

Sex Appeal

Matthew 19:1-6

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In 1985, I was at Fuller Seminary in Pasadena, California. During Cecil M. Roebuck's class on pastoral theology, we had been discussing the roles of men and women in the family, and in God's family, the Church. At one point in the class, I raised my hand and gave a lengthy disclaimer on how I'd always been in churches with women elders who were exceedingly capable, and how I really didn't hate women, etc., etc., etc.—but I still didn't quite, all the way completely see how to understand passages like 1 Timothy, chapter 2, where Paul talks about men speaking on behalf of women in church and exercising authority in leadership because of some strange reference to Adam and Eve. I didn't understand in light of the current argument that men and women are just the same and, therefore, should always fulfill the same roles in social institutions. And I said, "Would someone, kind of, help explain that?"

Well all of a sudden, hands shot up all over the classroom. And for the next fifteen minutes, students stood up and gave speeches about how Jesus loved us all "just the same" and so we are all "just the same," how we're all created equal, and how Paul and Jesus liberated women (which is totally true), and how oppressive, male patriarchies have abused women (which is also totally true).

Finally, Professor Roebuck stood up and said, "There's time for one more comment." And this guy stood up. I think he was looking for a date, I don't know. But he

stood up, and he said, “I’d just like to apologize to all the women in this class, that in this day and age, you would have to sit and endure such a comment in an evangelical seminary.” He apologized for me and my question... that nobody even attempted to answer.

After class, I just wanted to curl up in a ball. I felt so ashamed. Ashamed that I was different and suggested that maybe men and women might be different. It didn’t help that my old youth pastor, Gary Reddish, would come visit me on campus, forge notes, and put them on the Women’s Concerns Board, that read like this, “All women should be barefoot and pregnant. Signed, Peter Hiett, box 537.”

I felt so ashamed, and I wanted to hide. But all these people kept coming up to me and whispering, “I was wondering the same thing.” Maybe you’ve wondered the same thing, but you’re afraid to ask the question, “Are men and women different? And if so, how? And if so, what does it mean? And if so, is it a curse, or is it a blessing?”

Well, in the 21st century, I think that men have the most cause to be insecure because it’s become clear that since the Industrial Revolution, when physical strength became obsolete, that there’s just not much of significance that men can do, that women cannot also do. Except, of course, go potty standing up, but even that is contested. When my daughter, Elizabeth, was learning to go, she would stand at the toilet, just throw fits, screaming and making a mess all over the place, trying to be like her big brother, Jon.

Even so, there’s just not much that men can do, that women can’t do. Yet women can create life inside their womb. Yet they can’t do that without a man, and then only by surrendering their difference to his difference.

And yet now, in the 21st century, scientists have found ways around that dilemma so lesbian couples can get pregnant, perhaps even without donors. I recently read about some Australian scientists, working in Japan, who claim to have developed a way to grow human sperm in mouse testicles.

But guys don't get worried that you're obsolete and inferior for prominent British fertility researcher, Lord Robert Winston, claims to have developed means by which embryos can be implanted in the male abdomen, nurtured with the help of massive hormone injections, grow to maturity, and be delivered by cesarean section. And, of course, if any of you don't like your gender, you can just go down to Trinidad, Colorado, few hundred miles away, spend a few thousand bucks, and have it changed. Because modern society has informed us that masculinity and femininity are only really penis deep and a few hormones away.

Isn't it reassuring to know that in "this day and age" modern society has affirmed we are all just the same. For we Americans know that our freedom is based on equality. In the words of the philandering slave owner, Thomas Jefferson, in the Declaration of Independence, "We take these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal."

Well, if equal means the same, could there be any truth that's less self-evident than all people are the same? Every McDonald's in America divides their plumbing in two. There's a men's room, and there's a women's room. And that's scary because if we're different, maybe we're not equal. And then how will we maintain the balance of power for independence is based on equality because the equality maintains the balance of power.

