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Epiphany Lutheran Church, Castle Rock, Colorado
Epiphany 2, Series B
Saturday, January 16th, 2021
Sunday, January 17th, 2021 (Sanctity of Life Sunday)

Sermon: “My” Body?

Texts: 1 Corinthians 6:11-20

Focus: Our bodies belong to Jesus, who made them and paid for them with his blood.

Function: That they would resist the sinful, sexual desires of the flesh.

Structure: Text-Application

Locus: “I believe that Jesus Christ... has redeemed me... with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, that I may be His own...” (SC, 2nd Article of Apostles’ Creed).

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ!

Amen. “You can’t tell me what to do!” “It’s my body, my choice.” “It’s my body, so I’ll do whatever I want with it.” These are the cries of the libertine spirit that has seized our country ever since the so-called Sexual Revolution of the 1960’s. So long as any particular activity takes place between two consenting adults (or three or four!), and nobody “gets hurt,” then we have a right to do whatever we wish with our bodies. At least, that’s the thinking of our post-modern American culture. We have made consent and tolerance the hallmarks of sexual ethics.

If I want to overeat and indulge in food, who are you to tell me that I’m a glutton? If I want to turn my skin into a canvas full of tattoos and piercings, why does that matter to anyone else? If I want to get stoned or high or drunk, then that’s all right—so long as I have a designated driver.

If I want to have sexual intercourse with a member of the same sex, then that’s my right. If I want to have sex with multiple sexual partners, that is socially acceptable as long as we use “protection” and practice “safe sex” (even though the only really safe sex is that which takes place inside of marriage between one man and one woman).

If a woman gets pregnant and wants to have an abortion, then who are we to stand in the way of her “terminating” her pregnancy? It’s her body, her choice, isn’t it? And if some kid decides that he is actually a she and wants to “transition” into becoming a woman, we should just go ahead and let that happen—and ask taxpayers to pay for it, right?

And if I get diagnosed with a terminal illness, why must I suffer through chemotherapy or letting nature take its course? If I’m going to die anyway, don’t I have a right to “take” my own life? And shouldn’t the state allow me to do this as easily and painlessly as possible with help from my doctor? After all, it’s my body, isn’t it?

In the case of abortion, science makes clear that the fetus growing inside of a pregnant woman is *not* just another part of her body. The unborn child has entirely different DNA than its mother. He or she is a *different* person “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Ps. 139:14) in God’s image with his or her own right to life. When a woman elects to have an abortion—or a man in her life forces her to get one—they kill another human being. Abortion is murder. And even if it’s legal in our country, that doesn’t make it morally right.

But what about all those other activities that we do with our bodies? Why can’t we do whatever we wish with our bodies so long as no harm comes to others? The answer in Scripture is simple: because “your” body is *not* your body, and “my” body is *not* my body. Our bodies do not belong to us. They belong to the Lord. As St. Paul writes in our epistle, “The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body” (1 Cor. 6:13b, ESV).¹ Our bodies belong to Jesus because he *made* us and *paid* for us with his blood. “Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You

¹ All Scripture references, unless otherwise indicated, are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version.

are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body” (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

“You are not your own,” the Bible tells us. Your body is not your personal property to do with as you please. “You are not your own.” Your body is not a plaything or a toy to indulge in fleshly pleasures. “You are not your own.” Nor is your body a shell to be discarded, an unimportant or inconvenient barrier to real spirituality. “God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power” (1 Cor. 6:14).

Our bodies belong to God, and he cares deeply about what we do with them. “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has *done in the body*, whether good or evil” (2 Cor. 5:10). Bodies matter (all puns intended). God created human beings as body and soul *together*, and his original intent before Adam and Eve’s fall into sin was that our bodies and souls *remain* united for eternity. That is why God sent his Son Jesus to save us with *his* body by dying on the cross and rising again to new life.

Even now, the risen and ascended Lord Jesus has a fully human body. True, Jesus has a *glorified* body that can walk through walls and disappear and reappear at will. But he still has hands and feet that can be touched and a face that we will recognize. He can still eat fish and touch his disciples. Jesus still has flesh and blood, breath and bone—just as he did on the day he was born. And God promises that when Christ returns on the Last Day, he will raise *our* bodies from the dead to reunite them with our souls. In the new heaven and new earth, we will have bodies because bodies are meant to feel grass between their toes. For God, the body is *not* an afterthought. It is core to who we are.

