

Romance and Repentance

This year some rare timing happens on the calendar: Valentine's Day and Ash Wednesday fall on the same day. A day of "romance" and a day of repentance coincide. It is always a great time to hear from our Lord; this occasion seems a particularly timely one for us to hear from Him on romance and repentance... sexuality and our souls.



God is the author and giver of the gift of sex. From the beginning he has said:

"It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." ¹⁹ ...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.²² And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. ²³ 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."*

²⁴ *Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. ²⁵ And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed."* Genesis 2. Can you hear Etta James singing "At last..."? And God told the husband and wife: "*Be fruitful and multiply.*" What fun... the marriage bed, diapers to change, children to raise, and God's word to teach them!

To preserve the fragile, beautiful gift of sexual intimacy, God tells us that, in matters of sex, our words and conduct are to be pure and honorable. Husband and wife are to love and respect one another. To protect the gift, God reserves sexual intimacy for marriage only.

Of course, a race full of sinners gets this wrong: we cheapen the gift and commit adultery. Thanks be to God: Jesus came to love commandment breakers and saves us from our sin, ourselves, and Satan. Jesus is the real Valentine! Probably the best story of romance and repentance in the Bible is that of King David and Bathsheba. David's own wife is not enough for him; he takes his friend's wife... and the consequences are heartbreaking for all involved (read II Samuel 11-12). After a great sermon from the preacher God sends to him, David realizes that he has trespassed all over the precious, fragile gift of sexual intimacy. He is finally broken-hearted and contrite... just the kind of sinner on whom God loves to have mercy and give a fresh start. So at last, by grace through faith David learns a new song:

*Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within me.*

¹¹ *Cast me not away from your presence,
and take not your Holy Spirit from me.*

¹² *Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and uphold me with a willing spirit. (Psalm 51.10-12)*

Dearly beloved, no matter how tenderly or poorly you've handled the precious, fragile gift of sexuality, Jesus has enough mercy to restore to you the joy of his salvation and create in you a clean heart. He's at it right now as you read this. Happy Valentine's! See you on Ash Wednesday... and throughout the season of repentance that is lent.

Your brother in Christ,

Pastor Paul