



HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

Love of God and Life at Home

November 6, 2022

Hebrews 13:4-6

Clint Pressley

⁴ Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous. ⁵ Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." ⁶ So we can confidently say,

*"The Lord is my helper;
I will not fear;
what can man do to me?"*

(Pastor prays)

What you have here in front of you is the most deeply Biblical and radical statement that a person can make in today's world, when today's sexual ethic is built on the rotten foundation of self-expression and rank hedonism. And in addition to that, today's entire commercial economy is built on a foundation that encourages us to have what we want and want what we do not have. I thought my 11-year-old Ford was a good car until I walked through SouthPark on Friday and saw a matte charcoal Maserati Quattroporte. I walked by a kiosk and a lady with an accent said, "Sir, I need to ask you something." I said, "Yes ma'am?" and she said, "What do you do for the shadows under your eyes?" I said, "I usually splash some Aqua Velva on them." I didn't know I needed skin care!

The world around us encourages us to want what we don't have! But as Christians we sing, "Hallelujah, all I have is Christ." And the point of this

passage is that when you are filled up with Jesus, you aren't as hungry for the passing pleasures of this world. And the context, the preacher is giving his final instructions to his people and, as he does, he turns his attention to your home and how my private life has public consequences. And he sets us up as Christians as salt and light living in a dark and fallen world. But living here with joy and determination and grace. Look, I know that in the world we live in things are going from bad to worse. But as Christians we are going from grace to grace. This passage reminds us that...

A Christian's Life is Joyfully Different

What can we do to be different?

Celebrate marriage

Let's read verse 4a together. ⁴*Let marriage be held in honor among all*, Let's deal with the words and then this statement and then the implication. The words are "marriage" and "marriage bed." The great intimate joining of a man and woman under the lordship of Jesus Christ. That marriage is to be honored. That word "honored" is usually translated as "precious." In first Corinthians 3:12, it says "gold and silver and precious stone." In first Peter 1:19, it refers to the precious blood of Jesus. And then 2 Peter 1:4, says the "precious and great promises of God." Marriage is held as sacred value like a precious jewel that you would do anything to protect.

And then there are the words "among all." Here is a comprehensive statement. If you're single don't check out on me. Even if you have the gift of singleness or if you had it temporarily, don't waste it! Use this time to serve the Lord Jesus with a greater freedom than someone who is married. Even still single people are to look on marriage as a gift from God.

OK, those are the words. Now the statement. Let's read it all together and see how it starts. ⁴*Let marriage be held in honor among all*, That statement is written as an imperative. The word "let" is a command for the church, for married people and single people alike. So my question, then, is why? Why is

this such a big deal? If you are single it can feel like the church is worshipping marriage. Why is it such a centerpiece of Christianity? I would like to offer a few suggestions.

Kent Hughes puts it in a trinitarian form: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Marriage is a creation ordinance. God the Father honored marriage by establishing it before the fall. It's not just for the Christian but for human flourishing. In Genesis 2:24 it says, ²⁴ *Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.* This is why we categorically reject out of hand the idea of same-sex marriage. God the Father gave us marriage between a man and a woman before sin entered the world. And He did so as a building block of a well-ordered society. God the Father honored marriage by creating it.

God the Son, Jesus, honored marriage by attending a wedding in Cana of Galilee and performing His first miracle, changing water into wine. (It was a Presbyterian wedding.) And when Jesus spoke of marriage in Matthew 19, He quoted the verse from Genesis, "therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife and they shall become one flesh." God the Father honored marriage and God the Son honored marriage.

God the Holy Spirit honored marriage by using marriage as a picture of the Gospel in Ephesians 5, which is the most definitive instruction manual for marriage. In Ephesians 5:22-33, the Bible says for "wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord" and for husbands, "love your wives as Christ does the church and gave himself up for her." Paul will go on to say this is about Christ and the church. So that marriage becomes a tangible symbol of the Gospel.

So here's a good spot to pause and say, what is the Gospel? God in His goodness created you in His image. You have dignity because God created you in His image. I have to respect you because you are created in the image of God. But that image in you is disfigured by sin. Sin has disfigured that image in you so much so that we are separated from God. Be careful how you

talk about being far from God. You're not just far from God, the Bible says that we are actually *dead* in sin. That's a significant problem. The Bible says the wages of sin is death. God is a judge; sin is a crime. Crime must be punished by a holy judge. That puts us in a really bad spot.

