

The King's Speech: Committing Breakfast in your Heart

Matthew 5:27-32

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One of the most tragic stories in the Bible is found in 2 Samuel chapter 11. It is the story about King David's adultery with Bathsheba. Now as you know David was a great man of God. He was a deep worshipper. He wrote many of the Psalms that we still use in lyrics of our modern worship music. The Scriptures even tell us he was a "man after God's own heart".

But David was still human, he struggled with sin like you and me and the sin of lust dug its claws deep into his skin and he gave into it and it brought pain and brokenness to his life and the life of his family for years to come.

One evening David found himself on his balcony overlooking the city when he saw Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, bathing. Uriah wasn't home – he was out fighting for David. And instead of turning his eyes away in respect and guarding his own heart David indulged his lust and his imagination.

And he used his position to get what he wanted; he brought Bathsheba home, slept with her and she got pregnant. Now guilt always follows sin so David, having to cover his actions up, had Uriah murdered so he could marry Bathsheba – and he got away with it.

The worst part of the story is that throughout this entire event we never read that David felt any conviction or remorse. Sure he had guilt, he knew his actions were ugly and he didn't want to get caught, but that's not remorse or repentance.

And so God in His love and mercy towards David sent Nathan the prophet to confront him. And the way Nathan did this was unique. He didn't just come in guns blazing and accuse David.

Instead he told him a story about a poor man who had only one lamb, and this lamb was more of a pet than a farm animal – eating from his hands, playing with his children and sleeping in his arms. And then a rich man who had thousands of sheep came and stole the poor man's lamb and killed it for some guests who came to visit.

And when David heard the story he grew indignant with anger. He was a shepherd so this made sense. And he said "As surly as the Lord lives this man must die for his crimes."

And Nathan waited for that moment to turn the tables on David. And he spoke words that have passed down through the ages "You are that man" – "you are the man."

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If you have been with us over the last several weeks you know that we are in the middle of a series through the Sermon on the Mount – which I have titled “The King’s Speech.” In these three chapters Jesus tells us what it means to live as His disciple. And His words recorded here are just as powerful and relevant today as the day they were spoken.

Now, I should warn you that we are talking about sex today. And that may make some of us uncomfortable especially if your kids are sitting with you and you have been telling them you got them from the sale rack at Wal-Mart. You’ve been warned. But the reality is Jesus had a lot to say about sex, especially in the context of discipleship, and we need to hear it. So would you pray with me?

[Pray]

If you haven’t already please open your Bibles to Matthew 5 starting in verse 27.

If you divide Jesus’ Sermon into sections and the Beatitudes form the introduction we find ourselves in part one at this time in which Jesus talks about what it means to live under a fulfilled Law.

If you were here three weeks ago you will remember that Jesus fulfilled the Law in two ways. First, He fulfilled it by obeying it in a way we were never able to obey for ourselves. Jesus was perfect, He never sinned, and so He fulfilled all the Law’s requirements. In other words He earned God’s acceptance by living up to what God required. And the good news for us is that through His death and resurrection He gave what He earned to us. He took our sin upon Himself and clothed those who follow Him with His righteousness. He fulfilled the Law.

But second, Jesus fulfilled the Law by showing us how God wants us to live. And that was the intent of the Law all along. In the Old Testament the Law set the standard for how Israel was to live as God’s children – they weren’t supposed to murder and they weren’t supposed to commit adultery and all sorts of other things. But while the Law focused on outward actions, God always cared more about the heart behind the rules than the rules themselves.

Many people think the God of the Old Testament was all about the rules and then Jesus changed all this with His New Commandment to love, but this isn’t true. 1500 years before Christ, Moses wrote:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

(Deuteronomy 6:4-5)

and

Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. (Leviticus 19:18)

These are the words Jesus quotes in His supposed “New Commandment:

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” (Matthew 22:37-40)

So none of this was new. Just like Jesus didn’t come to abolish the Law or the prophets He also didn’t come to set up a new Law. Instead He came to fill the Law up to what God originally intended. And God never intended for the people to appease Him by avoiding murder, adultery, theft or dishonesty. He always wanted His people to image Him by living lives of love towards God and their fellow man.

