

Chastity
Rolf David Preus
Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church
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Thank you for inviting me to be here today. We live several hundred miles north of here, in the arrowhead of Minnesota, right on the Canadian border, in the North Woods, where winter has already arrived and will stay for about seven months. It's good to be here in Muncie, Indiana to speak to you on the topic of chastity. I can think of no better way to begin than by quoting the Catechism:

Thou shalt not commit adultery. What does this mean? We should fear and love God that we may lead a chaste and decent life in word and deed, and each love and honor his spouse.

This is the Sixth Commandment and meaning according to the 1943 version of Luther's Small Catechism published by Concordia Publishing House. The 1986 version slightly altered the words of the meaning of the Sixth Commandment.

What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we lead a sexually pure and decent life in what we say and do and husband and wife love and honor each other.

The word chaste was replaced by the words sexually pure. The committee that produced the new Catechism apparently thought that children would not understand the word chaste. They were probably right. Where they erred was in assuming that the children would understand the words sexually pure. Replacing the word chaste with sexually pure because the former was deemed to be archaic was a bit short sighted. As a matter of fact, the whole concept of chastity is archaic. If you believe in what God's Word teaches us about chastity and embrace it as a precious virtue to be taught and practiced, you are about as countercultural as you can be. When I was a young man, the counterculture promoted free love, as if to have sexual intercourse with anyone who is desirable and willing is the natural thing to do. The counterculture of the 1960s is the establishment of the 21st century. But the love it promotes is neither free nor natural.

Love is not free. It has a cost. From where God sits, his love for us sinners cost him the holy, bitter, suffering, and death of his beloved Son. From where you sit, love compels you to love the LORD your God with your whole heart, soul, strength, and mind, and to love your neighbor as yourself. Love has parameters. It has boundaries. It is defined. St. Paul explains how this is so in Romans 13:8-10,

Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not bear false witness," "You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

Love is the single requirement of God's law. We do not define what love is. God does. We don't decide what it means to be chaste. God does. Before the sexual revolution, the popular culture more or less reinforced the biblical teaching on the second table of the law, that is, commandments four through ten, which teach us how to love our neighbor. This applied to the sixth commandment as well. Sexual intercourse outside of marriage was regarded as wrong. People looked down upon boys and girls who engaged in premarital sex. Hotels would not rent a room to an unmarried couple. The so-called new morality of the sixties became the established morality by the eighties. Chastity was a quaint, old-fashioned notion, but no longer a virtue to be embraced.

When God made Adam and Eve in his image, he blessed them. In blessing them, he told them to be fruitful. The fruitful womb is a blessing from God. The Bible says so. We read in Genesis 1:27-28,

So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

Children are a blessing from God. The psalmist writes in Psalm 128,

Blessed is everyone who fears the LORD,
Who walks in His ways.
When you eat the labor of your hands,
You shall be happy, and it shall be well with you.
Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine
In the very heart of your house,
Your children like olive plants
All around your table.
Behold, thus shall the man be blessed
Who fears the LORD. (Psalm 128:1-4)

The psalmist writes in Psalm 127,

Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD,
The fruit of the womb is a reward.
Like arrows in the hand of a warrior,
So are the children of one's youth.
Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them;
They shall not be ashamed,
But shall speak with their enemies in the gate. (Psalm 127:3-5)

God has joined the conception of children in the womb to the sexual intercourse between a man and a woman. God put into what we call nature a cause-and-effect relationship between sexual intimacy and procreation. This is basic biology. As you know, any virile man joined to any

fertile woman could result in new life in her womb. But the notion that any man and any woman may, at will, have sex with each other apart from the permanent bond of marriage not only cheapens sexual intimacy, twisting it from the expression of marital love into a selfish seeking of pleasure for its own sake, but it has devastating effects on children.