Now here's the Gospel. We've got to start with condemnation; we are under condemnation. But that's not the end of the Gospel. The Gospel goes into the love of God. God shows His love by sending us Jesus. Jesus is all God and all man. Jesus as a man lived perfectly, keeping the law in a way that we can't. He kept righteousness where you have failed. He was fully righteous and that's important, because when He goes to the cross, what He does, He didn't just live for us, He dies for us. At the cross He takes the full wrath of God. So if you believe the Gospel, this is what you are believing. The wrath of God has been poured out on Jesus and He took all the punishment for every sin of every sinner who will ever be saved. He did that at the cross. At the cross, He took the wrath of God, and He was buried. God raised Him from the dead on a Sunday, shouting victory and forgiveness. Jesus ascended into Heaven and now He rules as Lord over all. That's the Gospel promise. It then is appropriated into your heart when you say, "I repent of my sin and put my faith in the life and death and resurrection of Jesus." And Paul says, marriage becomes the picture of the Gospel.

And that lets us know that God is extremely serious about the marriage of a man and woman, and He gives it to us in these beautiful positive terms. This reminds us that a Christian life is joyfully different. We celebrate marriage. What else do we do?

Fight for purity

⁴ Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, Now the preacher comes in close to the private life between a man and a woman, a husband and a wife. He says, let that union be undefiled. The word "undefiled" is used only four times in the New Testament and it basically means "pure, free from contamination." This is anything large or small that

threatens the God-given grace of the joyful union of a man and woman for life. And it comes down to the central tenet and command to fight for purity in marriage. And in today's world, that is an absolute slugfest in three areas.

Attitude. We swim in an ocean of promiscuousness and permissiveness, devaluing marriage. And yet we are in the ark that is Christ. Set your mind and heart on things above where Christ is.

Availability. Pornography and debauchery are everywhere. Fight it. Get rid of it. Delete, throw out, take drastic steps to protect your children. Jesus said, "if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off. If your right eye causes you to sin gouge it out." That is attitude and availability.

Actions. This is what you say, where you go, how you live, the steps you take. We are living as exiles in a foreign land. One of the best ways to fight sin and to fight for purity is an acronym I first heard from John Piper.

ANTHEM.

A is for Avoid. Avoid as much as possible the sights and situations that might cause you to sin. What places, screens and social media should you avoid? Maybe it's the internet late at night or bars and clubs. It could be certain friends that you need to avoid.

N is for No. Say no, out loud, to every lustful thought within five seconds in the name of Jesus. What did John Owen say? Be killing sin or it will be killing you.

T is to Turn. Turn the mind forcefully toward Christ as a superior satisfaction. Saying no isn't enough. You must turn from defense to offense. Attach the lies of sin with the promise of Christ. Know the Bible.

H is for Hold. Hold the promises of Christ and the truth of God's word firmly in your mind until it pushes the other images out. Hebrews 12:2 says, *² looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set*

before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Fix your eyes on Jesus.

E is for Enjoy. Enjoy a superior satisfaction. What steps have you taken to deepen your love for Christ? Attend worship, confess sin, have your prayer time and be in fellowship with Christ. Become a Christian.

M is for Move. Move into a useful activity. Move away from idleness and boredom. There's a reason the old folks used to say that idle hands are the Devil's workshop. Get up and do something. Clean the house, go to work, take a walk, do 100 jumping jacks. Move.

There is joy in getting victory over sin. A Christians life is joyfully different. Celebrate marriage and fight for purity.

Always apply the Gospel

Let's finish by reading verse 4 in its entirety with emphasis on the end of the verse. *4 Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.* This is how serious the matter of sexual sin is. God will judge the sexually immoral, fornication and those having sex before marriage. He will judge adultery, having sex with someone besides your spouse. And the statement here is that God judges and condemns that.

Now listen carefully. There are many in this room who have committed a sin like this and deserve judgment but for grace. The Apostle Paul addressed this when he spoke to the church in Corinth in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. *9 Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality,¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹ And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. See verse 11?*

And *such were some of you*. BUT – you were washed clean. You were purchased by the blood of Jesus. You were adopted as a son or daughter. BUT – you were sanctified. You are not only cleaned but you are received as holy. BUT – you were justified and are now right before God. And then look at the end verse 11, *in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God*. It's like Paul sealed the statement by our triune God.

If this passage has made you uncomfortable or ashamed or worried for someone you love, run to the Gospel. We don't diminish God's hatred for sin. We rejoice in the forgiving power, the saving, healing power of Jesus Christ. We believe in His perfect life in your place. His death in your place and God raising Him from the dead and offering you this free grace. The free grace of Jesus saves anyone who will come to Him. Here is the ground of our hope and joy.

A Christian's life is joyfully different because of Jesus.

(Pastor prays)