And in the last 2 verses we read this...

Genesis 2:24-25: For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

So, living in this place of paradise, in perfect relationship with each other and God, we read that they became one flesh. They had sex. They made love. And on top of that we read that they were completely naked and they felt no shame in front of each other.

So, the first thing that we see about sex in the bible, is that God created it. It was part of His original blueprint plan of creation for man and woman to enjoy in perfection! On top of that, there was no embarrassment, no sense of shame, no sniggering or smut about simply *being naked*.

Do you see? God's plan in creation is that sex is great! He created it for us to enjoy in absolute perfection. Now, sadly, in a way, that goes *against* what most people *think* the bible has to say about sex! They have this notion that the bible has a real downer on sex and we should never talk about it. We should suppress our sexual appetites and, if possible, never do it! But that's just not the case! In fact, if you were to flick forward in your bibles to a book called the Song of Songs, which is around the middle of your bible, you'll find an extended love poem, of a man to his wife.

But it's not just a love poem, it's an *erotic* love poem.... in the bible! Do go home, get your bible out and read it! You might not relate to some of the images the guy uses, he talks about her breasts being like gazelles! But what you *do* get, is the sense of this long stream of erotic feelings he has for his missus!

So, if God's really pro-sex. Why is it such a taboo? Why's it such a problem? Well, the answer to that, comes in the very next chapter, in Genesis Chapter 3. Because, in *that* chapter we read how man and woman fell away from their creator God. They disobeyed Him, and fell into sin. And when *that* happened, absolutely *everything* that God created good and very good, all the things He created 'in perfection' became twisted mangled and out of shape. They became a poor, dim reflection of the thing that God created them to be. Instead of creation being perfect, sin ruined all that perfection! The Psalms tell us that, because of sin and the fall, all creation literally groans! Eco-systems became out of balance, we have pain and sickness. Mans perfect relationship with man was shattered with the effects of that being seen in war, in selfish evil dictatorships etc.

But of course sex, and mans perfect relationship with woman wasn't immune from that process of ruination and fall. So sex, the beautiful fantastic wonderful gift that God had created for us to enjoy as much as we like, was also twisted and mangled out of shape! It started quickly because in Genesis 3 verse 7 we read

Genesis 3:7 "Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realised that they were naked so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves."

Do you see? In just a few verses, they go from feeling *no* shame to feeling shame and embarrassment about their nakedness. But as we look back over the years since then, we've seen God's perfect creation of sex, horrendously distorted in all kinds of ways. What God planned to be perfect, between one man and one woman, has been spoiled beyond recognition. For example, what's known as the oldest profession, prostitution is simply selling God's special free creation gift of sex for profit. Then we have pornography doing the same. The pornographic industry in America alone generates over 4 billion dollars in revenue each year! And a recent study suggested that between 50-70% of men and 30-40% of women access internet porn regularly. Then there's other horrific ways it's been twisted, when you think about the horrors of paedophilia or how men and women have extra marital affairs and are unfaithful to husbands and wives etc.

Of course the list of ways that sex has been twisted and mangled away from God's beautiful original blueprint plan could go on and on. We could probably stand here with a flip-chart and list

lots of others. But, what's the result of all this? Well, people might say pornography is a bit of harmless fun, or a fling, an affair is not that bad, everyone makes mistakes! Or prostitution, well, they're simply providing a much needed service etc etc. But at the end of the day all these things and lots of others besides are just ways that have mangled God's perfect wonderful gift of sex.

How does that play out? Well, simply each act that goes against God's perfect plan is sin that inevitably leads to brokenness, guilt and fear! The husband or wife that finds out that their spouse is having an affair or who's addicted to internet porn very often become broken people with deep feelings of betrayal, jealousy, lack of trust and, of course feelings of personal inadequacy. And if you look at it from the other side, the people involved in for example making porn? What's the effect on them? Well, Luke Ford, a reporter for CBS news in America did a report on the adult film industry and he said he found that, and I quote:

"Most girls who enter the porn industry do one video and quit. The experience is so painful, horrifying, embarrassing and humiliating for them, they never do it again."

So, do you get the picture that we have painted for us in the bible? God created sex. He thinks it's great. He wants us to really enjoy it! But because *sin* came into the world, what He created as perfect has been marred and the result of that is, that when it comes to sex, when we get involved in it in ways that *aren't* part of God's original blueprint plan, very often the result is brokenness, guilt and fear.....etc etc!

