

Trinity - 8 July 2018
Reading: SS 2:16-3:11 & 1 Co 7:1-9
'Married Sex'

Why is sex only for marriage?

- Welcome to Trinity. Today, third sermon in five-part series on SS, 'The Good News About Love.'
- Recap where been so far:
 - First week introduced book + saw what was: passionate romance between man and woman. Love song about *true romance*: promise-keeping love that finds origin in God ('flame of Yah', 8:6), but also points towards love of God.
 - Then last week saw romance between man and woman not just puppy-love but sexual. Healthy sexual appetite for each other + all too happy to satisfy! If scenes in SS to make swoon, also ones to make blush.
- But as saw last week, also not sex without limits. As will show today, man + woman married. Sex good but sex for marriage. Question want to ask today: why? Why sex only for marriage? Some critics of Christianity said v. repressive. **III - Jeff McBride, writing in popular website 'The Good Men Project,' writes of church teaching that sex only for marriage: 'That advice didn't prove very helpful to me at the time. My anxieties over how to reconcile repressive teachings of church with my naturally developing sexual desires led me to physical and psychological breakdown.'** **Hardly positive review: saying concept 'no sex before marriage' gave breakdown!**
- If single Christian, may not be convinced of, but may still wonder why God teaches. Not worried will give breakdown, but hard, and lots answers given for why should wait not necessarily that convincing. Why God teach hard thing?
- What will be looking at today. Want to say: answers God gives good news, for both married and single people.

'Do not awaken love until it so desires'

- As said last week, SS full of sexual energy, and lovers clearly want to have sex with each other. But not desire without restraint. Refrain in SS occurs 3x: *'Daughters of Jerusalem, I charge you by the gazelles and by the does of the field: Do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires'* (2:7, 3:6; 8:4). In lead up to each refrain, lovers been getting close: lying next to each other, cuddling (2:3-6); dreaming of bringing man into mum's bedroom (3:1-4); lying next to each other again, at mum's house, and been drinking! (8:1-3). But just as things start getting racy, woman calls time-out: *'Do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires.'*
- Point: time for what want to do, but this not it. Clearly, as good as sex is, for lovers not something to be enjoyed without limits. But what are limits? When should love 'desire' to be awoken?

A wedding!

- Short answer: when get married.
- After two chapters of standard dialogue, *Song* in 3:1 moves into a dream sequence. **3:1**: on bed but looking for one heart loves. (If want even more clearly, **5:2a** *'I slept but my heart was awake'*).
- Like lot of people got something big ahead - getting married - anxiety dream. **3:1-3**. Dreams lost man and has to go out into streets at night to find, asking watchmen

if seen, but to no avail. But then finds, takes to mum's house, things get bit PG, then calls timeout. So far, so familiar.

- But then scene shifts, in surreal way that dreams do. Suddenly, woman goes from streets and squares of Jerusalem at night to being thrust into wedding procession, in middle of day. Whose it? King Solomon's! Street-side to royal wedding! **3:6-11**.
- Everything about impressive. Flanked by guard of best 60 soldiers in Israel. Riding in *amazing* carriage: timber of Lebanon, posts of silver, base of gold, cushions royal purple. Most amazing of all, made self! '*King Solomon made for himself the carriage*' (3:9). **III - Reminds of Owen Wilson's character in 'Meet Parents', where hand carves that gazebo.** Most impressive of all: king! Got crown on + getting hitched! Weddings of kings things people like to watch! **III - Estimated globally hundreds of millions people watched Harry + Meghan's wedding.** This wedding 1000BC equivalent: **3:11**. Social event of season.
- But here thing: not actually Solomon getting married. This woman's dream about own marriage to humble shepherd, man, who is to her as if king.
- Look at **3:6**. Answer? **3:7**. That what sees when asleep. But who is 'coming up from wilderness' when awake in real life? **8:5**: '*Who is this coming up from the wilderness leaning on her beloved?*' Her + man. Who sitting next to king on chariot at wedding? **6:12** '*Before I realised it, my desire set me among the royal chariots of my people.*' Her: 'desire set *me* among royal chariots of people.' What dream? Dream of woman for wedding day, to king, shepherd.
- What all this got do with what talking about: whether can have sex before married or not? Simply this: even when dreaming, only after man and woman married that have sex, not before. Married in ch.3, sleep together in ch.4, not other way around. In fact, in many ways storyline of whole song. Longing for sex within marriage (1-2); dream about sex within marriage (3-6), then actual sex within marriage (7-8). Point clear: as good as sex, only once married that love (i.e. sex) should 'awaken'.

Sex and marriage

- So where up to: even sexiest book in Bible, SS, says sex should be for marriage. But why? Get *that* says, but *why*? For answer to that, need to come to NT, to 1 Co 7.
- Apostle Paul writing to church in Corinth and got questions re: sex + marriage. Big question underlying all others: marriage for sex, or sex for marriage? Let explain.
- On one view, reason get married (or one big reasons) so can have sex. I.e. sex such powerful thing only safe place to have in security of lifelong, exclusive relationship call 'marriage.' In that sense, marriage 'for' sex, i.e. safe place to keep.
- Certainly some support for this view in this passage. Paul says that, because sexual sin such temptation, people married should have sex within marriage to keep from straying outside (7:2). And for those not married, although fine for them to remain single, as Paul, if cannot control selves sexually should get married so can have sex safely and not sin (7:8-9).
- But although part of picture, not whole picture, or even main picture. Main picture not so much *marriage for sex*, in that marriage *serves* sex, but that *sex for marriage*, i.e. sex serves marriage. See that in **7:3-5**. Husbands and wives told to fulfil 'marital duties' to each other, i.e. have sex with each other. Then makes shocking statement underpins command: couple's bodies belong to each other. I.e. wife's body doesn't just belong to self, but to husband, and husband's body doesn't just belong to self, but to wife (7:4). Goes completely against grain of modern, individualistic culture. But passage clear: if married, body co-owned, by self + spouse. Really gets to heart

of relationship between sex + marriage. Marriage not just two individuals entered into mutually useful arrangement to meet own personal needs. People *given selves to each other*. Unity. So, when have sex, do so because good for this unity, this third thing called 'our marriage' (7:4). When decide not to have sex for time, e.g. to make time for prayer, make choice because will be good for *marriage*, not just *individuals in* (7:5). Point: not *individuals* need sex; *marriages* need sex. Why sex for marriage, because only marriages need.