But if one person is different, they might be weaker, and if they're weaker, they'll be raped by the rest because life is survival of the fittest, right? And in reality, history shows time and time again that women *have* been raped by men, which means that they're least fit.

But this day and age, don't worry women, for we've made women to be like men. So they're safe and invulnerable, and we're all independent... life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, free, free, free! Free sex. Free love, and we're all free to rape each other, like men—like evil men.

But, of course, it's not really rape, right? For sex is just biology, and we're all the same. (That's what we say.)

And so, of course, homosexuality is really no different than heterosexuality. Of course, you can mix and match. Of course, you can sleep around for sex is only genital deep. Underneath, we're all the same, just biology seeking orgasm. All the same.

All the same, and if you sense that you're different, you'd better hide that fact or you might lose your power and be forced into submission.

Well, in light of all these modern revelations, scripture does seem awfully uptight and neurotic about marriage and divorce and sex and gender... God seems like a legalistic, patriarchal, sexist bigot. And so we have a million questions, and yet, it seems, we still don't understand.

But we're not the only ones. Matthew 19:1:

*Now when Jesus had finished these sayings,
[about grace] he went away from Galilee
and entered the region of Judea beyond the
Jordan.*

Literally, “Judea across the Jordan,” which is an awkward statement because, normally to get to Judea from Galilee, you wouldn’t cross the Jordan. But I think Matthew is pointing out that this is the Promised Land; this is old Eden; this is home; this is Jerusalem. The Lord whom you seek is suddenly coming to His temple. The Messiah is entering Jerusalem. The last Adam is coming to the bride, the desolate bride.

...and large crowds followed him, and he healed them there.

He’s coming with great strength and love and tender compassion.

And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, “Is it lawful to divorce one’s wife for any cause?”

The religious leaders came to test him. They are lawyers, looking for loopholes in the law of love. They came to test Him, which can also be translated, “tempt Him.” You can hear the tempter in their voices, “Hey, Jesus, isn’t it legal to divorce your bride, Jerusalem, for she is unclean? And Jesus, this is gonna hurt you, a lot.”

He answered, “Have you not read that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So they are no

*longer two but one flesh. What therefore
God has joined together, let not man put
asunder."*

The Pharisees were part of a classic debate in Judaism at the time which had to do with Deuteronomy 24:1, in which Moses doesn't really permit, but he acknowledges, that men do divorce their wives for uncleanness, "ervah" in Hebrew. Which in one other place is translated, "shame," but in every other place in the English Bible, is translated, "nakedness."

They ask can a man divorce his wife for any "nakedness." That's kind of intriguing because nakedness can be so shameful, and yet, at times, so incredibly attractive. "Love has pitched its tent in the place of excrement," wrote Yeats, the poet.

"Can man divorce his wife for any nakedness?" And Jesus answers with a story. A story.

Let me just say that I don't know exactly the Lord's desire regarding gender roles in 2005 and how it relates to the Bible. We get so confused about the roles of men and women. We get confused about when, if ever, divorce is allowed and what would be the grounds, and whether or not you can kiss your girlfriend before marriage or can you grope her? Those are the kinds of questions we ask. And I think if we asked Jesus for clarifications on these things, I bet he'd answer with a story. He often answered legalistic questions with a story. Not because the law doesn't matter, but because He gives it meaning. He came to fulfill the emptiness of the law.

When we live by the law, we break the law because we don't see what it means.

That is, we focus on the notes and never hear the music.

We play by the score and never hear the song.

And yet if we hear the music and sing the song, you know, we'll probably hit just about every note.

That is, if you surrender your emptiness to love, He will fulfill the law in you.

So Jesus reminds them of the Story, the Meaning, the Plot, the Word. "Have you not read that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female?" Genesis 1:27. So "God created man..." literally, "*Adam, mankind.*" "*God created man in His own image. In the image of God, He created him,*" (singular). "*Male and female, He created them,*" (plural). Together, male and female, we are the image of God.

