

Sermon Notes/Follow-up

1 Cor. 6:9-11

“And Such *Were* Some of You: A New Way of Being Human”

Rich Lusk

There is obviously a lot more to say about all of the topics raised in the sermon, including Paul’s list of sinful patterns that cannot be tolerated in the church and the gift of the kingdom to those who are faithful/obedient.

Obviously, because homosexuality is the topic of the moment in the culture, I focused on it the sermon. I will also focus on it in these notes, though even then we will only be scratching the surface of what needs to be said. Remember, these notes are very rough and not at all a finished product. Nothing in these notes is to be quoted or distributed without permission.

We see two extremes in the church’s response to the gay agenda. Both are represented here: <http://www.baylyblog.com/2010/04/tim-keller-on-sexuality-again.html>.

When I hear Keller (who I really like) trying to squirm out of having to address homosexuality because of his audience, I am greatly troubled. We simply have to find a way to preach to this issue or we consign ourselves to irrelevance. I actually think Keller’s approach is a lot like those Southern pastors in the 1950s and 1960s who knew racism was wrong but refused to speak to the issue from the pulpit for fear of being misunderstood or causing offense. It is, quite frankly, a form of cowardice, letting the world rather than the Word dictate what we say. If silence about homosexuality is some kind of “missional” strategy, we have truly outsmarted ourselves. We need to get back to just preaching and teaching the Word, letting the chips fall where they may. It doesn’t make any sense to purchase relevance at the price of silence on the most relevant issues of the day; in so doing, our quest for relevance actually backfires and we end up irrelevant.

But others in the church tend to think the best way to deal with homosexuality is by showing that they are totally grossed out by it and then repeating the biblical condemnations in shrill tones at high volume. This approach comes off as self-righteous and arrogant and is not likely to further the mission of the church.

If Jesus was able to attract major sinners to himself during his ministry, shouldn’t the church, as the continuation of that ministry, do the same? Our churches should be places where people with same sex attraction are welcomed on gospel terms (faith and repentance), not shunned or scared away. A successful church in our age is going to have to be able to minister the gospel to people who are deeply dysfunctional in their sexuality, but right now there is little evidence most Bible-believing, conservative churches are able to do that.

Conservatives have a tendency right now to treat homosexuals as scapegoats, blaming them for everything going wrong in the culture. We should not be naive; the gay agenda does pose a significant threat to our religious liberties. But the gay agenda is just the outworking of a sexual revolution that has been going on for a long time. Homosexuality is just the next – and I suppose the final – phase of our long-term sexual rebellion. The church has been complicit in this. We have not dealt with unbiblical divorce and pre-marital sex among members, or sexual scandals among our leaders. Our own families in the church are often in shambles – and that has far more to do with the present crisis in our culture. Where was the church when no-fault divorce was instituted? Where has the church been, as fathers have abandoned their families en masse? It looks hypocritical and self-interested to all of sudden draw the line at gay marriage. Why are suddenly so concerned about upholding biblical standards in public life with regard to marriage?

I am NOT saying we shouldn't fight the gay marriage battle. I think we need to. But we also need to repent. And that repentance will color and texture our political involvement with a deep humility. 1 Cor. 5:9-12 remind us that we should not expect non-Christians to live like Christians. But we can and should seek the common good of the society in which we live, and it is very hard to see how promoting homosexual acts and culture can in any way serve the common good of society, especially since the logical end of the gay agenda will virtually force the church into a cultural closet.

I wish I could give more time to developing what it means to say that homosexuality – or, more specifically, homosexual activity -- is “unnatural.” This is an important issue because many will make the claim that gays are the way they are because “God made them that way.” We have to respond by saying, no, God did not make any man's anus to be rammed by another man's penis. That's blunt – but that's what homosexuals do (among other unnatural forms of sexuality). This is not for the faint of heart, and it's from a Roman Catholic, but here is more info: <http://pblosser.blogspot.com/2006/06/what-homosexuals-do.html>. Homosexuality is a misuse of the body and misuse of sexuality.