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And so in the first section of The King’s Speech Jesus gives five examples, mirroring the five books of Moses’ Law, to describe what it looks like to be God’s disciple.

And our text today is looking at the second of those five examples – this time Jesus deals with adultery.

Now while the Pharisees and the rest of Jesus’ listeners – like us today – would have agreed adultery is a bad thing, they were blown away with the examples Jesus gives because both lust and divorce were not thought of as having anything to do with adultery.

So let’s look at the two examples Jesus gives and see what it means to live under a fulfilled law as far as adultery is concerned.

Let’s start in verse 27:

[Read Matthew 5:27-28]

Exactly parallel to the murder section just above, here Jesus starts with the totally agreed upon point that adultery is bad and then proceeds to show how law abiding, rule following, church attending people are more guilty of adultery than we like to think.

When good church folk like us get together and talk about sexual sin we are almost always talking about someone else. We are talking about the woman down the street, who cheated on her husband, or those people who give themselves over to

pornography, or those loose people who jump from partner to partner and think nothing of it. In a nutshell we think adultery is someone else's problem.

But Jesus' words in verse 28 are the parallel of the Prophet Nathan's. David sat in smug self-righteousness, handing out judgment until "you are the man" brought him to his senses.

And here Jesus looks at people who consider themselves innocent and says "you are the man, you are the woman."

Sure most of us have avoided the outward act of adultery, but Jesus says adultery happens in the heart long before it ever becomes physical. And God knows our hearts and holds us accountable for what is bubbling below the surface and out of sight. Jesus says lust is adultery.

Now as soon as we start talking about things that happen in our head it is important that we define what we are and aren't talking about.

Just like there is a difference between noticing a nice car driving down the street or a nice house down the block and coveting the car or the house, Jesus isn't talking about noticing that someone around you is attractive. Attraction is a good and God given thing.

But He is saying that when we cross that line from noticing to lusting we are guilty of adultery. To lust is to see someone attractive and then linger on them instead of respecting them. It is to undress them with your eyes, to turn them into an object you want to use for your own pleasure. Lust is imagining or planning a sexual action in your head with someone other than your spouse.

C.S. Lewis once joked "any man who looks at ham and eggs in the morning and lusts has already committed breakfast in his heart" – adultery happens in our hearts long before we act it out physically.

And by showing us this Jesus filled the Law "don't commit adultery" up to what God meant all along. What God expects from those who follow Him is holiness in the mind not simply holiness in action.

Now Jesus' words are directed specifically at men because men have a specific weakness for lust – amen? But the principle here applies just as much to women. Really no one has kept their thoughts pure 100% of the time. Virtually everyone has allowed their mind to flirt with lust from time to time. And Jesus says everyone who has ever looked at another person with lustful intent has already committed adultery with them.

Now if you are the one person in a thousand who has a really low libido and has never lusted, resist the temptation to dwell on that because Jesus' main point is to uncover the lie of self-righteousness.

One of the greatest complaints against Christians I receive from my non-Christian friends is that the church is full of people who give the impression they have never sinned. Now we all know we have sinned, and actually everyone outside the church knows we have sinned as well. But the accusation is that church folk give the impression we haven't sinned – we are often self-righteous.

But the foolish reality about self-righteousness is that it doesn't even exist. No one has any self-righteousness. None of us have any righteousness in and of ourselves that is worth a bag of salt before the Holy God of the universe. All of us are sinners in need of God's mercy and forgiveness whether we think so or not. And here Jesus is saying adultery isn't someone else's sin, you are that man; you are that woman. God's standard is perfection and you, and I, fall short.

And we fall short because adultery is not fundamentally a physical act but something that happens in our heads.

The reality is we can get married as virgins but have a mind full of extra-marital sexuality. We can restrict ourselves to only watching PG rated movies but live with an x-rated imagination. We can be outwardly faithful to our spouse but have a wandering eye. Adultery is not someone else's sin, Jesus says "You are the man; you are the woman."