That was day six, in Genesis chapter one. God rests on day seven, but we're still being made in the image of God right now. That means that right now it's still day six, and it's day six in Genesis chapter two for it describes how we're made in His image. In Genesis 2:7...

God makes Adam, singular.

And God makes the garden.

And God makes a tree, two trees (that I believe become one tree) in the middle of the garden.

And then God says it's not good for Adam to be alone, and God declares that He will provide a helper, an advocate, a comforter, a helpmate for Adam, mankind.

God, then, makes the animals and each of them has a helper, another that is made in their own image and likeness, through whom they bear life.

And yet Adam is still alone.

You know, Jesus said, that He is our helper,
our advocate, our comforter, our groom.

Well, anyway, Adam doesn't see any helper. So God puts Adam to sleep, a Biblical euphemism for death. He takes part of Adam, his rib, and makes Eve. So it's no wonder that when Adam wakes up and sees Eve, he says, "Bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh... that's my rib! That's my body; that's my blood." She was taken out of Adam. Then Genesis 24:24, which Jesus quotes in Matthew 19:

Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife...

[Or, as Jesus translates "yoked to." Remember Jesus said he had a yoke to share with us.]

...and cleave to his wife, they become one flesh. [Genesis 24:25, next verse] And the man and his wife were both naked and unashamed.

They were unashamed of what we call our private parts. You know, every culture in this world has some sort of adornment or covering for the private parts. That's weird, and those parts are weird.

Think about it, not too much, but think about it a little bit, I mean, it's like an internal organ on the outside of the body. A man's genitals look like they shouldn't be on the outside of his body. Indeed, they are connected to the inside of his body. They are made to fit on the inside of a woman's body. And indeed, according to scripture and every romance novel ever written, those parts connect way more than just physical bodies.

It's like two persons become one substance, and that doesn't just happen when you bump elbows with someone. That's because you cannot really wear your heart on your sleeve. You wear it somewhere else. And when that somewhere else connects with somebody else's somewhere else, two different hearts beat as one.

That "somewhere else" is where our deepest differences reach the surface and most clearly define us as male or female. The great theologian Emil Brunner wrote:

Our sexuality penetrates to the deepest metaphysical ground of our personality. As a result, the physical differences between the man and the woman are a parable of the psychical and spiritual differences of a more ultimate nature.

Penetrating strength and tender receiver.

Initiator and responder.

Filler and filled.

Impregnator and impregnated.

No definition totally fits, yet we all feel the definition in our flesh, in that place. That place is where we complete each other, in God's image. "And what God has joined together, let no man tear asunder."

You know when you sleep around, you fuse your heart to another heart, and then you tear it asunder. Fuse and tear. Fuse and tear. You rape your heart over and over until it's numb. Hidden in scars, independent, alone... that is, dead. And that, my friend, is tragic.

For sex is to create life. Those parts are the place we are to complete each other in the Image, and create life in the Image of God. You know the most creative thing that you could ever do on the physical plane is to get naked and have sex with your husband or wife and create a person in God's image.

That would be three persons in one flesh,
one substance.

And now, if you're not married, and you don't have kids, don't stress. The Image is much deeper than human flesh. You may be far more creative than you know. Jesus was pretty creative, and yet after the flesh, He did not have a wife, and He did not have children. Yet, He does.

Well anyway, Adam and Eve were both naked and enjoyed each other's differences until Eve talked to a snake. And it appears that the first Adam, who was with her, stayed silent. Well, whatever the case, what she chose

to receive was not the word of her husband but the advice of the snake.

The snake told Eve that she could be like God if she ate of the tree. Now remember, this is still day six and Adam and Eve are not yet complete; they're still being created in the likeness of God. But now Eve doesn't trust God to complete her in His likeness. She listens to the snake and tries to complete herself. She tries to fill her emptiness with the fruit of the tree—the knowledge of good and evil, the law. She eats and gives some to Adam, who was with her.

