

Marriage That Works: Let's Talk About Sex

Song of Songs 2:1-4, 8:6-7, 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 by Patty Friesen (Jan.14/18)

I'm glad to see this morning's service is so well attended! Someone dared me to preach about The Song of Solomon so here it is and I've never been so nervous to preach about anything but I think it's super important, perhaps one of the most important sermons I've ever preached. I think the sex discussion in the middle of this marriage series is essential. Sex is what gets us into all this trouble in the first place. But let's begin with the bible.

The Song of Solomon is the most poetic and erotic book in the bible and seldom used in worship but sets the honest, respectful tone for our God given attraction to other people and deep human desire for intimacy and love. We may have been taught that Song of Solomon is all about gardening. "Come my love to my garden. My love is like a garden full of pomegranates that I want to devour." Grr. I don't know about anybody else's garden but my carrots don't get me that excited. The Song of Solomon is not about gardening, people.

The Song of Solomon is about learning how to be a good lover. It is a slow eight-chapter pursuit of the desire of one's heart towards another person who is real with real physical features and personality. It is a mutual pursuit. It is two voices, male "as a lily among brambles, so is my love among women," and female "as an apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among men." It is equal in appreciation and passion and exclusivity. The female says three times with deep satisfaction, "I am my beloved's and he is mine."

Some of the descriptions get pretty sappy, “How beautiful you are, my love. Your eyes are doves.” And some of the descriptions are kind of funny, “your hair is like a flock of goats, moving down the slopes of Gilead.” I’ve been to Israel and those flocks of goats are nasty – dirty and mangy things. “Your teeth are like a flock of shorn ewes, all of which bear twins, and not one of them is missing.” Wow – that’s the measure of physical attraction – that your love has all her teeth? (4:2) “Your navel is a rounded bowl, your belly a heap of wheat. Your nose is like a tower of Lebanon looking towards Damascus.” He really knows how to charm a woman!

What is beautiful about this book is the woman’s voice. She has voice, she has choice, she has power. In the first chapter, she regrets that she’s been looking after her family’s vineyard and needs and responsibilities but “my own vineyard, I have not kept.” (1:6) The book is about finding her own vineyard, her place, her position, her power, her voice even within this love relationship and in the last chapter 8:12 she declares, “my vineyard, my very own, is for myself.”

The key to a great sex life lies within the Song of Solomon and I’m going to make it required reading for all my pre-marital couples. It is about mutuality, respect, desire and taking plenty of time to get to know each other and browse among the lilies and check out the pomegranate blossoms. It is a slow roast until “dawn breathes and the shadows of night flee! (2:17) It is about exclusivity – I am my beloved’s and he is mine. No one else is allowed into this sacred circle of love. It is about accepting each other’s bowl-like navels and wheat bellies and big noses. It is about real love that can withstand fire and flood and no amount of money can buy. This is the best kind of love – this is the best possible sex within a trusted, respected, exclusive relationship.

This best possible sex is so worth waiting for, young people, and believe me it gets even better with age! You probably don't want to hear that from your middle-aged minister but any other kind of young person sex can't even measure up. Skinny gorgeous young people making eyes in a bar can't compare with Song of Solomon sex with their wheat bellies and big noses. Hollywood doesn't have the corner on good sex. The church does! Can I have an Amen?

Any other kind of sex, whether in glossy print or internet form cannot even begin to measure up to this kind of sex. Glossy print and computer screen women aren't real and they don't make men real either. Everyone is an object and fantasy. Porn doesn't teach us how to be great lovers. It teaches us how to self-gratify and trains our brains and bodies to only respond to certain stimuli that actually wreck a real sex life with a real person you love and eventually can wreck a marriage. It's highly addictive and while there are wonderful helps for this addiction, it can last a lifetime. And like crack cocaine, once we are hooked, especially when we are young, we get imprinted with the stuff and it messes with our brains and our bodies.

That's why Paul in 1 Corinthians pairs sex with food and Song of Solomon pairs it with wine. These are our healthy human appetites created by God: food, sex and wine that when consumed in healthy amounts on a regular basis create a healthy metabolism that is good for our bodies and souls. But when we over-eat or over-drink or over-stimulate with porn, we throw our bodies and souls out of whack and we can never get enough to satisfy. We're a wreck of depleted, unsatisfied, unhappy people.

Dr. Ehman who preached our winter study last year, talked about sexual addictions and affairs as a means of escape. So we have to ask ourselves, what are we

escaping from? The boredom and meaninglessness of our lives? The loss of our self-esteem and self-control? So we look for acceptance and gratification instead of tending our own vineyards and souls? Escape is definitely more easy than dealing with our crap, confessing it and seeking support and accountability. The way to healing of course, as with any addiction, is fessing up and getting into a support group with people who hold each other accountable. Please talk to me or another respected church member about this.

This is why it's so important to talk about sex in church. It is God's incredible gift to us. God loves sex. Who else could have come up with anything so weird and fun? And because it is at its' best in loving, trusting, accepting, exclusive relationships with the blessing of one's family and friends with the party of a lifetime: it is so worth waiting for. I'm not sure it's helpful to think we are only going to hold hands until we walk down the wedding aisle but I think we can control ourselves until we find someone we would want to walk down the aisle with.

I've struggled to preach about pre-marital sex because I've struggled to find the path between the Sex is Bad – Don't Even Look at a Boy or You'll Get Pregnant message of my upbringing and the Anything Goes message of our culture. These loud voices at polar opposites need to be balanced with our joyful voices in the middle: Sex is Great – And It's Best with Someone Awesome Who Makes You Laugh and Loves You As You Are and Is Your #1 Cheerleader and Because of That is a Constant Turn On Which Leads to More Great Sex, Hallelujah. That sounds like the Gospel to me. And equally important to talking about waiting with young people is for the rest of us to be talking about restraining ourselves with regard to flirting with other people and using pornography. Our young people know when we are being hypocrites.

Please talk about the sermon during youth and adult Sunday School. I'll be meeting with Adult Ed in the 007 Room to process this more.

I'll close with this psalm: hallelujah! o, praise You, Lord!
praise You in the temple that I am,
in this body You redeemed with Your mighty power!
yes, praise You with heartstring and soulswing,
with fingersnap and toetap;
praise You with lips and larynx and lungbreath,
praise You with pulsing pipes of vein and artery,
praise You with every rhythmic thump-under-ribcage!
let every organ peal Your glory and every cell sing for joy;
let all within this temple give praise to You!
praise You, Lord!
hallelujah!
—“Temple Psalm,” Sandy Mayle

Let us pray: Gracious God, thank you for the amazing gift of our bodies and that we can use them to show love to the most important people in our lives. Thank you for the Song of Solomon which shows us what respectful, admiring, slow love looks like and help us to be the most respectful, admiring lovers we can be. Forgive us when we mess that up. Amen.