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The second point Jesus makes is that God cares about people keeping not rule keeping. Look with me at verses 31 and 32.

[Read Matthew 5:31-32]

Here Jesus continues to talk about adultery, bringing up a second unexpected way people commit it.

Now I once wrote a 50 page paper on Jesus' views on divorce but you will be happy to know that most of what Jesus says here is just a parallel of what we have already concluded: namely it is easier to commit adultery than we are used to thinking – here divorcing your spouse for any reason other than his or her adultery makes you guilty of adultery. And even marrying a divorced person makes you guilty. So lots of us are adulterers by this standard. But there is something more going on here than even that. Here is the context behind Jesus' "It has been said" quote:

1500 years earlier Moses had written:

If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds something (anything) indecent about her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house... (Deuteronomy 24:1)

Now two things about this: first in that time women were considered the property of their husbands and so divorcing a spouse was something only men could really do – that's why Moses and Jesus both speak specifically to men. But second you probably noticed that this verse ends in the middle of a sentence. In fact it goes on to clarify that this certificate of divorce was for the woman's safety, but the terrible thing was that Moses' words were being used out of context to allow men to divorce their wives at the drop of a hat.

And to become a single, non-virgin woman was a death sentence in ancient Israel. Women, divorced without evidence that they were innocent, could be stoned on the spot, and if they weren't stoned they still wouldn't be allowed to return to their father's house because of the shame of the whole event. On top of this no one else would want to marry her for the same reason. Really a divorced woman's most viable options were starvation or prostitution.

And so Moses penned these words to protect woman from this fate. At least a divorced woman with a certificate of divorce would not be stoned and might even be allowed to return to her parent's home.

But first century men were abusing this. They were using Moses' words to justify divorcing their wives so they could indulge their lust. When someone more attractive came along they made up a reason to divorce their wife so they could pursue this new piece of skin.

But Jesus turned all this on its head. Instead of divorce being the easy and faultless way out of a boring or tired situation; Jesus says divorce results in adultery. First the man is guilty of making his wife commit adultery because she has to become a prostitute, and then if he marries a divorced woman he commits adultery himself.

Now culture has shifted, wives are no longer viewed as property – and that's a good thing, but this same low view of marriage is still present. Today most divorces are "no fault" divorces where "irreconcilable differences" are cited as the main reason a husband and wife can't get along. And the result is the lives of women and men and especially children are being destroyed by the selfishness of divorce.

God isn't impressed when we find technical loop holes that allow us to get divorced while injuring our spouse or children. And that's because God cares about people keeping not rule keeping. His law has always been "love God by loving your neighbour."

Friends, if you are in a marriage that isn't happy get on your knees and meet Jesus. While there are a few legitimate reasons to get divorced don't make that your focus. Get help to make loving God by loving your spouse the focus. That's what it means to be Jesus' disciple.

Now, don't get caught here thinking "well what about if he is abusing her by bla, bla, bla." I'm not talking about those situations. I'm talking about how we try to make excuses for why divorce is ok in our situation because we don't want to put the work in to look like Jesus.

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At this point probably lots of us are feeling the weight of Jesus' words. The reality is none of us have any "self"-righteousness to be proud of. All of us are murdering, adultery committing sinners worthy of God's punishment.

That's the bad news. But that's not where Jesus leaves us. How many of you need some good news right now?... I do. I need good news because I am just as guilty as any of you.

The Good News is that Jesus knew we would fall short of His standard and so He built the answer to this problem right into His sermon.

As we have said before the context for everything Jesus says in these three Chapters is the very first verse of the Beatitudes

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:3)

The poor in spirit are those who aren't holy and recognize it. They know they fall short, they know there is no hope for them outside of the substitutionary atonement of Jesus. And those people get the kingdom of heaven.

