

Trinity - 1 July 2018
Reading: SS 4:1-5:1 & 1 Ti 4:1-5
'Good Sex'

Good luck, Mr Gorsky.

- **Ill - 'Good luck, Mr Gorsky.'**
- Now, funny story, but sums up common secular view of God of Bible and views on sex. In common secular view, God anti-sex; big 'Mrs Gorsky.' **Ill - Sam Harris, 'new atheist', said church spent 'two millennia demonizing human sexuality to a degree unmatched by any other institution, declaring the most basic, healthy, mature, and consensual behaviours taboo.'** **Darrel Ray, in book 'Sex & God,' 'Humans love sex. Sex is the social glue of the human species. It takes heavy-handed training or trauma to kill a person's sex drive. Religion has that power.'** **On this view, religion - and Christianity and Christian God in particular - anti-sex.**
- Though wouldn't want to admit, wonder if view crept into Christian thinking, too. Know in minds God pro-sex, but in practice find hard to believe or accept. E.g. think of way treat SS! SS kind of racy + therefore surprised in Bible. **Ill - 'Sealed section.'**
- If that us - or that you - SS will be good medicine today. Because more clearly than any other part of Bible, think, SS shows God profoundly pro-sex. Sex good gift from God. Far from being anti-sex or anti-pleasure, God pro-sex + pro-pleasure, because invented both! More broadly, God pro-creation: *everything* God made good and be received with thanksgiving. Ultimate proof given of fact that raised Jesus to life in real, physical body. God committed to physical world, so much so will one day save in new creation, and Jesus' raised body first-fruits of that creation. If want to know where headed today, that where headed.

God is pro-sex

- First of all, God pro-sex, and SS shows us why.
- Listen to how man and woman describe each other in *Song*:
 - First, man describes woman: **4:1-5**.
 - At first imagery looks v. strange. If took description literally, woman would look like this (**slide**). What babe!
 - But not how works. Taking just one part of each image + applying to woman. E.g. 4:2 '*Your teeth are like a flock of sheep just shorn, coming up from the washing*' doesn't mean teeth 'woolly + all over shop,' but 'really white'. So, woman describing *lovely eyes, flowing hair, perfect teeth, red lips, even face, graceful neck, soft breasts*. Knockout.
 - Woman describes man in same way: **5:10-16**. Clearly finds v. attractive.
 - Rest of song full of sensuous imagery like this: lots of descriptions of bodies and delights of seeing, touching, tasting, hearing and smelling. Clearly more than 'just good friends' and romance more than just puppy-love, all holding hands and gazing into each other's eyes. Sexual. And God clearly approves: v. positive view of sexual body.
- All imagery paves way for description of first time man and woman have sex. Note progression in 4:12-5:1.
 - **4:12**. Woman 'garden,' but 'locked up'; 'spring enclosed,' 'fountain sealed.' Man desperately wants access to garden of woman's body and to enjoy but, until lets, shut out.
 - **4:16**. Woman does invite man into 'garden', and does so with delight.

- **5:1.** Consummation: man enters 'garden' and enjoy together, in sex.
- All talk of sex as 'garden' meant to make think of *another couple* in garden together, Adam and Eve. God puts man + woman in garden of Eden and tells to become 'one flesh' (Ge 2:24), i.e. have sex. Happily oblige! **Ge 2:25** '*Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.*' SS glorious example of this sort of joy. Man + woman thrilled by each others' bodies and so make 'one flesh' in sex. SS depicts in 'garden' to remind of Ge 2 and to make point: something of paradise in sex. In sex, as if man and woman been able to sneak back into garden of Eden, pre-fall, and have love as always meant to be: joyful, free, and innocent. SS clear: sex good.
- **App -**
 - **Now, sometimes as Christians have hard time believing this. Know in head sex good but, somehow, still find selves getting uptight about in odd moments. Can't quite bring selves to use proper names for body parts. Tut-tut when hear certain songs on radio when if SS set to music would sound much same. Find hard to think Jesus could been married and led normal married life without that somehow diminishing as Son of God. Yet sex really is good. God made as good gift to humanity. Made for to enjoy. Didn't have to. Could made sure reproduce asexually, like aphids. Could made sure maternity wards just places where people go to subdivide, not give birth. Could made sex just for reproduction, not pleasure. But didn't. Why? Because loves. Loves giving good gifts. God pleasure-loving God and loves making pleasures for us. Point: *God not killjoy.* May be non-Christian here today and think God anti-fun. Ill - HL Menken 'Puritanism: haunting suspicion that someone somewhere may be happy.' But not true. God loves fun. Ill - CS Lewis, 'God hedonist at heart.' Loves pleasure. Why made sex.**
 - **Doesn't mean God saying anything goes in area of sex; that SS licence for some kind of sexual free for all. If think SS something someone dug up from Woodstock rather than Bible, let burst bubble now: man and woman married. Will explain why in week; for moment just take word for it that sexual bliss describing married sexual bliss, not some other sort. But still doesn't mean that, if unmarried, can't appreciate beauty of opposite sex. Or if married, can't recognise attractiveness of person other than spouse. Difference between recognition of beauty and lust. E.g. when walking down street and see someone attractive, and struck by attractiveness, that in self not wrong. Natural reaction to beauty in God's world. Trick is in what do next. Right thing to do next go, 'Whoa, gorgeous! Good work, God!' Then eyes back + power on. Wrong thing to do next take *second* look: lust. Sex good, but made for within limits.**
 - **Of course, for some of us this will be v. hard to hear. Single + Christian and, as such, committed to life of celibacy until and only if get married. Single + not Christian but, either because of own scruples or just way life worked out, not in sexual relationship. Married, and so feel should be able to enjoy kind of sex *Song* describes, or something like, but for one reason or another marriage not like that: sex dried up, not fun. Or worst of all, whether single or married, been abused or for some other reason carry huge trauma or guilt when comes to sex, and all this talk of sex as good just seems like bad joke at best, or agony at worst. What hope God hold for? Won't skip ahead too far: next week will be looking**