- **App - When get that, totally transforms way view sex + marriage.**
 - **Transforms way think about as married:**
 - **Marriages need sex; one of fuels run on. Paul counsels couples to have sex regularly:** *'Do not deprive each other except perhaps by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then, come together again.'* (1 Co 7:5). **Does so because sex good for marriages.** Ill - Remember being kid and mum explaining sex to. Said term 'make love' not euphemism, lit. 'makes love.' **Does! Releases all sorts of hormones make couple grow closer to each other, including oxytocin, so called 'cuddle drug' helps couples form strong emotional bonds. So, good for married couples to enjoy healthy sex-life. Of course, what healthy married sex-life looks like will differ from couple to couple + according to stage of life. No ideal level of frequency, and as people get older other sorts of intimacy, like cuddling + holding hands, become more important. But point same: marriages need sex, because sex for marriage.**
 - **Transforms way think about as singles:**
 - **Fact is, as individuals, don't need sex. Not like food, water or air. Don't die if don't have. In fact, can live perfectly healthy life and never have sex. Not message culture feeds. According to culture sex fundamental individual need.** Ill - David Marr, responding on Q&A to suggestion unmarried people shouldn't have sex: *'You people have no idea how unspeakably cruel. That nonsense, poetic nonsense, "All God's creatures, and we love you." But you can never have sex. You have to live your life an entirely sterile life without sex.'* **For Marr, sex v. much individual need, without which life entirely sterile, and so to say some people can't have unspeakably cruel. But wrong: individuals don't need sex. Not individuals need sex; marriages need sex. Because it for marriage that sex created. Not as if God dreamt up sex first, and then only when released what volatile stuff was that had to invent marriage as safe place to keep, as if in damage control. Bit like arguing humans invented petrol and only when realised how flammable made combustion engine as safe place to keep. No: invent petrol to *fuel engine* not engine to *restrain petrol*. Exactly same with sex + marriage. Not that God invented sex and then thought up marriage as way to contain. Rather, God invented marriage and then invented sex as way to fuel. That why marriages need sex, not individuals.**
 - **That means, if single and having sex, or engaging in any kind of sexual activity, got to stop, at once. Bible's advice for anyone on topic of sexual immorality - single or married - one word: 'flee.'**

Pointless! Burning fuel got no use for. Ill - Like standing at petrol pump filling up jerry can when don't own car! **Dangerous: because burning fuel in place not meant to be, will get burned.** If single, don't have sex, because marriages need sex, not individuals.

- **But just because individuals don't need sex, doesn't mean don't want.** That desire both natural and good. Man and woman in SS want sex so much have to be told three times to cool. Paul says wanting to have sex perfectly legitimate reason to get married. So, when feel longing but can't act on because single, OK to feel frustration and grief at that. Grief natural response when miss out on something good in God's world.
- **Think married people got to get much better at recognising this about singles.** For them, not having sex one of costs of following Christ + hard. Single people not asexual: have exactly same sex-drives as married, but with crucial difference can't act on! That hard. So, married people, help single people by way talk. Don't say dumb things. 'So lovely, how come not married?' Thanks for rubbing salt in this particular wound. 'Sure someone just round corner for.' How do know when don't? 'Better off alone anyway, so much freer as single.' True, more flexibility in single life, but no one free to do whatever like whenever, unless totally selfish, so comfort with limits. 'Too fussy.' That right, my fault. Rather, treat single people as what: normal people with problems don't have, just as they treat you as people with problems don't have.
- **But final thing want to say on: fact that marriages need sex, not individuals, doesn't just mean shouldn't have sex, but also that nothing wrong with if not having sex.** That is, not some kind of less than fully functioning human being because not having sex. Again, not message culture feeds. In fact, opposite. Culture says - **because individuals need sex, not marriages - if not having sex something wrong with you.** Ill - Exactly view expressed in recent article in SMH by man writing about how felt to be virgin. '*Until I lost my virginity my overarching romantic motivation was, "If I don't have sex soon, will be a laughing stock. I will be a total loser. She has to have sex with me, because if she doesn't, I will be less than nothing."*' Ill - '40 Year Old Virgin.' Very title meant to be joke: something intrinsically hilarious about someone 40 years old never had sex. **Some feel this.**
- **But nothing weird about if virgin, or not having sex.** Ill - If don't own car, no one thinks weird don't buy petrol! **Jesus never had sex. Paul single. Can be completely well-rounded person + celibate.** What makes worthwhile not marital status but spiritual status; not relationship with others but relationship with God. Must be worthwhile in eyes, because sent only Son, Jesus, to die for sins. All of us treated appallingly. Yet comes and dies for anyway, to forgive sins + reconcile to one need relationship with most, God our Father. Knowing + accepting that basis for truly authentic identity, not whether married or single.

- Let's pray.