

Title: Think Jes^{us}! (pt.2)

Text: 1 Corinthians 6.12-17

Theme: How to view sin

Series: 1 Corinthians #23

Prop Stmt. Every believer is part of a body, so what the believer does affects the whole.

1 Corinthians really lays all of the cards on the table doesn't it? God is not shy at all about dealing with the sublime and the raw issues of life. In fact, while we tend to think of spiritual matters as being lofty, and everything else as being earthy, God's Word shows us the important connection between them. But, not everyone is used to hearing such straight forward talk about sensitive matters. I know that, and care about how I communicate these truths so that both the substance of the text, the intent of the passage and the heart of Christ is really put forth to you. Sometimes I come into this Worship Center when no one else is here and I sit in different seats and try to put myself in the shoes of someone coming in here for the first time who is curious about what we believe. If that is you, I pray for you and pray that your heart will really hear and embrace the message. I am aware that not everyone is ready to hear what God's Word says, but I must and will preach it anyway.

Last Sunday I was preaching through a particularly challenging passage given the current state of our culture. I mentioned then that it was a text that was full of warning and full of hope. I knew that in order to understand how gracious of a Savior we have, and what an incredible joy it is to be washed, sanctified and justified (as v.11 speaks of), we needed to visit and understand that coming to Christ demands a turning away from our sin. In verses 9 and 10 the Bible is very clear about what some of the sins are that a follower of Christ turns away from. Last Sunday as I was just starting to work through that part, I saw an unusual number of people get up and leave. As you know, in every service someone usually has to leave the service. But this was clearly more than usual and it was all about the same time when I was dealing with the pretty hard-hitting terrain. I am watching people leave, wondering what did I say that was so offensive, thinking back through that, and at the same time, continuing to preach. I rehearsed that part of the sermon over and over and finally on Monday morning in staff meeting I asked for the staff to critique the sermon. Was I harsh? Was I confusing? What was it? Were people really that upset? Jeff started laughing and said, "You didn't hear what happened did you?" "No" I said, "what?" Every Sunday, we have a team of people who serve on our medical alert team ready to respond to any medical need that arises. They each wear a pager and have a protocol to follow. In addition to that, if you take your child to our wonderful nurseries, you are given a pager so that if for whatever reason, your child needs you, you are paged and you can go to the nursery. Last Sunday, a medical need arose and the medical team was paged, but the person sending the page accidentally hit the "Page All" button. So, not only did the medical staff respond, but every parent who had a pager now thought that something had happened to their child. People were popping up all over the place. Granted, the passage last Sunday was very clear. These verses that we are looking at this week are just also very earthy, but the big idea that Paul is attempting to help these believers grasp is absolutely critical for us to embrace also.

This entire passage is about “body life.” When you become a follower of Christ, you become part of his body, his family, his church (or as we say around here) part of the stuff. That truth runs counter-intuitive to cultural mainstream. We hear and we tend to think – it’s my body I can do with it what I like. As you well know that is the irrational basis of abortion, euthanasia and a host of other tragic activities. If there was no God and you were the only person alive on planet earth, that idea may have some validity. But you are not only part of a world, you are part of a country, part of a community, and part of a family. Many of you are followers of Jesus Christ, and to you this text is directed. You are part of something that is absolutely fundamental to your core identity. You are part of a community of believers called the church. Your life, my life is our life. We have to learn to: Think Jesus!

That is the big idea of this text. Let’s get into it.

1. What are you thinking about “your” life? (12-13a)

“Everything is permissible for me.” Is Paul really saying that he has permission to do whatever he wants? Actually it appears that Paul is quoting something that some of the people in Corinth have been saying. In other words, some of the believers were saying this in an attempt to excuse or justify their sin. They were taking one aspect of Christianity to an unbiblical conclusion. Hey, I am free in Christ!! I have this position in Christ that allows me to sin and have heaven too.

Perhaps you have heard Las Vegas’ more recent chamber of commerce slogan, “What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas.” They have gone back to the sin all you want without consequences slogan, when their attempt at a family values campaign did not work. Well, this slogan – “Everything is permissible” (idea that I am free to do whatever I want) was apparently a slogan that was popular in Corinth, only the believers were using it in the church because of some rather creative spiritual gymnastics.