If that's right, then what can we do? Well, I think the key's found back in Genesis 2 Because as Christians we live on *this* side of the cross heading towards the day when everything will be perfect again, just like it was in Eden, the day when Jesus comes back. And so, what we really need to do is get back to the makers blueprint for sex! Remember what that is? Sex is great, God made Sex and wants us to enjoy it as much as we like!

But God, in His love and in His wisdom put up some really important boundary markers for that enjoyment. Why? So that we can enjoy it to the full *without* all the brokenness & guilt etc. And so, what He does is, throughout the bible is tell us, very carefully and clearly what those boundary markers are, starting here in Genesis 2. Let's read those two verses again:

Genesis 2:24-25 For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

So, do you see? The number 1 boundary marker is marriage. Notice it says man will leave mum and dad, be united to his wife (or.. if you like get married) and *then* they become one flesh... ie they have sex. Notice, that's the gender, man and woman and that's the order of doing things. And *anything outside* that boundary marker isn't part of God's perfect blueprint plan. It's a plan that runs right through the bible. Jesus picks up on it in His sermon on the mount, Paul picks up on it when he's writing to the Corinthians etc.

Now you might be thinking "hang on a minute, this is 2011, we're a bit more liberated today. That's not the kind of society we live in any more! Everybody does it now!" Well, that might be true but it doesn't make it any less God's perfect blueprint plan and anything away from that plan will inevitably lead to brokenness, guilt etc in all kinds of different forms.

I know a couple where the husband after 23 years of marriage is currently on the brink of a nervous breakdown. Why? Because he can't come to terms with the fact that before he was married to his wife, she had one particular sexual partner that he compares himself with. 23 years of hurt, most of it hidden and suppressed! The story could be repeated hundreds of times with different nuances.

And so, we're called to live within God's boundary markers. He didn't give them to restrict us or our enjoyment of sex, He gave them to set us free to enjoy His perfect fantastic gift of sex! And if we do stay within the boundary markers, sex will be as God planned it to be. Go outside the markers and we'll have difficulty. It might not be immediate or even obvious. It might even never even be spoken about between couples but it's there. And if we really love them, these are boundary markers that we should be teaching our children so they too can enjoy sex as God's perfect creation gift.

Well if that's what the bible says, how can we respond to God's word? Maybe for some we need to *start* by saying sorry to God for obvious ways that we've gone against His perfect blueprint plan for sex. Maybe you've never done that, or never even thought you needed to! And, for anyone who's living with brokenness, guilt or fear because they've experienced some of the things that we've been talking about, then the good news is that there's a way out of it and there's total forgiveness available. How's that possible? Well, if you're a Christian, the reason you're a Christian is because Jesus hung on the cross for you. He died so that you can be forgiven. Sometimes we get to feeling that what *we've* done is beyond the pail, it's something we just have to live with! But that's not true! There's *nothing* that can't be forgiven by God. Absolutely nothing! That's a promise that's there for any of us through what Jesus did on the cross.

There's a terrific verse in Romans that talks about the kind of forgiveness we receive when we're trusting Jesus....

Romans 8:1-2 there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.

Do you see that? NO CONDEMNATION! Not 'well there's a little bit of condemnation left.' And the result of that is, that there's a way back to restore what was broken. When there's an acceptance that forgiveness is needed, then God doesn't just leave it at that, he wants to heal broken lives and broken relationships. And that healing power's available through the cross.

Prayer

There is almost no avoiding the brokenness of the world around us. When we talk about our creator God, and the gift of human sexuality, we immediately see the ways that sin has corrupted this gift. It's a source of shame and heartache for some, and a source of religious judgment for others. Let's acknowledge that together as we pray:

Lord in creation, you have given us many gifts. In marriage, you've given us the gift of love, the gift of children, and the gift of the marriage bed. We thank you for your good gifts, and acknowledge you alone as the author and creator of these good things. But like all of your gifts, sin corrupts. We have wasted your gifts in casual sexual relationships. We have taken the beauty of intimacy and cheapened it into pornography. We've found countless ways to corrupt the one-flesh relationship of a marriage covenant. We've allowed lust to fill our hearts and minds, and dismissed the virtues of fidelity and faithfulness.

Forgive our sins, Lord. Lead us in obedience, by the power of your spirit. Help us all to honour the marriage bed, and keep it pure. Help us to raise our children to value it as you do. Help us to purify our hearts and minds, treating it as beautiful and valuable, even when the world around us treats it as casual, and sells as a commodity. Only by your grace can our hearts be changed. Even as we pray for mercy, we remember the cross, and the invitation to find grace at your throne. We boldly come to you, sad for our mistakes, and rejoice in the good news that in Christ, we are made new, we are forgiven, and made pure. Amen