Bodies matter to God, and so they matter to us. God cares about what we do with our bodies, so we also must care and take care of our bodies in ways that please God, serve our neighbors, and protect the weak and vulnerable.

The Corinthian Christians to whom Paul wrote argued that “all things are lawful” for us (1 Cor. 6:12). That’s another way to say, “My body, my choice.” The particular problem in Corinth was that newly converted Christians were having sex with prostitutes at local temples. Prostitution was common and socially acceptable in the ancient world (as was having sex with young boys), but God’s Word clearly condemns it, not only for its association with idolatry and fertility cults, but for its perversion of God’s design for sex in marriage. The Corinthians argued that they had a right to do whatever they wanted with their bodies.

So the Apostle Paul had to remind them that their bodies did not belong to them. Rather, they belonged to Christ, who died on the cross to redeem their bodies and save them from sin, death, and their own sinful flesh. What’s more, now that they were baptized, their bodies actually had become *parts* of Jesus’ Body. “Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?” (1 Cor. 6:15a). “For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body...” (12:12-13a).

As Christians who make up the Body of Christ, how can we take those body parts and use them for sinful, selfish, evil desires? That’s blasphemy—a sacrilege!

Furthermore, as Paul will point out in chapter 7 of his letter, our bodies not only belong to Christ but also to our husband or wife, whether present or future (1 Cor. 7:4). So what we do with our bodies now, even before we are married, has an impact on our later marriage. “Or do

you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, ‘The two will become one flesh’” (6:16).

Did you know that, strictly speaking, there is no prohibition in the Bible against pre-marital sex? It’s true, there isn’t. In fact, in a biblical worldview, pre-marital sex doesn’t even exist! Why not? Because, according to Scripture, having sex with somebody *makes* you married. That is why Paul quotes the book of Genesis, which teaches that when people come together in a sexual union, they become *one* flesh (v. 16; cf. Gen. 2:24). You can only be one flesh with one other person. So if you had sex with somebody back in high school or college before you were married, even if it was only a one-night stand, in God’s eyes, you are still married to that person (Deut. 22:28-29). In other words, if you ever had sex with somebody else before you got married, then every single person you had sex with afterwards was a form of adultery—including your current spouse! Now *that* is a sobering thought for Sunday morning.

The Good News for all of us sinners is that God sent Jesus to save sinners. Christ redeemed us from our sins of the body with his own body on the cross—his hands and feet pierced with nails, his bloody brow, and his bleeding back and side. Jesus saved us—body and soul—with his body, his blood, and his dying breaths. “By his wounds, you have been healed” (1 Pet. 2:24). So no matter what sins you have committed *in* the body or *against* your body, Christ died to forgive those very sins, including abortion, adultery, addiction, and homosexual desires. Your sins were washed away in the blood of Jesus when you were buried and raised with him in Baptism.

“You have been bought with a price” (1 Cor. 6:20). What we do with “our” bodies matters, because they *aren’t* our bodies. They belong to God our heavenly Father, who created us. They belong to Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who bought us the price of his own blood on

the cross. They belong to the Holy Spirit, who dwells within us as in a holy temple for the Lord. And because we are joined together in the Body of Christ, the Christian Church, we have a responsibility to our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ for what we do with our bodies.

Your parents, pastors, and teachers, in particular, have a responsibility to show you what the Scriptures say you can and cannot do with your bodies. What gives me that right? God does! And so does this congregation, which called me to preach and teach the Word of God. Yes, that even means telling you what you can and cannot do in the bedroom. And as my brother or sister in Christ, you have that responsibility toward me.

We have no right to do whatever we wish with “our” bodies. We cannot eat, drink, smoke, or inject anything we want. We have no right to mold, cut, or shape our bodies in any which way. We cannot have sex with whomever (or whatever) we wish. We cannot kill unborn children, and we have no right to “take” our own life. After all, it is not yours to take.

Your body belongs to God. “You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body” (1 Cor. 6:19b-20). In the name of the Father and of the Son and of ✠ the Holy Spirit. Amen.