Within the broad umbrella of cultural Christianity, there has usually been a group of people who have reasoned that what is on the inside is the only thing that matters. Therefore, I can do anything that I want with my body. After all, my body will die. It is my soul that lives on. What happens to my soul is the most important thing. So, as long as my spirit is pure, I can indulge my body in whatever I want. This seemed to be part of the mix in the church at Corinth. Also, there were people who reasoned that because they appeared to have some of the more spiritual gifts, like speaking in tongues and a word of knowledge, they were obviously men of the Spirit and were not affected by things that were done with the body. They were basically living on a different level than most others. They reasoned that these gifts were undeniable evidence of their superior spirituality and were therefore free from the things that were known to affect others. In other words, the rules did not apply to them. They were above them. Therefore, the argument is, there were people in Corinth who were using this line (Everything is permissible for me) as their own slogan and excuse for immoral behavior (in this case, visiting prostitutes, whether street or temple, the text does not say).

Even though you have freedom in Christ, this freedom is not about living for self-centered pleasures, but living for a higher goal. You are part of the body of Christ and you have to live with that in view. Do you see what is happening here? Paul is demonstrating that NT Christianity is not a heavy-handed, rules-oriented life. NT Christianity is driven at the heart level. Notice that Paul does not respond to their wrong views with a series of rules. Instead he wants them (and us) to consider something else. He wants us to think. Is the action that I am about to take beneficial?

A. Is it Beneficial?

What are you thinking about your life and the decisions that you make? Is the decision that you are making helpful? There is truth to the fact that a follower of Christ is no longer subject to the OT dietary and national laws of Israel. Viewed in that light, there is some truth to the statement that everything is permissible to me, which does not mean that all things are sanctioned by God, but instead has more of the idea that believers have been granted liberty from the OT ceremonial laws. Here Paul introduces some other things to consider, that will become very important later on (10.23, etc.) What you are seeing here is a very clear contrast between genuine Christianity and cults. In a cult, you typically have a very strong authoritarian leader or leaders who demand blind allegiance, and exert incredible control over the lives of their followers. If you want to buy a car, you have to ask their permission. If you want to buy a home or move, you have to ask their permission. The followers learn not to think or make decisions for themselves or grow and mature. They only learn to fear and to do what they are told. Do you see what is happening here in this text? Clearly there are sins that we are called upon to avoid (verses 9-10), but there are principles that Christ wants us to embrace. One of those principles for living is found in answering this question – Is what I am about to do beneficial? Second question;

B. Is it Binding?

I joke about eating ice cream, and there is no doubt that I like it. But what if, I had to have a bowl of it every night. Who then is lord of my life? Is it Christ or is it ice cream? There is no rule against eating ice cream, but there is a principle of bondage. Is there something in your life other than Christ that you think that you have to have? What do you turn to in stress? What do you think that you have to have in order to calm your nerves and settle you down? We all know where this text is heading, but before we get there, Paul asks us some very important questions. Who are you? Are you just a bunch of glands shrink wrapped in epidermis? If not, then should your glands be in charge of the decisions and habits that govern your life? It's a good question – isn't it? Is the action that you are taking binding? And here is where a level of maturity comes in. There may be something that is binding for you that is not binding for someone else.

You may be able to eat 2 potato chips and walk away, while someone else does not stop at 2 and ends up eating the entire Pringle canister. But, this text is clearly more than about food, as the next statement makes so clear.

2. What are you thinking about “your” body? (13-17)

“Food for the stomach and the stomach for food.” Again it appears that this is probably something that people were saying in the Corinthian church that Paul is quoting. Some of the people in Corinth were in essence saying, “Look, my body gets hungry – so I feed it. That hunger tells me that my body needs something, so I respond to its needs. There is nothing wrong with feeding your body when it is hungry. Therefore, when my body wants sex, there is nothing wrong with taking care of that need as well. After all, it is nothing more than a bodily function similar to eating.” What is the obvious problem with that thinking?