And now it really gets weird for they both, all at once, experience shame and cover their nakedness, their “ervah.” In shame, they hide that part of themselves that connects to their heart and defines them as different and reminds them they're incomplete on their own, that place where they are commanded to commune in the sacrament of the covenant of marriage in the sanctuary of their love, producing fruit in the image of God.

Adam and Eve hide *that part*.
They hide their nakedness and shame.

One day when my son, Coleman, was 5 years old, he was changing his pants and my daughter, Elizabeth, came into the room, and Coleman asked her to leave. Elizabeth looked at Coleman and said, “Oh Coleman, come on. When you were little, we'd change your diapers, and I saw your private parts a lot.” Coleman looked at Elizabeth, and said, “Yeah, but that's different. That was before I knew I had ‘em.”

But now, eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Adam and Eve know they *have* ‘em. No

longer is their gender only blessing, now it feels like a curse. Their incompleteness feels like shame. The law tells them they're naked. They hide their parts from each other. They hide themselves from God, as if one is a picture of the other.

Well anyway, the Pharisees come up to Jesus as He's crossing into Judea, and they ask Him about the details of the law, and Jesus reminds them of the story. Why? Because they asked about sex and marriage, but even more because He just crossed the Jordan.

He was entering Jerusalem, and Jerusalem is Eve...

The whoring bride in Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Hosea...

The whoring bride and the beautiful bride coming down in the Revelation...

Jerusalem is us,
for we are the bride of Christ,
and Jesus is the eschatos Adam,
the ultimate man,
the last Adam.

We do long for Him, don't we? We long for Him to touch us in our place of shame, and yet our hearts are too frightened to surrender. We honor Him with our lips, and yet our hearts are far from Him.

Jesus says to the Pharisees, "Haven't you read the Story? Don't you get the Meaning, the Plot, the Word?" They couldn't see the Meaning, and He was standing right there in front of them.

In Ephesians 5, Paul quotes Genesis and Jesus, writing this,

For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” This mystery is a profound one, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

Paul writes that we are the bride of Christ. In 1 Corinthians, he writes that Jesus is the ultimate Adam, the perfect man. Now this is a profound mystery. I can’t explain every note, but I think I’m beginning to hear the music. The music is eternal even though it’s being played out in space and time.

The music is...

That Jesus is God in the flesh—the Lord—and He is our helper. We are being made for Him, and we are just now beginning to see.

God put Jesus to sleep in death on a cross, and we were made from His bleeding side: His body and His blood.

So He cries, “Bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh,” when He sees us.

He longs to enter us and fill us and give us His life, Himself, the Word, the Seed that bears fruit.

He completes us for we are His body, and He is our head.
(Scripture says the husband is the head of the wife.)

He completes us, and in some way, we complete Him for
we are Him. We are His body, and we contain His
Spirit.

“It’s no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.”

So when we fell and when we fall, He will not “leave us
nor forsake us” for what God has joined together,
let no man tear asunder.

He was bound to us from the foundation of the world in an
eternal covenant. Our names were written in blood
in the Lamb’s book of life.

When we fall and when we fell, the ultimate Adam was
with us, but He was “not deceived” (1 Timothy 2).

Yet He took the fruit of death to be with us in death. “He
who knew no sin became sin that we might
become the righteousness of God.”

“For if we are bound with Him in a death like His, we will
surely be bound with Him in a resurrection like
His.”

And even now He speaks for us. He is the Word that
conquers the serpent. He is our intercessor before
the Father. Satan accuses, and He is our defense.

If the first Adam was silent, He is *NOT* silent. He is the Word of God to us and for us.

He is our declaration of independence. However, we must declare our dependence. We must surrender our difference. We must surrender our incompleteness. We must surrender our naked shame. We must feel our own emptiness and invite Him to fill it with Himself. He is the groom, and we are the bride, we are all the bride.

So from the beginning, God made Adam (mankind), male and female. And from the beginning, He wrote the Gospel into our very bodies.

Do you see what that means?

Every romance novel ever written was about Him.
Every song ever sung by a teenager in love on an AM radio station was about Him.
The craving you feel in your flesh to be bound in communion with another, to rest in another, to be complete in another, to reach ecstasy with another, it's all about Him.