Are you poor in spirit? The alternative is that you think you have your life together. You think you are pretty good and God owes you something. This was what the Pharisees thought. They put all their energy into being good in an effort to put God in their debt – and they made everyone around them feel unholy in comparison. But Jesus tells us:

Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees... you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:20)

Jesus is never impressed with “self”-righteousness because He sees it for what it is – legalistic rule keeping instead of people keeping. God can’t be impressed on a technicality, He demands a pure heart. And this is what Jesus gives us when we come to Him poor in spirit crying out “Jesus I can’t do it myself, I’m not good. I don’t live the way I should. I don’t even want to live the way I should. I need help.” - Not Nikki needs help, I need help.

And Jesus tells us that people who come to Him for help receive the kingdom of heaven. And that is good news. Amen?

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But Jesus doesn’t leave us – even there. When we come to Him for salvation He moves into our hearts and begins changing us. He turns murdering Saul into Paul; He turned fearful Cephas into Peter; and He turned lusty David into a man after His own heart, but none of these men went back to where they had fallen. The evidence that Jesus has entered us is that we take the grace we have been given and live lives transformed on the outside. And our actions prove we have in fact received grace. Following Jesus is no game.

Look at verse 29 and 30 that Jesus sandwiches between His two examples of adultery.

[Read Matthew 5:29-30]

Now Jesus isn’t presenting physical body mutilation as the answer for how to avoid adultery. None of His original disciples saw His words this way, and while Origen, one of the early Church Fathers did take this literally, after the fact he recognized his error. And that was that body parts don’t make us sin. Sin happens in our hearts and we just act it out with our body.

Really if we all cut off body parts we used to sin we would just be a pile of toes and belly-buttons. And we’d still be sinners!

So Jesus isn’t talking about physical mutilation, but He is talking about taking extreme steps to avoid sin. Once we come to Him poor in spirit and in need of His salvation, He moves into our hearts and empowers us to change. But we must work out our salvation with fear and trembling. We must use His empowering strength to cut sin out of our lives at any cost.

And that is what Jesus is talking about here. If you are trapped by lust, or if you are tempted to divorce your spouse, or perhaps have already done so Jesus’ words present a two step process for salvation. First come to Him in repentance as a sinner, and second “stop it”. Do not let adultery rule your life from today forward.

Your right eye is important – in fact vision is most commonly cited as the last sense a person would want to lose. Your right hand, assuming you are right handed, is also important. I know my left hand is basically a meat stick – good for nothing.

And so Jesus says “I forgive repentant sinners – freely by grace, but you must prove I’ve forgiven you by living transformed.” Take any action steps necessary.

That might mean if you find yourself watching stuff you shouldn’t on TV then maybe you need to get rid of your TV.... Oh, come on. I need some entertainment... Jesus says it is better to lose something incredibly valuable than for all of you to be thrown into hell.

But you don’t know my spouse: he’s a miserable person to live with. I can’t stand her habits. I don’t I love him anymore. Jesus says there is no sinless way to get out of your marriage early and people who look like Me, who have My Spirit within them don’t live in sin. Take any step necessary to avoid living in adultery.

Friends, what Jesus calls us to is high. He expects those who come to Him for salvation to be conformed to His image – our old ways die and we must start to look like Jesus at any cost. If we don’t we prove we’ve never been saved. But the good news is that Jesus, by His grace, enables us to do the very thing He has commanded. He does call us to the high road, but He also empowers us to walk there. Amen?

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How does this hit you today? Are you guilty of adultery? Perhaps you never thought you were but today in light of Jesus’ words you realize this is you. What do you do now?

The answer is two things. First repent. Tell Jesus you are a sinner in need of His salvation. And second allow Jesus’ empowering strength to help you stop. Cut out whatever is leading you into sin no matter how much it costs. Cut it out and throw it away.

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3000 years ago David stumbled blindly into a cycle of lust and adultery and murder that began to eat him from the inside out. It hardened his conscience; it destroyed his family and it left him only a shell of the man he once was. But God, in His mercy caused Nathan to speak the words “You are the man” and David recognized his guilt. His soul softened, he let go of his non-existent self-righteousness and he repented. And the holy God of high standards transformed the sinner David into the man after God’s own heart because that is the business God is in. And He offers that same transformation to any sinner here who cries out for help and then turns from their sin to embrace His righteousness.