

Come and Become pt. 7: Cultivated Lust

Intro / Recap:

-Matthew 5:3-11 are known as the Beatitudes.

-those verses kick off the first sermon of Jesus' public ministry,,, known as The Sermon on the Mount

-Jesus basically says "*are you: spiritually poor, sad, broken, weak, are you a loser?*"

Good NEWS! ***God is inviting you to be a part of what he is doing in the world***"

-You don't have to be something first. God invites you to **Come** to Him through Jesus just as you are, and he will cause you to **Become** something through following Jesus.

-Then: Jesus gets a little tough.

-Matthew 5:20 Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

-As people we all have a tendency to explain the Rules around what already do or want to do; rather than fitting ourselves to God's expectations.

-(Jacket)

-over the years I have gained and lost weight, but the problem was that every time I needed to wear a suit it didn't fit,,,,, SO I BOUGHT ANOTHER

-then I decided that this is TOO EXPENSIVE,,,,,

-so now I regularly put on the Jacket and if it is snug I need to lose weight so that it fits

-When we turn to Jesus, Salvation and forgiveness happen RIGHT WHERE WE ARE.

-there is nothing you can do to earn that or keep that

-BUT REAL FAITH in Jesus means we commit ourselves to discovering HIS DESIRE FOR US, and then we allow him to transform us, to meet that desire.

-We get Fitted to the Jacket we don't Fit the Jacket to us.

-Finally before breaking from this series we looked at Jesus' words about Anger.

-In Matt. 5:22 Jesus condemned "CULTIVATED ANGER"

-Cultivated anger will burn our lives down and make us incapable of the kind of love Jesus commands for us.

-That brings us to today where Jesus also warns us about Cultivating other things beside anger.

(food tease picture on screen once I mention C.S. Lewis)

-Illustration: C.S. Lewis -talked about how weird it would be if you went into a dimly lit theater full of people, and suddenly the curtain went up to reveal a table, and you could tell things were on the table, but it was covered with a cloth.

-then teasingly and suggestively somehow the cloth was slowly peeled back revealing first a hint of a salad plate with a little green showing

-eventually all the green was exposed and the crowd went wild,,,, people were screaming and throwing money at the stage

*-over the course of a few minutes the cloth provocatively and progressively revealed an entire meal that **nobody ever actually ate,,,,** but they were WORKED INTO a frenzy SEEING IT AND THINKING ABOUT IT*

-You would conclude that something had gone terribly wrong with the normal appetite and consumption of food in these people.

-he went on to say that something similar to that had gone wrong with western culture and our collective sexual appetites

Problem: Our society has normalized the Constant Cultivation of Sensual Desire.

-The desire for sex, and to be sexy is constantly invoked to sell products, to entertain, and to capture attention for things that are not even remotely related to it.

-Even when we are not looking for it we are constantly awash things intended to awaken desire in us.

-it is not just inadvertent

-We mentally consume things in printed material and on screens, that we would never feel comfortable just staring at in real life, with real people.

-examples:

-some of you men look at magazines like sport illustrated swimsuit edition and because it is not "nudity" you feel it is ok,,,,, I have a dare for you::: Go to the beach or pool with your wife, and find women who look like the ones in the magazine and sit down in front them and look at them the way you do in the magazine

-just see if that is weird or if it feels normal and healthy

-you will need to check your life insurance policy first

-ladies you aren't off the hook,,,,, reading romance novels or watching movies with these super romantic hunks, we sometimes live vicariously through that medium.....
-wishing our lives were so romantic or we had men pursuing us who looked or acted like the men in these fantasies

-Many people would say *“there is nothing wrong with looking at the menu, I am not planning on eating”*

-just window shopping -this is just research -I can look, I just cant touch

-But did Jesus think that was true?

-Matthew 5:27-32 “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ 28 But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. 29 If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. 30 And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell. 31 “It has been said, ‘Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.’ 32 But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her the victim of adultery, and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

Jesus challenges our narrow definition of sin.

-The religious leaders of Jesus day very narrowly defined adultery.