The problem is, if you do not eat, you will die. That is not the case regarding sex. The other problem with that view is that some were taking what is a God-given desire and were seeking to satisfy that desire in a very ungodlike manner. The Bible is clear that sex is not just a mindless, biological function. Ever hear this one? “Hey we don’t love each other, so if we have sex it doesn’t matter, no one takes it seriously.” People may say that, but no one really believes that. I can speak about all sorts of things and in the course of the sermon, may use little stories or examples to illustrate the point and keep you awake. But when I speak on this subject, I do not have to keep you awake, in fact, sometimes I actually have to interject a little humor just to get some of the tension out of the room, because every person knows that it does matter. What people have not quite figured out is why it matters so much. Here is one of life’s great ironies. In the name of expressing yourself, breaking out, living out your freedoms, doing your own thing, you can pursue a sexual ethic that you will eventually find is incredibly dehumanizing, where you are nothing more than a number, a carcass, or an animal. Every encounter sucks more of the essence of life out of you. Your laughter is replaced with cynicism, your joy is replaced by anger. A world that used to be in living color now is a dull gray. A promising future is now replaced by broken dreams. You withdraw, you hide, you run, you duck, you cover, you slowly die, maybe not from a disease, you just die a little bit at a time and you wake up to find there is nothing left. God never made you for immorality, because immorality destroys you. God made you for Himself, and God gave us the gift of sex to be enjoyed within the covenant of marriage. Some of the people in the church at Corinth were saying – it’s my body, I can do with it whatever I want. Oh no it isn’t! When you come to faith in Christ....

A. Your body belongs to God. (13b)

“The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.” Wow, that sure helps us understand that our relationship to Christ affects every aspect of ourselves – body included. Your body is not yours to do with whatever you feel like at the moment, it is the Lord’s.

B. Your body is eternal. (14)

Now, if you are a follower of Christ, your body is going to undergo a change. The way that it is right now will not work in heaven, which is why flesh and blood cannot inherit

the kingdom of God (15.50). And in that change, it appears that your body after the resurrection day will have no need for a stomach, since we will not have to eat in order to sustain ourselves. (God will destroy them both) Here Paul goes back to the resurrection of Jesus Christ and says, what happened to Him, is what is going to happen to you. Your body belongs to God – forever, so it does matter what you do with this body.

- 1) God raised Christ
- 2) Christ had a body [implied]
- 3) God will raise us (just like he raised Christ and because...)

In fact...

C. Your body is part of the “body of Christ.”

Your body belongs to God – forever. Your members (hands, feet, etc) are literally his and to be used for Him. He views your hands and feet and his. Can you take the body of Christ and unite it with a prostitute? No! You get the point don't you? This is a body that we are part of. What you do affects all of us. You do not sin in secret. The lie says, it's your body and it doesn't matter what you do as long as no one else gets hurt.

Prostitution is an attempt to deny the sacred unity that is expressed in intimacy. That is why, in that industry, there is so much violence and bondage, it so dehumanizing. No amount of make-up or soft lighting can mask the emptiness that comes to those who practice or those who patronize.

You were not made to be empty. You were made by God to be satisfied, but you cannot find that satisfaction in anyone or in anything, except in Him. (17)

This passage presents 2 roads.

- 1) Get used and call it love. At the end there is nothing left to live for and nothing left to give. Or
- 2) Be Loved by God. There is no end and there is no emptiness because this eternal God is a God who loves you so much that He gave you the very best when he gave you His Son.

Amy Carmichael was a missionary to India. She became acquainted with many little girls, whose families sold them to a local temple where they were raised and kept in order to service the lusts of the male worshipers. The level and affect of syphilis, gonorrhea and other STD's was staggering, but even worse, was the emptiness and hopelessness that these girls lived with. Amy developed a ministry that helped to reach out to these girls who had only known repeated abuse of the worst kind. She tried to help them get reconnected with their moms that they needed so much. And she taught them the gospel of Christ. He was a man, who did not come to take what they should not have to give, but He came to give what they desperately had to have.