at sex + single and week after difficult but crucial topic of sexual abuse and domestic violence. But what will say God aches with aches. Knows what like to miss out on good gift of life: Jesus single. Weeps with those experiencing brokenness of world, whether that be cold marriage or devastation of abuse. Done something about. Sent Son, Jesus, to die for sin of world to bring justice to wronged + healing to hurt. Exactly what looks like will see more in next two weeks. But for now, let be enough that God wants joy for world also wants joy for you, not forgotten, and that offers forgiveness + comfort in equal measure to those need.

God is pro-creation

- Fact is, God not just pro-sex; pro-creation. Not pun: not talking about kids! (Note: won't talk about two v. important topics - kids and SSA - during series. Not because not important - are - because SS doesn't mention. But will deal with topics another time and if want to find out more about now, check bookstall). But reason God pro-sex just because pro-creation, generally. Loves *everything* made in physical world, not just sex. Turns out, God in favour of 'stuff.'
- See that in SS.
 - SS not just celebration of human love and human bodies but whole physical world. Look at things lovers compare each other to: wine, perfume, flowers, fruit, trees, animals, kings, jewels, metals, cities, armies, sun, moon + stars. Do precisely because *beautiful too*; world full of beautiful things to compare lover to! Full of rivers and mountains and stars and gazelles and other good things. Overall impression is of lovers who not just in love with each other but whole world in which love takes place.
 - Garden theme points in that direction, too. Brings back to first lovers, Adam and Eve, and world in which lived: world which over and over affirmed as 'good' and which once people added 'v. good.' God loves physical world.
- That affirmed in NT. Speaking in 1 Tim 4 against teachers forbid marriage + certain foods, Paul retorts by saying such prohibitions 'taught by demons' (4:1). For things '*God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth. For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer.*' (1 Ti 4:3b-5) All created things good, if received in right way: with thanksgiving and prayer. God won't have bar of dualism shaped so much of Paul's culture + still influences ours, where nonmaterial things better than material things: philosophy better than brick-laying; books better than footy. No, God loves physical world and everything in.
- Loves so much will preserve forever. This world, in its current form, passing away. One day, Jesus will return in judgment and destroy. But won't abandon once done. Instead, will replace with new heavens + new earth, 'new creation'. What John sees at end of *Revelation*: not bodiless, formless 'heaven', but world, and city, and jewels and rivers and . . . garden. *Revelation* picture language so may not look literally like this, but will definitely be physical, in some way. And everyone who trusts in Jesus will be raised from dead, physically, to live in new creation too.
- **App - Hope of Christian not heaven. Lots of people think is: die, go to heaven (disembodied place where souls live with God), and that where stay, forever. But not. Is place called 'heaven', and is where Christians who die before Jesus returns go to and are now if already died. Happy there, and with God. But not**

final hope of Christian. Because until receive new, resurrected body, new life still incomplete. People not just souls in bodies, waiting for release to higher, spiritual plane. Rather, souls + bodies, and only fully selves when two united. Why resurrection of dead so important. If heaven all have, no real life after death. But if bodies rise, physically, and rise to life in new, physical creation, death really has lost sting. Heaven wonderful waiting room; new heaven and new earth hope.

- Might sound crazy if not Christian. How on earth can believe? How can believe God going to renovate + recreate entire universe? *Because seen bit of it already.* Already seen first 'clod of earth' of new creation. What is it? Jesus' resurrected body. When God raised Jesus to life, physically, not just doing magic trick, or even proving cross worked in payment for sin. Rather taking first step in last part of plan: establishing new creation can never be spoiled by sin and death again. Jesus' body 'first cab off rank', 'first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep' (1 Co 15:20). When returns, new creation will follow. That why Jesus died + rose again: not to save souls for heaven, but to raise - body + soul - to real life in real world will never die again. How much God loves world made.
- **App - All good things in life - sex, food, music, travel, love - these things make life worth living. These things death will take from and which make death so bad. Reason fear death and reason so bad because world God put in so good, so full of good things. Don't want to miss out. Want to not miss out? Want to know how can have life, forever, in real, good world? Trust in Jesus. Confess sins have no place in new creation will bring. Trust when tells death on cross paid for all, no matter what done. Live in hope that just as raised Jesus to life in body, so will raise to life in body, to live in real world, with, forever.**
- Let's pray.