

Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church



Weekly Sermon Series

Taking Root: The Gospel Rules ...Guarding Faithfulness Exodus 20:14; Matthew 5:27-30

The theme “Guarding Faithfulness” is grounded in the teaching of the commandment, “You shall not commit adultery.” Luther’s Explanation: We must fear and love God so that in matters of sex our words and conduct are pure and honorable, and husband and wife love and respect each other.

Love, honor, and cherish are words often repeated in marriage vows. These words express what a faithful relationship involves. Adultery is the opposite. Adultery is disloyalty and faithlessness. It is difficult to have a loving relationship if there is adultery. Trust and respect is needed for a stable and loving marriage.

In the Old Testament the prophets decried Israel’s relationship with God as adulterous. The people often were unfaithful in their relationship with God and the prophets would name this sin and called Israel to repent. The prophet Hosea especially comes to mind as one who names Israel as like a harlot, unfaithful to God. He then proclaims that God desires to woo Israel back into a faithful relationship with him. Spiritual adultery was rampant in Israel.

In Matthew 5, Jesus teaches that faithfulness is a matter of the heart. He teaches matter of fact that everyone who looks at a woman with lust commits adultery in his heart. So what man can

avoid this? For Jesus this fact condemns those who think by outward propriety they can be perfect in fulfilling the law regarding adultery.

The Pharisees often pretended to perfection in following the law. Jesus regarded their pretensions as hypocrisy.

We know that humans are sexual creatures attracted to each other. This fact leads to problems in relationships and marriage if one partner follows the temptations that are numerous and available. Guarding faithfulness is an important value for a marriage to thrive and grow. We Americans live in a highly sexualized culture. The advertising industry is a master at using sexual images to sell the millions of products we consume. On the other hand, many Americans still have difficulty being open about sexuality, talking about it in a healthy and realistic way, especially in the context of faith and family. Today no family is untouched by divorce. Many people have experienced betrayal, faithlessness, distrust, and disrespect in failed marriages. Such experiences often lead to great stress, lower standards of living, and sometimes endless fighting in the courts over custody or child support of the children. Learning to trust again is a very difficult challenge.

In this context, what does it mean to guard faithfulness in our marriages and families today? How can we nurture faithfulness and strengthen our marriages and families in the community where we live?

Lord, help us to be faithful to you and to each other in these difficult times. Amen

-- Week of June 21, 2009