The Bible does not acknowledge a homosexual “orientation,” as if someone were immutably attracted to the opposite sex as a law of their being. 1 Cor. 6:9-11 shows that homosexuals can change! Their desires can be retrained. And thankfully, thousands of men in recent years have come out of a homosexual lifestyle, thanks to various Christian ministries and churches.

This means we should not let someone define himself as a “homosexual.” We all use that language – and I have used it myself. But properly speaking, there is no thing as a homosexual, only someone who performs homosexual acts. A homosexual is not a

different kind of person with a different orientation; rather, he is someone who uses his body and his sexuality in a dysfunctional, unnatural way.

While appeals to physical consequences are not absolute, it is indisputable that those who engage in homosexual practices get more diseases, have more emotional and mental problems, and have a shorter lifespan than those who do not. Disease is nature's way of showing that something is going wrong. Homosexual activity is at war with nature as God designed it; and nature fights back because nature is on God's side.

Is there a biological or genetic component to homosexuality? Even if there were, it would not change anything, and would certainly not exclude homosexuals from responsibility for their actions. Take alcoholism. There is actually far more evidence for a genetic component in alcoholism than homosexuality. But alcoholism is still unnatural – and therefore destroys the body, just as homosexuality does. Just as we hold alcoholics responsible for their behavior, whatever the genetic background may be, so we must with homosexuality.

Further, homosexuality is an unnatural alienation from the opposite sex. God made man incomplete and he made woman incomplete. He made them each lacking in something that could only be found in the other. But homosexuality is a rejection of the other. At root same sex attraction is self-attraction – or, to put it another way, the ultimate form of narcissism. Of course, this brings us back to Paul's critique of homosexuality in Rom. 1:18ff, where fallen men and women exchange the glory of God for their own glory. Ultimately, all of humanity's idols are thin veils covering up worship of the self.

The case of Sodom is also instructive. In Genesis, it is clear that Sodom is judged at least in part because of its sexual perversity, seen in their desire to commit homosexual gang rape. When Ezekiel reflects back on that episode in history, he identifies Sodom's lack of care for the poor and refusal of hospitality as well. But I would say all these sins are related. Hospitality is literally love for strangers, love for those different than oneself. Proper affection between a man and a woman is thus a unique form of hospitality – of welcoming someone different from the self into one's life, of loving the one who is "the other." Homosexuality rejects the other in every sense – whether the stranger at the city gates, or one of the opposite sex.

I do not think one has to embrace the Roman Catholic Church's complete prohibition on birth control to point out the intrinsic procreative difference between heterosexual and homosexual sexual acts. Heterosexual sex has the power to give life, to create life, in a way that homosexual sex never can, even if we grant that not every instance of heterosexual intercourse will be (or has to be) procreative. Homosexual intercourse is *intrinsically* powerless and impotent, which is one of the reasons I think Paul calls it "unnatural" in Romans 1. Paul assumes there is a natural

use, a God-given function and purpose, for our sexual powers, which include both bonding a man and a woman together as one flesh, and creating offspring as the fruit of their shared love and life. You see both of these purposes in Gen. 1-2.

Homosexuality does not accomplish either purpose: It does not bind two different-but-complementary persons together, thus rejecting the truth that God made man male and female in the beginning; and it cannot produce new life since it is an intrinsically sterile action, thus rejecting God's command to be fruitful and multiply. Homosexuality is not merely a violation of God's law (as though that law were arbitrary); it is a violation of our own nature, of our God-given sexual design. Homosexual activity is a misuse of our procreative organs because it can never be procreative. To quote an old professor of mine, to use the penis and anus as homosexuals do is like using the lungs to sniff glue, thinking that's what they're made for; or it's like using a tea cup to drive a nail, thinking that's what it's made for. No: When you use something contrary to its design, it either works badly, or breaks altogether (which is exactly what happens to the bodies of homosexuals -- homosexual practice is sexual suicide).