The new morality that set sexual intimacy free from the bonds of marriage was part of a larger cultural shift away from traditional Christian moral teaching. No-fault divorce divorced adultery from the legal judgment concerning divorce. This not only made divorce much easier. It also made it unfair to the faithful husband or wife whose spouse was unfaithful. Easy divorce means easy destruction of the security children require from their parents. No-fault divorce subordinated the needs of children to the selfish whims of their parents.

The feminist movement, with its claim that whatever a man can do a woman can also do, may have originated with some good intentions, for example, repealing laws that denied property rights to women, but it soon became obvious that the real target was the traditional housewife who devoted her life to her husband, the raising of their children, and the management of the home. If a woman has the same rights as a man, and a man has the right not to give birth to a baby, a woman must have that same right. The October 2022 issue of Harper's magazine features an article by a woman named Charlotte Shane entitled, "The Right Not to be Pregnant: Asserting an Essential Freedom." The right of a woman not to be pregnant is her right not to give birth to a living baby. This right trumps the right of the baby in her womb to be born alive. Feminism as an ideology insists on the right of a woman to have sexual intercourse without giving birth to a baby. This justifies not only contraception, but also abortion. Christians who presume that more effective instruction about birth control will prevent abortion miss the point. The point is that people want sex, but they don't want kids. That's unnatural.

Luther treats the intimate connection between marriage, sexual intimacy, and procreation in the Large Catechism under the topic of the Sixth Commandment. He writes:

Therefore, [God] also wishes us to honor [marriage] (Hebrews 13:4) and to maintain and govern it as a divine and blessed estate because, in the first place, He has instituted it before all others. He created man and woman separately, as is clear (Genesis 1:27). This was not for lewdness, but so that they might live together in marriage, be fruitful, bear children, and nourish and train them to honor God (Genesis 1:28; Psalm 128; Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 6:4). (A Reader's Edition of the Book of Concord, page 408)

The Ten Commandments are the best summary of natural law ever written. By natural law, we mean the law that God teaches us in nature. Consider what God made when he made man male and female, blessed them, joined them together, and told them to be fruitful. He established and defined chastity.

Sex matters. It matters whether you are a man or a woman. It matters that men and women think and act according to God's will for men and women. Men and women are not the same, and don't have the same duties. A common duty of both men and women is to place sexual intimacy within the marital bond. As the Epistle to the Hebrews says, "Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge." (Hebrews 13:4)

Note these words carefully. When the Bible says that marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled God is saying that sexual relations between husband and wife are honorable and pure. Sexual intimacy is good. Marriage is good.

In Luther's day, the religious establishment held that virginity was inherently more chaste than faithful, monogamous sexual relations within marriage. In our day, marriage is not seen as a necessary precondition for having sexual relations. Distorted views of sex distort marriage. Whether a denigration of honorable sexual intimacy or the celebration of dishonorable sexual intimacy, in both cases marriage is what suffers. Marriage is a positive good. It is not a cross to be borne. It is a blessing to be enjoyed. In Luther's explanation of the Ten Commandments, he begins each explanation with the words "We should fear and love God that we may not . . ." Not in his explanation of the Sixth Commandment. He mentions no prohibition. He explains it in a purely positive way, "to lead a chaste and decent life in word and deed and each love and honor his spouse." Marriage is a positive good. Not a necessary evil.

Marriage is for children. There is more to marriage than having children. The sexual intimacy between husband and wife is an expression of the love they have for one another and the mutual sharing that makes marriage marriage. When God chooses not to bless marriage with children it's still marriage. St. Paul compares the relationship of husband and wife to that of Christ and the church. Jesus did his first miracle at a wedding. God blesses the institution that he established in Paradise even when he does not give them children. That's God's choice. He chooses as he wills, and who are we to question him? We, on the other hand, may not choose to make marriage something other than what he instituted. When we accept marriage as God established it, we see that it is for the benefit of children.