-they knew just how close to the edge of the cliff they could drive without going over

-at “this point” you are holy and righteous but at “this point” you are an adulterer

-Where do you think they wanted to hang out at? :)

-truth is we try to find that point also

-Remember the point about the suit Jacket.

-Jesus challenges our tendency to fit right and wrong around what we already do.

-The people of Jesus' day were trying to interpret God's law in such a way to make everything ok except a few very specific things.

-HERE IS WHY JESUS MENTIONED DIVORCE in this context

-because their Narrow definition of Adultery allowed them to get RIGHT UP TO THE POINT of the ACT ITSELF but not to fulfill the desires they had cultivated

-in this verse Jesus deals specifically with men because they had the power, but today this would apply to us all

-these people would live in a fantasy world, thinking about all these people other than their spouse

-younger more beautiful people. -more intriguing than their spouse

-more romantic. -more interested. -more interesting. -hotter -buffer....

-eventually there was no passion, desire, or even tenderness for their own spouse, they had cultivated all of that and directed it toward other people

-so in their mind, rather than commit adultery they would simply divorce their wife and marry the one they had cultivated desire for.

-they felt ok about doing this because technically they didn't commit the act of adultery:

-You know what Jesus said???? **TECHNICALLY , SCHMECHANICALLY**

-HE SAID YOU ARE MORE GUILTY

-they are guilty of the sexual sin they have been cultivating in their heart all along

-they are guilty of making this woman and any future partner guilty of adultery as well

Jesus says the sin starts much further back, and when unchecked it carries us somewhere we would never chose to go.

-These people's jaws would have hit the floor when Jesus said that even looking at someone lustfully is the same as adultery.

-first they would have said, "it is impossible not to look in such a way"

-many would have argued that it was their right to think whatever they want

-their thoughts aren't hurting anybody (Jesus would have said, isn't hurting your wife that you are currently divorcing? This divorce started years ago in your thoughts and fantasies)

-many would have accused Jesus of being Repressive

-that this is natural and these desires should be explored and expressed

*-can I respond to this:: **acting on desires does not resolve them** it strengthens future desire ,,,, and fuels progression*

-We will come back to this line of thought in a few minutes.

-Jesus said unchecked Lusts eventually carry us somewhere.

-In those verses Jesus establishes a continuum that starts in our thoughts but progresses until it culminates into action.

-what is required to produce excitement in us is always progressing (**we get desensitized**)

-thoughts and desires eventually progress into some form of action

-but the nature of the thoughts themselves is always progressing

-and the nature of the actions resulting from the thoughts is progressing as well

-we start off with things that seem relatively innocuous but end up pretty bad

-Jesus warns that if we don't interrupt this continuum our whole body will be thrown into hell.

-Hell = Gehenna - a well known valley just outside the city wall of Jerusalem

(Gehenna 1 picture)

-a few ancient WICKED kings sacrificed children there to pagan deities

-so Gehenna became figurative language for the eternal destination of Wicked People

-it also became the garbage dump for the city of Jerusalem

(gehenna 2 picture)

-there were always fires burning there as people disposed of things

-there was always the presence of Putrid and Rotting things

-So in one sense being thrown in Gehenna represented your life being tossed on the Garbage heap of society: wasted, ruined, worthless, putrid.

-people were done with you and had discarded you

-In the other sense Gehenna was a physical picture of the eternal condition of a soul that refuses God.

-our rejection of God empties our life of his goodness, light, blessing, and protection and leaves us to our own means which ends badly for us.

-Jesus intended Both Meanings of Gehenna here.

-cultivating lusts isolate us from God.....

-that isolation from God drives us further into the lusts we are trying to derive pleasure from; which will further intensify our isolation

-this will drive us to actions that will ultimately WRECK OUR LIFE here and now

-it very well could "so isolate us from God" that we reject faith in Jesus entirely and therefor end up in eternal judgment

-Is Jesus being overly dramatic?

