

“Virginites Virtue: The value of waiting until marriage for sex”

Luke 1:26-34

I want to talk today about a topic I have spoken of in youth groups or in one on one pre marriage classes but never over a pulpit. That is the value of remaining sexually inactive until marriage; the virtue of virginity.

Obviously we are still in Luke 1 where Mary is chosen by God because of her heart for worship, her prophetic character and her sexual purity and so our passage lends to this topic but... six or so weeks ago Rebecca and the youth leaders put on a brilliant evening for the youth on the subject of dating God's way and the question of why wait came up during the discussion time at the end.

The 5 panellists did our best to answer the question. We said it causes damage to the person like two pieces of once glued paper being pulled apart. You could get pregnant, you may get a sexually transmitted disease and it dishonours God.

When I left the meeting I thought, wow Rebecca and team well done. It was a good evening but I left feeling that we hadn't dealt with this one question well. Why wait?

You see for those of us who have been around for a while we saw the free love, hippie movement of the 60's and the herpes epidemic of the 70's then the horror of aids taking the planet in the 80's and for us we are inclined to say to our youth, our friends, your nieces and nephews God said don't do it and you could catch all these nasty diseases.

But those answers are not sufficient for pastors, elders, parents, aunts and uncles to give to this generation because the reality is our young adults are raised on the message that when you have sex make sure that it is 'safe sex' and use protection. More than that they are told that there is the pill and the day after pill and abortions in NZ have become common place. So in their context really getting a Sexually Transmitted Disease or getting pregnant is not a great reason at all.

I have been thinking we have to do better. We have to explain the reason why it's a virtue and a value and of huge benefit personally to remain pure until marriage. I became aware also that our bibles don't spell out sexual immorality as clearly as they used to in the old English as well. Let me give you some old words from old translations:

Licentiousness – It is one of the original words used which simply means sex without a marriage licence. Promising to love each other under the moonlight on Bethels beach doesn't count.

Promiscuity - It simply means to break a promise to self, another, or to God.

Fornication and **immorality** also mean sex outside of the marriage covenant and so when we read a passage like Galatians 5:19-21 people may not naturally get it because they don't know what these words mean.

Galatians 5:19-21

People's desires make them give in to immoral ways, filthy thoughts, and shameful deeds. They worship idols, practice witchcraft, hate others, and are hard to get along with. People become jealous, angry or selfish. They not only argue and cause trouble, but they are envious. They get drunk, carry on at wild parties, and o other evil things as well. I told you before, and I am telling you again. No one who does these things will share in the blessings of God's kingdom.

Young adults when you read 'immoral ways' it is talking about licentiousness i.e. sex without a legal marriage licence. No one who is practicing these things will have any part in the kingdom of heaven.

Sometimes people have asked me why God got so upset about Sodom and Gomorrah in the Old Testament and destroyed them? Why is sexual sin so offensive to God?

I would respond to them like this. A person who practices sexual sin though loved by God has already condemned themselves. The people of Sodom and Gomorrah had really given themselves over to all kinds of perverted sex outside of marriage and they were doomed already. Juliette and I saw a documentary on Rabies a couple of months ago and were horrified by this killer disease that will kill the carrier and spreads so easily.

If I as a father had a rabid dog visit my home and I had a shot gun I would not hesitate to kill it. It's going to die anyway and I as a loving father would be determined to prevent it spreading its lethal disease to any of my family or neighbours. It would be a loving and wise thing to do, to shoot the dog. God's dealing with Sodom and Gomorrah was just the same.

At Baptist Assembly they are always trying to resource the local church and on one stand I saw a youth version of Laugh your way to a better marriage by Mark Gungor. These resources are excellent. He says that marriage failure amongst those that remain sexually pure until marriage is only 5% worldwide across the cultures. He also says that young men imprint on their first sexual experience and try throughout life to repeat that in some way and so if their first sexual experience is at a party or in a car there is going to be problems in future relationships. He also said that young women who have meaningless sex as young adults even in marriage struggle to see sex as important or meaningful (i.e. they could go without it).

Putting all that aside let us look at

5 REASONS WHY IT'S WORTH THE WAIT: WHY VIRGINITY IS SOMETHING OF GREAT VALUE.

1. VIRGINITY/ SEXUAL PURITY INCREASES OUR USABILITY TO GOD.

Now it's true that Mary was a worshiper of God. Many say that she had a prophetic spirit within her. This 14-15 year old girl was just human, just a really amazing young lady. She would be horrified that people today sometimes pray to her. That is not what she wanted or what God wants but the point is she was pure sexually, she had never been with a man or been spoiled by a man, and that together with her love for God made her usable by God.

Text Luke 1: 26-34

God was able to use Mary, to give her a high calling because she was a worshiper and she was sexually pure. I am in no doubt that the same is true of any of us today. To remain sexually pure makes yourself available for God's highest calling on your life. If Mary had known a man, if Mary had sinned in the past and was forgiven what difference would that make?

I believe that God would have forgiven her. He would love her and bless her but she would have missed the best that God had for her. So purity in this area increases usability.

2. VIRGINITY/ SEXUAL PURITY DEMONSTRATES YOUR LOVE FOR JESUS UNIQUELY

In the Revelation of Jesus 14 we read of the 144,000 people who God will raise out of the nation of Israel, 12,000 from each tribe, during the times of tribulation. These 144,000 will be sent out by God to perform mighty signs and wonders and lead people to Jesus.

Rev 14:1-5.....

These people who God uses amazingly during the shaking up of the earth during the time of tribulation are described as pure virgins (men and women) who follow the Lamb wherever he leads.