Advocates of same sex "marriage" argue that we have no right to tell someone whom to love. They defend and advocate for same sex "marriage" in the name of what they call "marriage equality." They miss the point. Setting aside the obvious fact that carnal lust and love are not the same thing, the purpose of marriage is more than the expression and enjoyment of mutual love. In creation, God joined the expression of marital love to procreation. Nature teaches us this. Marriage is for children. This is one reason that sexual fidelity is essential for marriage. Children who are born without a father and a mother who are devoted to each other are deprived of what God intended all children to have. If sexual intimacy is regarded as a right to enjoy without any regard for marriage, children will suffer. Marriage is not for the benefit only of the couple that is married. The chief beneficiaries of marriage are the children. Even same sex couples who pretend they are married and have now succeeded in getting the government to go along with their delusion know that marriage is for children. Adoption among same sex couples is rising. Same sex couples are much more likely to adopt than normal couples are. Since their sexual union cannot yield the fruit of new life, adopting children born of natural means is how these unnatural unions grasp for legitimacy. While rejecting the natural law that defines homosexuality as a perversion of nature, these couples are still bound by nature to desire children.

Understanding chastity as a defense of children, born and yet to be born, grounds it in the family where it belongs. There is an intimate connection between the Fourth Commandment, telling us

to honor our father and mother, and the Sixth Commandment, forbidding adultery. These commandments are bound together.

The civil law is a teacher of the moral law. They say you can't legislate morality. If that's so, what can you legislate? The fact is that the civil law reflects our view of God's moral law. That the civil law in America permits no-fault divorce, recognizes same-sex sexual unions as marriage, and permits abortion on demand in many states, even with the overturning of Roe versus Wade means that the civil law does not teach us the truth about sex and marriage. This requires us Christians to become self-consciously countercultural, specifically regarding issues of sex, marriage, and procreation. We are at odds with the civil consensus and the popular culture. When we wage spiritual warfare against the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh, we must have a clear idea of what the world teaches, so that we may oppose it with God's Word.

The first price we pay for being countercultural is that we will be attacked by the keepers of the cultural mores. We are outsiders. We are oddballs. We are nonconformists. We are not the cool kids. We're the rejects. Get used to it, Christian, because that's your lot in this world. There are two extremes to avoid in being countercultural. We should be neither defensive nor "in your face." God's Word, not the currently fashionable social opinions, is the standard for our thinking and living. God has made us male and female. He has determined what is good and what is evil. This means that we cannot endorse or defend or speak well of any of the perversions identified by the acronym: LGBTQ. When we are accused of hate because we agree with God's Word and condemn as sin what God's Word condemns as sin, we have no right to be defensive about it. It is not our standard. It is not our opinion. It is not our judgment. It is God's. What God says about adultery, fornication, divorce, and homosexuality is clear. Sexual intimacy between members of the same sex is sin. St. Paul teaches us in Romans chapter one that this sin is the fruit of idolatry. The teaching that God approves of a monogamous same sex sexual relationship and that the church may bless such unions in God's name is a false and demonic doctrine. Such a teaching is incompatible with the Christian faith. To teach that divorce is acceptable under any other circumstances than adultery and malicious desertion is to teach falsely and burden God's children with sin. To dismiss the difference between man and woman, husband and wife, as taught throughout the Scriptures and most clearly in St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, chapter 5 is to embrace the standards of this world in defiance of what the apostle says in Romans 12:2, "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." Christ's headship, which the husband is to imitate, entailed his humble obedience all the way to the death of the cross. The church's submission to Christ, is the submission of faith through which she receives from him her identity. The Christian understanding of authority and submission cannot be understood apart from the mystery of Christ's incarnation, humiliation, suffering and death, and his redemption of sinners by his blood. When we stand against the culture that undermines marriage by promoting feminism, homosexuality, transsexuality, and other assorted perversions, we must do so with confidence and respect. Purveyors of false doctrine are also blood-bought souls who are precious to our God and Father. We stand against the culture with confidence in the truth of God's Word, which remains forever, while the achievements of the flesh are like the grass that withers and dies in the sun. We stand against the culture with respect for those who are captive by lies, knowing that God doesn't convert people by mocking them, but by his gospel. The first price we pay for being countercultural is that we

will be scorned by the established social gatekeepers. We may not avoid or evade this scorn. We consider it pure blessing from God, knowing that so they persecuted the prophets who proclaimed God's truth.