Sex appeal is gospel appeal.

That desire I have to enter Susan, my wife, though
I'm afraid she'll reject my advances and
despise my naked longing...
That longing in Susan to be filled by me and
receive my seed, though she fears that I'll
despise her naked shame...
That's all about the gospel,

it's not just an idea on a page in some book somewhere, but it's a desire, a longing, a passion deep built

into the depths of our being so that we can know and believe the love God has for us in Christ Jesus our Lord. He is our helper, our advocate, our groom. But we must surrender our naked shame.

You know, even if we see our nakedness through the law, it takes faith to surrender our shame.

In Matthew 19 Jesus is crossing the Jordan. He's coming to His bride, and yet she's hiding in the trees, she's hiding in the law because she's been raped time and time and time again. She's played the harlot; she's surrendered to other gods.

You know Satan and his demons, the fallen men of this world, they only know how to rape, and so fallen Eve only knows how to hide or to become a rapist, too, to balance the power and to protect her heart.

The teachers of the law ask, "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any uncleanness, any nakedness, any 'ervah?'"

They despise the "ervah," the nakedness of the people, the bride, and they use it for their own pleasure. They rape the bride. Jesus says that they are of their father, the devil.

Well, Jesus doesn't despise the naked shame of His bride. No man hates his own flesh.

He longs to fill the naked shame of His bride with himself.

He longs to fill the empty craving with Himself.

He comes to her with healing, strength, love, and tender compassion.

He's holy, but holy means "different," and different to her is a threat. It's a curse and not a blessing. It's a threat to her power so she must balance the power.

Because she's been raped, she can only believe rape, so she rapes her groom. She nails Him to a cross, to a tree, naked, where He dies bearing her shame. And yet, it's there that she's created *at His bleeding side*.

Jesus said, "When I am lifted up from the earth [lifted up on the cross], I will draw all men to myself." That is, "I will romance my bride unto myself."

He will not rape you.

He will only romance you.

You know many of you are frustrated with God because He will not rape you. "God, if you're there, you come take me. You show yourself to me!"

He will not rape you; He will only romance you so that you would surrender your naked shame so He could enter you in ecstasy because your joy is His joy for He is good.

Robertson McQuilkin resigned as the president of Columbia Bible College in order to care for his ailing wife, Muriel. Long before this time, they were bound in a covenant, and he longed to love her in her naked shame. She had Alzheimer's and had completely lost her mind. So instead of running a prestigious evangelical college, everyday he bathed Muriel, he fed Muriel, he walked Muriel, he clothed Muriel's nakedness, he bore her "ervah," her naked shame.

He writes,

Once our flight was delayed in Atlanta, and we had to wait a couple of hours. Now that's a challenge. Every few minutes the same questions, the same answers about what we're doing here, when are we going home, and every few minutes we'd take a fast paced walk down the terminal in search of what? I didn't know. Muriel had always been a speed walker. I had to jog to keep up with her.

An attractive woman, executive type, sat across from us, working diligently on her computer. Once, when we had returned from an excursion, she said something without looking up from her papers. Since no one else was nearby, I assumed she had spoken to me or at least mumbled in protest of our constant activity.

"Pardon?" I asked. "Oh," she said, "I, I was just asking myself, 'Will I ever find a man to love me like that?'"

Christian, your gender matters. Your sex life matters. Your marriage matters because it's not just about you. You are made male and female so the world will ask, "Will I ever find a man to love me like that?"

Even if you're single, especially if you're single (as we'll find in a few verses). Even if you're single, even if, especially if, you're in a bad marriage, your eager hope, your patient endurance, your faithful longing, is to make

the world ask, “Will I ever find a man who will love me like that?” The one she longs for, the one he desires to be. It’s to make *you* ask, “When will *I* find a man to love me like that?” It’s to make you say from the depths of your being, “Maranatha, Come Lord Jesus, come.”