For those of you who are interested in Bible numerology 12 is the biblical number for government. 144,000 obviously is 12 x 12 times 1000. These are a literal people and I think the number will be fulfilled literally and prophetically. But to say that there is 144,000 is to suggest as well that these people are under His government, they are governed by Him and led by Him.

Why does God give us desires and passions which can't be worked out until the days of marriage? I mean isn't that just cruel?

No its not. I believe that especially in this day and age it gives each of us a unique time, a unique period of our lives when we can demonstrate our love for Jesus and our desire to follow Him wherever He goes. In Rev 12 we see the great whore of Babylon which is a city that is just out to seduce you with its merchandise.

I think that every time you are enjoying a great program on TV and the advertisements come on and they are trying to sell you something like Tui brand bear and you are told and see that its brewed by beautiful women, the great whore of Babylon is trying to seduce you and I away from Gods best for our lives. Society, advertising, the internet will bombard you with seductive messages trying to get you to lower your standards.

I have in the years past read stories like Shadrack Meshack and Obednigo with young men, and they say to me, "Russell if we lived in those days and we had to stand for God at the risk of being thrown into the fire, we would have stood with these boys and we would not have bowed down to the golden statue."

Listen to me young men. Every time the fire of passion burns within you and you want to cross that line with your girl friend. Every time you get bombarded with seductive images and you refuse to bow down you are standing with Shadrack, Meshack and Obednigo. In the eyes of your Father in heaven you are a legend in this generation just as they were in theirs.

Every time you refuse to bow down, you refuse to give in you show your love for the Lord Jesus Christ uniquely. You are the legend.

3. VIRGINITY/ SEXUAL PURITY FREES YOU UP FROM SENSUAL SLAVERY

Ephesians 5:3-4

What is interesting about this text is the order of the sins. Firstly there is immorality which is then followed by indecent and greedy behaviour which is then followed by dirty or foolish or filthy words and it occurred to me that this order is the way sexual addictions and perversion starts in a person's life. Initially there is immoral behaviour, but that is only the beginning, indecent behaviour follows as does dirty talk and dirty jokes and dirty language.

When you start to sin sexually you don't just stay with the sin or immorality, which will keep you out of heaven on its own, you commit the first sin and then you get the whole package along with it and that often involves perversion and addictive sexual behaviour.

So avoiding sex outside of marriage frees you from all the rubbish that is going to follow that first sin.

4. VIRGINITY/ SEXUAL PURITY INCREASES YOUR POTENTIAL FOR GREAT SEX

People say stupid things like we need to take a test drive before buying that car. Or we need to live together for a while to see if we are sexually compatible before we decide if we will get married. They are nuts. The statistics show the exact opposite to be true. The more pure the courtship is the greater the sex in marriage and the greater the chance of marriage success long term.

There are many wonderful people who don't ever experience the heights of marital fulfilment as described in the Song of Solomon because they carry problems and distortions that can be traced back to previous sexual relationships outside of marriage.

God does not tell us multiple times in scripture to be sexually pure because he wants to stress us out or make us miserable. The reason he wants you to remain sexually pure until marriage is so that you can experience all that marriage can be. I want to keep you from dysfunction and from getting messed up.

Now if you have messed up out of ignorance or rebellion and you have been sexually active outside of marriage, I don't know if your future marriage can ever be as good as it could be but I do know that God will forgive and cleanse you if you stop sinning today and turn to Him for forgiveness and say today. Your ways are right – I was wrong, I will follow the Lamb. Your sins will be removed as far as the east is from the west. Gone.

I can't tell you just how often marriage counsellors and pastors have to work with folk who cannot enjoy sex fully because of previous sexual activity outside of marriage.

Finally

5. VIRGINITY/ SEXUAL PURITY PROTECTS AND PRESERVES YOUR REAL PERSONALITY

Several times in the books of Proverbs it says that if you sleep with someone you are not married to you destroy your soul, e.g. Proverbs 6:32.

Your soul is not your spirit which will go into eternity. Your soul is your emotions and your mind. If a person sleeps with another or others outside of marriage they destroy their own souls. What that means is that they become emotionally messed up or empty and they lose the ability to relate healthily to others.

A person who practices sex outside of marriage is eroding their own soul. They are doing damage to their mind, their emotions and their personality. A person who has lived an immoral life might be 30 but they look 40 and they feel 50 on the inside.

There is a course phrase we often used to use when kiwis were angry with others. They would say I will take a piece of him, or a piece of her.

Theologically and practically that is exactly what happens when people sleep together outside of the marriage covenant. They lose something in the area of the soul that is never regained.

If you can imagine a person's personality being like the layers of an onion.

Girls if a guy comes to you and says I love you please let me show it to you in bed, what they are really saying is "I lust for you, let me rip a layer of your personality, off your soul." I find with people who have lived immoral lives even if they look OK on the outside, there is a sadness, an emptiness, a hollowness about them. Damage has been done to the soul.

In a marriage the opposite takes place. Two people give to each other and they become one. Like two glasses of coloured cordial, one red and one blue. As each glass is poured into the other the water in both becomes purple. They become like each other. And because no one is being used or taken or treated cheaply and it's under the legal marriage covenant the soul isn't damaged it's in fact built.

In immorality the soul is destroyed. In marriage the souls are joined and built strong. Mum's, dad's, grandparents, aunts and aunties, youth leaders, pastors and elders when you are speaking to the young adults in your families about this topic. Can I encourage you to be well prepared?

Be prepared to tell them the reason why Virginity is a thing of value to be preserved.

It increases their usability to God.

It gives them a unique opportunity for what is probably a short season in life to demonstrate the love for Jesus like the 144, 000.

It keeps the free from sensual slavery

It increases the potential for great sex in marriage and

It preserves and protects their souls – their personalities.