-let me read you a few names and you tell me:

-R. Kelly. -Harvy Weinstein. -Kevin Spacey. -Jeffery Epstein -Michael Jackson

-Tom Brokaw. -Charlie Rose. -Jimmy Swagart -Bill Oreilly. -Eric Greitens

-These are people who have accomplished Great Things but their legacies were either completely undone or permanently Tainted by the fact that they had a Continuum of Desire that started off as No Big Deal but it ended with their life on the TRASH HEAP of culture.

-we cannot speak to how it ends for these in eternity, but do you still think Jesus is being dramatic in his warning?

-It is not just famous people, the cost of Cultivated Lust is real for average people also.

-how many marriages end up smashed on the trash heap because of :

-infidelity. -emotional affairs. -addiction to fake online sensuality

-How many marriages stay together but are Emptied of Joy, Real Intimacy, and Passion because we have trained our desires for other things, and now our spouse is no longer the source enjoyment God intended.

-We are setting ourselves up for misery when we train our desires on things that are not available to us in real life.

-or if they are available, they will carry us outside what is good for us, our spouse, our family

What starts in the heart needs to be stopped in the heart.

-Jesus was not literally telling us to cut off body parts to avoid sin.

-he was giving a metaphor of stopping Lust at the real source

-*notice there are a few body parts conspicuously absent from the chopping block*

-would gouging out your eye or cutting off a hand stop you from fornication or adultery?

-No

-Jesus was widening the scope of our discussion, so that we could see where the problem actually starts and address it there.

-Sin does not begin with what we do with our privates, but rather with our eyes and our minds.

-The hand symbolizes everything we set in motion through our actions.

-*that lingering exchange with a coworker. -purposely walking past a desk you don't need to*

-*friending of old flings on social media*

-*its the choice to spend time with that friend that pays a little TOO MUCH ATTENTION to you but it makes you feel special...*

-*we sometimes choose to be in places or around people **because they awaken desire in us and that desire feels good***

-In doing this we are Cultivating Lust

-we are training ourselves to want things that if we get them, will BREAK OUR LIFE

-Once we have Cultivated desire around things other than our spouse we have doomed ourselves to perpetual dissatisfaction with our real life.

-Proverbs 5:15-18 Drink water from your own cistern, running water from your own well. 16 Should your springs overflow in the streets, your streams of water in the public squares? 17 Let them be yours alone, never to be shared with strangers. 18 May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth.

-God's desire is for the husband or wife of your youth to continue to be a fresh spring that brings blessing, joy, and even desire into your life like a reliable well.

-*dont drink water from the gutters of the streets...*

-Thoughts, desires, or actions may not look or feel like Adultery but they plant seeds that grow into something.

- they are either going to push you toward being satisfied by your own well
- or they will push you to drink from every gutter and puddle you see**

-The thoughts of today seed the patterns of tomorrow.

-Story of brushfire:

- i once lived in a church owned house -the maintenance man developed a brush pile in my yard
- in frustration I decided to burn this pile. (mice and snakes.....)
- huge piles of grass clippings. -the sheer volume of sticks would have made a towering inferno
- so I had a plan for a "CONTROLLED BURN"

-with a hose I wetted down this pile in sections thinking that only the section that I left dry would burn

- that fire burned down beneath the wet surface areas and spread to the whole pile,,, grass included
- imagine the smoke..... -there were news helicopters.....*

-I am terrified that I will get a ticket so I am trying to put the fire out

-I am spraying it with hose but the problem is that the water is not getting down beneath the surface where the flames are smoldering

-I had Karen soak me with the hose and I jumped onto this smolder pile of burning brush and grass and I start RAKING down trying to expose the fires so Karen could put them out with the hose

-eventually the heat and smoke were too much and I had to give up,,, the fire never went out,,, because of how wet it was burned FOR DAYS,,, my shoes were melted my yard was a mess,,, and I probably lost lung capacity that night...

-The time to stop that fire was before I started it. Once it is burning the amount of control I have is drastically reduced.

-I started that fire with a single match,,,

-When did I have the most control over it? There was moment in time when one breath would have done it