But when you deny your gender and diminish your sexuality, making it just biology
 because you live in fear,
 afraid to surrender,
 using sex as a weapon to control and
 dominate rather than serve so that differences are curses
 rather than blessings...

When you despise your spouse’s surrendered shame...

Wife, when you refuse to receive your husband’s advances
 because you despise his naked shame...

Husbands, when you refuse to hang on a cross, bearing
 your wife’s shame, and so you take your seed somewhere
 else...

When you do these things, you lie about the gospel.

You lie to the world, and you lie to yourself, your own
 heart.

You harden your heart, and you don’t trust the great
 Bridegroom, and refuse to surrender your shame and
 receive His love.

The key to our sexual healing, the key to all healing is to surrender our shame to the Lover of our souls.

We love because *He* first loved us.

Last week, Susan and I went to Dallas with our good friend who was raised, raped, and tortured for years in a satanic coven. We went to visit all of these places that she had been abused.

For ten years we have prayed for her and watched Jesus heal her. It's always the same way. He romances her. He romances her to surrender her shame, and when she does, she watches Him fill it with light and new meaning. And she realizes that He was there with her all along, suffering her pain. She just couldn't see Him for she was hiding in shame, her spirit frozen in darkness and death. But surrendered, He fills her with His body broken and His blood shed, and He clothes her nakedness with His righteousness. Good Friday turns into Easter. She's created at His bleeding side, bearing the fruit of life as Satan flees in terror. I've seen it over and over and over again, and then I've come to realize, *that's my story, that's our story*.

This last week, the Lord walked her through, a horrid memory. At one point, in this vision, as we were praying, Jesus said to her, "You need to surrender this pain." I stopped her as she said this and said,

Do you understand what He just said to you?
The creator, the creator just *asked your permission!* Satan and his demons and evil, evil men... they will rape you at the first chance they get, but Jesus, the Lord of all, He stands at the door, and He asks *your*

permission as He suffers in *your pain*. Don't you see, that's the difference, *He will not rape you*. He will only romance you.

He romances us all through this fallen world, and even our very bodies, that we might see what we're without and call to Him to complete us and make us real, that we might see we're empty and call to Him to fill us.

The Bible ends with this statement from the bride to her Groom. In fact, all of history ends with this statement from the bride to her Groom, spoken from the depths of her heart, Revelations chapter 22, verse 20:

"Truly, Maranatha! Come, Lord Jesus, come!"

Let's pray:

Lord Jesus, You know that we honor You with our lips and our hearts are still afraid for we're still here. And yet, You are romancing us; You are singing to us; You are calling us. And, Lord Jesus, You see our nakedness. You see down into the core of our being. And although we are numb, you are not numb. Although we're in darkness, You are the light. Although we're dead in our trespasses and sins, You are the Life and You do not despise Your naked bride in her shame. And so we're beginning, Lord Jesus, to believe, and we're beginning to call out to You, "Maranatha, Come Lord Jesus."

[The worship band plays Bring Me to Life by Evanescence]

Bring Me to Life

By D. Moody/A.Lee/D.Hodges, Zombies Ate My Publishing,
Forthefallen Publishing and Dwight Frye Music, Inc (BMI)

How can you see into my eyes like open doors
Leading you down into my core
Where I've become so numb without a soul
My spirit sleeping somewhere cold
Until you find it there and lead it back home

Wake me up inside
Wake me up inside
Call my name and save me from the dark
Bid my blood to run before I come undone
Save me from the nothing I've become
Now that I know what I'm without
You can't just leave me
Breathe into me and make me real
Bring me to life

Wake me up inside
Wake me up inside
Call my name and save me from the dark
Bid my blood to run before I come undone
Save me from the nothing I've become
Bring me to life

Frozen inside without your touch without your love
 Darling, only you are the life among the dead

All this time I can't believe I couldn't see
 Kept in the dark but you were there in front of me
 I've been sleeping a thousand years it seems
 Got to open my eyes to everything
 Without a thought, without a voice, without a soul
 Don't let me die here, there must be something more
 Bring me to life

