

I ONLY WANT EYES FOR YOU

Sunday February 14, 2010 is Valentine's Day. It is a day made for love. It celebrates coupling. It was inspired in part by the birds of the air. Our European ancestors observed that around the middle of February, birds began pairing, building nests and raising a new generation. On Valentine's Day, a young man may first declare his love for that young woman he has been dating for a time, or may even propose marriage to the one he has already confessed true love. Married couples will declare their love for one another on that day in many and various ways. As beautiful as those sentiments are, it is easy to be cynical about love, commitment and marriage on this Valentine's Day.

Every time I wait in the checkout line in my local supermarket or drug store, I am confronted with images of infidelity, separation and divorce. The tabloids remind me that last month Brad Pitt was 'married' to Angelina Jolie and now apparently he's back with Jennifer Aniston. The breakup of US Senator John Edward's marriage has been splashed all over the news. We learned that he was engaged in a clandestine affair with 'the other woman.' The affair allegedly spanned the time he ran for vice president of the US, as well as the time his wife was receiving treatment for cancer. It is alleged that he conceived a child with the other woman during the time of their affair. Through this whole time, Edwards portrayed himself as a true family man. This litany of infidelity from our recent past would not be complete without mentioning Tiger Woods. It was revealed that this 'All-American' golfer, 'without peer', had allegedly been involved in multiple clandestine affairs. He too was portrayed as a family man; a devoted father and husband. The list of those involved in extramarital affairs goes on and on.

As sordid as these affairs are, they testify to a need deep within us. God created us male and female and placed within each sex the desire or attraction for the opposite sex. This attraction is expressed as a desire to couple with a member of the opposite sex for physical, emotional, relational and spiritual union. Just as the birds build nests and the female lays the eggs from which the next generation comes, so we humans build a life together with our mates and bring the next generation of humans to life. Mankind joins with all other living things as partners with God in the continuation of creation. God has also given us the gift of society so we can live together in a semblance of harmony and safety and our species can overcome the obstacles to life and even thrive. He gave us the family as a building block for human society. The harmony of the community and the continuation of society require that boundaries be drawn. Laws must be put in place which protect citizens from injury to their bodies (including death), their property (from theft and trickery of others), and their reputation from slander. Laws also have to be put in place to protect one's spouse from the advances of another (adultery). However, like all other gifts God has given us, they can be abused and misused by us. We hurt and even kill one another. We cheat and steal from one another. We must also put in place punishments for transgressing these boundaries so that these laws have integrity and others are deterred. Sadly, we regularly transgress these boundaries, including the boundaries of marriage.

The Holy Bible testifies that even God's most loved and trusted Saints committed the sin of adultery. In one case, when the illicit affair produced a child, the adultery and paternity of the child were covered up with murder: 2 Samuel Chapters 11 and 12 tell of the affair between King David and Bathsheba. God promised King David that the Messiah, Jesus, would come from his line. As hard as David tried to hide his transgression, the adultery was exposed. However, David confessed he sinned and God forgave David. He was permitted to marry Bathsheba and from their legal union came the wisest King in the world, Solomon.

It is very easy to judge those who transgress boundaries, especially marital boundaries. We can look down our noses at Brad, Angelina, Jennifer, the Edwards, Tiger and David and Bathsheba with self-righteous indignation. We have not done such a thing. However, Jesus reminds us that, with God it's the thought that counts. Jesus declared that if I, as a married man, even look at another woman with lust in my heart and mind, I have committed adultery with her in my mind. (Matthew 5:28). Ouch! *Guilty*. We can transgress the sanctity of the marital relationship in our minds. The sad reality is, the boundaries of marriage are broken by more than infidelity. They are broken when we spouses ignore one another, and even abuse one another physically and emotionally.

What is the source of all this boundary breaking? It's twofold. First, it is that desire for physical intimacy and union with another; that irresistible force that impels us to seek a partner, sometimes at the risk of losing one's home and spouse. Second, our perception of the spouse we cheat on is diminished in our heart, soul and mind. The shine on our beloved spouse produced by love fades ever so slightly until it disappears. One can even experience distain, even revulsion, at the sight of a once beloved spouse. Sometimes the revulsion and distain is justified, as in the case of physical or emotional abuse. However, in the final analysis, when we cross boundaries we are almost always pulled across the boundaries by the allure of another and pushed across by our negative perception of our spouse, the one for whom the boundary was erected to protect. What are we to do? How can the tractor beam of lust for another which pulls one across the line be broken and the negative view of one's spouse be changed? We need to be transformed. We must look at our spouse with new eyes. We need a miracle.

Jesus went to a wedding some 2000 years ago. The couple was in trouble. The joy of their marriage celebration was in danger of being ruined because they had run out of wine. The shame and disgrace which flowed from the poor planning for the banquet would be perceived by the guests as an omen for the rest of their marriage. Like the party, it would end abruptly in shame because they did not have what it took for the marriage to last. All that changed. But first they had to confess the lack of wine to Jesus. Then Jesus changed some water into wine. Jesus permitted the wedding banquet to continue until its intended ending.

On this Valentine's Day, do you need new eyes through which to see your spouse or beloved? Is your wedding party in danger of ending prematurely because the joy has been pushed and pulled out of it? Do you need a miracle? Jesus is sitting by silently. All He desires is that you confess your problems to Him and to your spouse or loved one. He needs you to say you are sorry to Him first and then your spouse or loved one. He will forgive you and He will give you some steps to take. He will ask you to take water and put it in jars (follow steps found in the Bible) and He will change the water into wine. He will change you and your beloved. Jesus is available for a consultation at a church near you. Ours is located at 1162 Hudson Road on the Westside. We meet Sunday mornings at 10:30!

In Christ,

Pastor Ed Skutshnek