The second price we must pay as we live chaste Christian lives in opposition to the lies of the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh is the discipline of our bodies and the subjugation of our desires. Self-discipline is not easy. One need not be a Christian to recognize that moderation is a virtue while intemperance is a vice. Married men who are exposed as womanizers are considered to be of low character. This is why when mud is slung in a political campaign, sexual misconduct is a favorite accusation. The world, the unregenerate, unchristian, unbelieving world, knows that a man who can't keep his pants on can't be trusted to be faithful in anything else.

For us Christians, chastity goes far deeper than avoiding sins that could come back to bite us. Chastity is an expression of love for God and for our neighbor. Love is disciplined. Love is action. It is decision. It is a verb. To be "in love" is a meaningless concept, having nothing to do with chastity. To love is to do for the neighbor what God tells us to do. The first thing we learn about love for our neighbor from the Sixth Commandment is that our body is not ours to enjoy as we choose. St. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 6:18-20,

Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

The demonstrators carry signs that say, "My body, my choice." They're claiming the right to kill the unborn baby in their womb. There is no such right. Nor is there a right for a woman to have sex with a man to whom she is not married. We Christians confess this. The God who made us to desire sexual intimacy is the God who established marriage as the time and place where sexual intimacy may be enjoyed. As St. Paul put it in 1 Corinthians 7:9, "It is better to marry than to burn with passion." Confining sexual intimacy to marriage requires self-discipline. It requires self-control.

Self-discipline requires avoiding the use of pornography. Pornography degrades the gift God gave us in sexual intimacy by severing sexual excitement from the true object of the same, namely a man's wife. God wants men to desire their wives, not some whore in a picture or a video. Solomon writes,

Drink water from your own cistern,
And running water from your own well.
Should your fountains be dispersed abroad,
Streams of water in the streets?
Let them be only your own,
And not for strangers with you.
Let your fountain be blessed,

And rejoice with the wife of your youth.
 As a loving deer and a graceful doe,
 Let her breasts satisfy you at all times;
 And always be enraptured with her love.
 For why should you, my son, be enraptured by an immoral woman,
 And be embraced in the arms of a seductress?
 (Proverbs 5:15-20)

The word pornography comes from the Greek word, *πορνεία*, from which the English word fornication also comes. It's sometimes translated sexual immorality. God's Word condemns all forms of *πορνεία*. To succumb to this temptation is to hand yourself over to uncleanness. This takes hold of your affections and distorts your thinking. Chastity is for marriage and children. The doctrine of "free love" breaks the bond between sexual intimacy and marriage. It opens the door to every kind of *πορνεία*. This is not freedom. It is slavery. After St. Paul establishes the doctrine of justification by faith alone in Romans 3-5, in chapter six he directs us to our baptism where we died and rose again. He writes:

Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace. Romans 6:11-14

This calls for modesty in dress. Women should not, if they can help it, dress in such a way as to evoke sexual excitement in men. The question is not whether men should become sexually excited by what they wear. The question is whether men will become sexually excited by what they wear. Modesty in dress is an outward expression of inward chastity. This goes for men as well. One doesn't need to dress like the Amish or Hutterites to recognize that the way we display or cover our bodies in public says much about our devotion to chastity. Such devotion is surely countercultural in our sex-crazed society.

As Christians we are countercultural. We are scorned by the socially correct in-crowd. We are countercultural. We exercise self-discipline, avoiding all forms of sexual impurity. We are countercultural. We discriminate against people on the basis of their religion.

Recent political polls suggest that men and women are becoming less and less willing to date members of the opposite sex who belong to a different political party. The consensus among self-described conservatives appears to be that it is wrong to discriminate against a potential date on the basis of his or her politics.