Wake me up inside
 Wake me up inside
 Call my name and save me from the dark
 Bid my blood to run before I come undone
 Save me from the nothing I've become
 Bring me to life

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And so on that night that He was betrayed, and rejected, and abandoned to a cross where He was stripped naked and crucified in our shame, He took bread and He broke it saying, "This is my body given to you. Take and eat in remembrance of me." And in the same way, after supper and having given thanks, He took the cup and said, "This is the cup of the new covenant in my blood, shed for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it, all of you, in remembrance of me. I will not drink again of the fruit of

the vine until I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." And Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand."

And so we invite you to come in faith to this table, take the bread, dip it in the cup. The black cups are wine; the purple cups are juice. They're both blood, and this is body. He's calling to you to surrender. So come, and surrender, and receive His life. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Satan, that is our declaration of independence, Our Lord Jesus. In His name. Amen.

Now before you leave, if any of you are tempted still to take that drive to Trinidad, let me just say, we're all male in the first Adam, and we are all feminine because we are the bride of Christ. And then Paul, who said all that other stuff, says this really weird stuff in Galatians. He says, "There is neither male nor female for we are all one in Christ Jesus."

I think, I'm not sure, but maybe, perhaps, I've kind of tasted this, kind of encountered this. There is an incredible moment of ecstasy in the sacrament of the covenant of marriage when bride and groom experience communion at those very places of naked shame. There is a moment when there is neither male nor female for both are one... one body. That's where life comes from.

Did you know, the kingdom of God is not a balance of power? It is a communion of ecstatic, sacrificial surrender.

And by the way, we are not all created equal, if that means created the same. However, we are all of equal

worth. We are all worth one rib. We are each worth the body and blood of Jesus. We are each worth absolutely everything to God, and one day I firmly believe that you will not be able to stop praising Him for making you exactly who you are.

In Jesus' name, believe the gospel. Amen.

Relevant Texts and Quotations (from bulletin)

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." ... Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." So out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper fit for him. So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh; and the rib which the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said,

"This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called Woman,
because she was taken out of Man."

Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.

Genesis 1:26-28, 2:18-25

Thus it is written, “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. But it is not the spiritual which is first but the physical, and then the spiritual. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. As was the man of dust, so are those who are of the dust; and as is the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.

1 Corinthians 15:45-49

You shall no more be termed Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate; but you shall be called My delight is in her, and your land Married; for the LORD delights in you, and your land shall be married. For as a young man marries a virgin, so shall your sons marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.

Isaiah 62:4-5

Yea, thus says the Lord GOD: I will deal with you as you have done, who have despised the oath in breaking the covenant, yet I will remember my covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish with you an everlasting covenant... I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall know that I am the LORD, that you may remember and be confounded, and never open your mouth again because of your shame, when I forgive you all that you have done, says the Lord GOD.

Ezekiel 16:59-60, 62-63

Plead with your mother, plead—
for she is not my wife,
and I am not her husband—
that she put away her harlotry from her face,

and her adultery from between her breasts; lest I strip her naked
 and make her as in the day she was born,
 and make her like a wilderness,
 and set her like a parched land,
 and slay her with thirst...

Therefore, behold, I will allure her,
 and bring her into the wilderness,
 and speak tenderly to her. And there I will give her her vineyards,
 and make the Valley of Achor a door of hope.
 And there she shall answer as in the days of her youth,
 as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt.

And in that day, says the LORD, you will call me, "My husband," and no longer will you call me, "My Baal." For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth, and they shall be mentioned by name no more. And I will make for you a covenant on that day with the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the creeping things of the ground; and I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land; and I will make you lie down in safety. And I will betroth you to me for ever; I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love, and in mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness; and you shall know the LORD.

