

THE BIG IDEA: The cross means your past is never more powerful than your future.

The Take-Off

Today, we wrap up what has been a first for many of you: talking about sex in church.

The goal in this last message isn't to learn something new as much as it is to remember something old.

Let's start by briefly recapping what we've talked about to this point:

- In week 1, we learned that the purpose of sex is INTIMACY, and specifically, intimacy in marriage. We saw that God gave us this amazing gift in order to allow us to bond physically, spiritually, and emotionally with one person for life, and many of us were amazed to learn that God thought this through all the way to the level of designing our brains to call for chemicals to be released during intimate moments. 20 seconds is all it takes for a woman's body to release oxytocin, and that - just like vasopressin in a man - acts like superglue between the 2. That's why The Gathering is the home of the :19 hug!
- In week 2, we found out that the problem of sex is IDOLATRY. In other words, we make way too much of the physical part of sex and elevate it to the place where that alone can make or break a relationship instead of Jesus. The result is that we become selfish lovers instead of servant lovers, and so we become the very opposite of who Jesus was in the most important relationship we'll ever have on this planet.
- Finally, we learned last week that the perversion of sex happens INCREMENTALLY and that all of us are perverts; not in a "lead story on the news" way as much as a "I know what I need more than God" way. It is that attitude that ultimately leads to small steps now away from God's plan that leads to giant leaps later into places we never thought we'd go. Examining our lives and practicing the daily discipline of following Jesus are 2 ways we can stay close to his desired path, and he has provided us with the word of God and the people of God in order to catch the blind spots before they become sore spots.

Now, what all of this means is that there has been plenty of "yuck" to go around, right?

Plenty of eye-opening moments that made most of us wish that we could have a do-over, because most of us need one.

But of all the emotions you may have felt over the last 3 weeks - shame, regret, anger, any others - the most important one to walk away with today is hope, and there's one very important reason why: the cross.

Let's read 1 Cor. 6:9-11 and see how the cross can give us hope as we seek to purify sex once again.

1. Our past is real (vv. 9-10)

- a. You'd be hard pressed to find any 3 consecutive verses in the Bible that paint such a bleak, then beautiful, picture than these three.
- b. We start with the first 2, and they're not pretty.
- c. One of the things that I love about God and the Bible is that they don't hide the ugly. That's one of the compelling evidences that we can actually trust the Bible, right?
- d. You and I would never mention the bad stuff, but God did, and here's why: the cross was necessary because our past is real.
- e. This is such a big deal that Paul - under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit - penned the command "do not be deceived."
- f. Never for a moment, Paul says, think that you were good and just needed a little help to be better, or think that you were just struggling with some weaknesses.
- g. No, Paul makes it clear that we were sinners who would never inherit the kingdom because of sin.
- h. And the reason why so many of us try to ignore our past is because we've allowed Satan to convince us that our identity comes from our activity.
- i. I'm a bad person because I've done bad things, or I'm a good person because I'm doing good things.
- j. No, no, no. We were sinful people doing sinful things.
- k. Don't ever leave the MESS out of your MESSAGE. The good news is only good because the bad news is real.
- l. Never shy away from it, because the minute you forget who you were is the minute you begin to forget who you are and who you are becoming.

2. Our future is bright (v. 11)

- a. I'm reading from the NIV, and as bleak as vv. 9-10 were, v. 11 starts with one of the best sentences in the Bible: "And that is what some of you were."
- b. "Were" - your past is, well, past! Over! Finished!

- c. Satan wants use to get our identity from our activity, but Jesus wants us to get our identity from HIS activity!
- d. And what exactly has Jesus done? He's done his best work on the cross, and verse 11 uses 3 buts to help us see the significance of it:
 - First, he made us clean (we've been washed - gets rid of the dirt on us)
 - Second, he made us holy (we've been sanctified - gets rid of the distance between us)
 - Third, he made us right (we've been justified - gets rid of the dishonor around us)
- e. And of course, when we really understand the power of what Jesus did on the cross, we start to see that it's impossible to have a new identity without having new activities.
- f. That's why Paul goes on in the next 9 verses to talk about living differently in our sexuality.
- g. See, Jesus' activity changed our identity, which in turn will change our activity.
- h. Everything we did in vv. 9-10 made us seem less valuable, but everything Jesus did in v. 11 restored it!
- i. We were bought for a GREAT price, and the purchase price sets the value of what was purchased!
- j. You are valuable, and that's just part of your new identity.
- k. Romans 6:6 says that you're a free son or daughter, not a slave to sin.
- l. Romans 15:7 says that you are accepted by the God of the universe!
- m. John 1:12 says that - in Christ - you and I are children of God!
- n. We can't afford to forget that.
- o. [Clip from Lion King]

The Landing

The cross is everything. The cross allows us to see who we were, but even more to see WHOSE we are!

The Big Idea says it like this: **The cross means your past is never more powerful than your future.**

I think in the area of sexuality, God looks at us and says, "You are more than what you have become! Remember who you are!!"

New identity leads to new activity! God's valuing us leads to us honoring God!

Will our enemy try to bring us down with past choices - esp actions before the cross? Of course.

But I love this old saying: when Satan reminds you of your past, remind him of his future.

And remember the future that the cross has secured for you!

The cross means your past is never more powerful than your future, and that our new identity changes everything.

Let's close this morning - and this series - with a powerful reminder of that.

[Identity clip]