Well, why not discriminate? If my wife had been some kind of a left-wing socialist, she never would have become my wife. We began dating during the Nixon/McGovern campaign of 1972. If she had expressed admiration for McGovern and his policies, would I have continued to see her? Would I have married her? Why? To listen to political foolishness for the rest of my life?

Well, religion is as much greater than politics as heaven is greater than the earth. Do you want to marry someone who, when you have a baby, doesn't believe the baby should be baptized? Do you want to marry someone who thinks that ordaining women and homosexuals is just fine? Do you want to marry someone who thinks that the pope is the head of the Christian church on earth? Do you want to marry someone who denies we are justified and saved by grace alone through faith alone? How much do you care about the truth you confess? Why would you want to become one flesh with a woman or a man who could not confess that truth with you?

Choosing a spouse is serious business. There is no more momentous decision you can make. One reason for avoiding sexual intimacy before marriage (besides the fact that it's a sin against God!) is that you might begin to think that the pleasure of sex is the greatest benefit of marriage. Oh, sexual intimacy is important. It's a beautiful expression of marital love. It's a sign of marital unity. It's how God brings children into this world. Sex is great. But our faith is better.

I hope you don't mind if I talk a little bit about my wife and me and how we met and, as they say, fell in love. We met in October of 1972 in Ann Arbor, Michigan. We were both students at Concordia Lutheran Junior College. She was a freshman. I was a sophomore. We started hanging out together in the cafeteria. We would talk theology. This was during the height of the Battle for the Bible in the Missouri Synod when a majority of the faculty of Concordia Seminary in St. Louis had taken a stand against our historic teaching that the Bible, as God's Word, is inerrant, that is, containing no errors because God wrote it. Dort and I talked theology. The Charismatic Movement, the intrusion of Pentecostal theology into Lutheranism, was strong at our school, so we talked about it. As we talked theology, sharing our common devotion to the same truth, we learned to love each other. We shared what was most precious. True, she was the prettiest girl in the school, and yes, she had the sweetest and most pleasant disposition of any girl I had met, but the reason I loved her and wanted to marry her is because she and I were joined together in a common confession of the true Christian faith. This unity is what has given us joy as we have faced sorrow. It is what we tried to pass on to our children. Today we see our children and our children's children confessing the same truth that bound us together fifty years ago and I thank God.

Chastity is for marriage. Marriage is for children. Children are blessings from God. I was raised in a family of ten children. Of all my parents' children, I had the least amount of money. My father told me that I was the richest one of his children. He was right. God has blessed Dort and me with 12 children and 74 grandchildren with two on the way. Love and marriage are not about getting more and more stuff that will perish with this world. It's about receiving from God blessings that are eternal. Even as the everlasting gospel unites husband and wife, just so this gospel gives to their children eternal life. Children are the only gifts God gives us in this life that we can take to heaven with us. To teach God's word to your children, singing good Lutheran hymns, talking theology around the dinner table, bringing them to church every Sunday is to sow to the Spirit unto everlasting life. Marriage is for this earthly life alone, as Jesus told the snotty Sadducees, but the fruit of marriage is forever.

We teach our children the gospel of Jesus Christ, the holy bridegroom who gave his life for his bride, the church, and washed her clean in his blood by baptizing her in his name. He gave her his name. He gave her her identity. Not by legal imposition. Not by clever manipulation. But

by bearing all her sins in his own body on the cross. He died for her that she might be forgiven, a glorious church without any stain or blemish. He rules over her by his grace. He wins her heart by forgiving her all her sins freely by his grace, not because it's what she deserves, but because it's what he has won for her by his vicarious obedience and suffering and death.

This forgiveness is what binds together the hearts of husband and wife in a happy marriage. God has forgiven them all their sins. From that forgiveness they have the authority to forgive one another. They can bear each other's burdens because Christ has borne their burden on Calvary. Where we have failed to live the chaste and decent lives God gave us to live, we run to Jesus, confess our sins, receive his absolution, and live Christian lives under his grace. A Christian marriage is an incomparable gift.