Hosea 2:2-3, 14-20

And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.
John 12:32

There is something mythic in the way a man is with a woman. Our sexuality offers a parable of amazing depth when it comes to being masculine and feminine. The man comes to offer his strength and the woman invites the man into herself, an act that requires courage and vulnerability and selflessness for both of them. Notice first that if the man will not rise to the occasion, nothing will happen. He must move; his strength must swell before he can enter her. But neither will the love consummate unless the woman opens herself in stunning vulnerability. When both are living as they were meant to live, the man enters his woman and offers her his strength. He spills himself there, in

her; she draws him in, embraces and envelops him. When all is over he is spent; but ah, what a sweet death it is.

And that is how life is created. The beauty of a woman arouses a man to play the man; the strength of a man, offered tenderly to his woman, allows her to be beautiful; it brings life to her and to many. This is far, far more than sex and orgasm.

John Eldredge

For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This mystery is a profound one, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

Ephesians 5:29-32

Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues, and spoke to me, saying, "Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb." And in the Spirit he carried me away to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal... The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let him who hears say, "Come." And let him who is thirsty come, let him who desires take the water of life without price.

Revelation 21:9-11, 22:17

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 3:28

And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?" He answered, "Have you not read that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'?"

So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder.”

Matthew 19:3-6

Unlikeness makes one feel strange or endangered – “different” to the point of alienation. At the least, unlikeness draws pity or snorts of scorn or blank, uncomprehending looks. Therefore, the partners strive to seem the same. They dress themselves in “like” opinions, in “like” habits, in “like” tastes and goals- but at bottom this sort of sameness is a truce and not the truth. They have become ashamed of their nakedness.

Then, truly, “in the day that you eat of it you shall die.” These spouses spend a great deal of energy denying much of the truth of themselves, of their own natures, repressing it so that they may live life with as little pain as possible. So close to another human being, yet so isolated. So lonely.

Walter Wangerin, Jr.

Our sexuality penetrates to the deepest metaphysical ground of our personality. As a result, the physical differences between the man and the woman are a parable of the psychical and spiritual differences of a more ultimate nature.

Emil Brunner

True masculinity and femininity emerge and develop only in the midst of other-centered relating. The more a man understands a woman and is controlled by a Spirit-prompted other-centered commitment to bless her, the more “masculine” he becomes. And he will become more masculine in an unselfconscious fashion. Ask this man to define masculinity, and he will need to think awhile before answering. In exactly the same way, the more a woman understands a man and is preoccupied with doing all she can for him, the more “feminine” she naturally becomes. We will neither understand nor enjoy our sexual natures until we take seriously our responsibility to use our distinct natures to serve others.

Larry Crabb

Have as much equality as you please - the more the better – in our marriage laws: but at some level consent to inequality, nay, delight in inequality, is an erotic necessity.

C.S. Lewis

She had been conceiving this world as "spiritual" in the negative sense--as some neutral, or democratic vacuum where differences disappeared, where sex and sense were not transcended but simply taken away. Now the suspicion dawned upon her that there might be differences and contrasts all the way up, richer, sharper, ever fiercer, at every rung of the ascent. How if this invasion of her own being in marriage from which she had recoiled, often in the very teeth of instinct, were not, as she had supposed, merely a relic of animal life or patriarchal barbarism, but rather the lowest, the first, and the easiest form of some shocking contact with reality which would have to be repeated--but in ever larger and more disturbing modes--on the highest levels of all?

"Yes," said the director. "There is no escape. If it were a virginal rejection of the male, He would allow it. Such souls can bypass the male and go on to meet something far more masculine, higher up, to which they must make a yet deeper surrender. But your trouble has been what old poets called Daungler. We call it Pride. You are offended by the masculine itself: the loud, irruptive, possessive thing--the gold lion, the bearded bull--which breaks through hedges and scatters the little kingdom of your primness as the dwarfs scattered the carefully made bed. The male you could have escaped, for it exists only on the biological level. But the masculine none of us can escape. What is above and beyond all things is so masculine that we are all feminine in relation to it. You had better agree with your adversary quickly."

"You mean I shall have to become a Christian?" said Jane.

C.S. Lewis