At TPC, don't have and don't need an official position on birth control since that is a matter best left to Christian liberty and biblical principle/wisdom. But I think the basic, inescapable fact that heterosexuality is intrinsically procreative in a way that homosexuality is not is something we should point to as a reason why the latter must be considered an "unnatural" use of our sexuality. Same with same sex is always sterile, which is contrary to God's overall, big picture design for the sex act.

Conservative, Reformed, evangelical congregations like TPC are not immune to having people with friends, family, and even church members who struggle with same sex attraction. We live in times of rampant sexual confusion, and lot of times that shows up in places we'd least expect it. For most of the older folks at TPC, there won't be any question about whether or not homosexuality is wrong. For the younger set, being taught/reminded that it is wrong is probably more a necessity than we'd like to admit, especially since they're hearing the opposite everywhere else they go (e.g., the college classroom, the media, etc.). But I think our teaching should not consist *merely* in condemnations, but in reasoned, persuasive arguments *why* God forbids homosexual activity (just as we have to make reasoned arguments against heterosexual fornication, etc.). Being prophetic in this case does not mean shouting out biblical prohibitions in loud volume; it means training our people to embrace a biblical view of sexuality in a culture that is awash in the opposite.

All that being said, there's another issue here that often gets overlooked – and I think this issue is critical. Conservative Christians who know that homosexual practice is a moral evil still have to wrestle with some very important questions, such as: How do we interact with gays and pro-gay people all around us? What does it mean to be missional in such a wider context? How can we present the Bible's teaching on sexuality to them in a way that is humble and winsome, yet also

forthright? How do we navigate the charges of homophobia and hate speech while speaking the truth about homosexuality and calling homosexuals to repent? The temptation for many conservatives is making their condemnations of homosexuality come off as self-righteous; they're disgusted by homosexuality and they want everyone to know it. We can easily give the impression that heterosexuals are "righteous" while homosexuals are "wicked." But the antithesis does not run between heterosexuals and homosexuals; it runs between sexual sinners *of all sorts* who have repented and turned to Christ, and sexual sinners of all sorts who haven't. That's why Paul's line in 1 Cor. 6, "such *were* some of you" is so powerful, so important.

In Alabama, you all too often have the young man who is sleeping around with the girl of his choice each weekend -- but he's absolutely certain gay marriage is wrong, and in fact, to call something "gay" is the biggest insult he can think of. Or you have the redneck who is on his third marriage, but believes the gay agenda is the biggest threat to traditional family values we face. Yeah, right, buddy, keep on thinking that. All too many people in Bible belt culture pick and choose when it comes to biblical morality; they feel righteous because they have avoided the "big sins" according to their own personal definitions. "Yeah, I sleep around...but at least I'm not gay." "Yeah, I've been divorced a few times....but at least I'm with *women*, unlike those wicked homos." It takes more than disgust with homosexuality to prove that one is righteous. And if that disgust actually arises from self-righteousness, then there is a huge problem.

Preaching on homosexuality in conservative circles, where the evil of homosexuality is basically taken for granted, might be trickier than speaking to a more liberal audience. You have to help them situate their moral conviction about homosexuality within the context of the gospel and the mission of the church -- something I think many churches around us have failed to do.

How, then, do we minister to homosexuals? We need to avoid showing them contempt or expressing disgust. Jesus never did that with the sexual sinners he encountered. We can and must tell them what the Bible says about homosexual activity. But this proclamation should come in the context of friendship. We should strive to speak the truth in love, being as winsome and forthright as we can be. And we need to make it clear by our words and actions that we are sinners too, in need of the same salvation we are offering. We need to leave no doubt that we are trustworthy and have their best interests at heart. Those who I know who have been effective reaching gays with the gospel and bringing them to repentance have done so in an environment of deep friendship and service.

One thing we need to avoid doing is giving the impression that the homosexual would be saved if he could just become straight. That's just another works righteousness program. Straightening out one's sexuality does not merit eternal life. Instead, we need to talk in terms of forgiveness and God's gracious work of transformation -- the twin benefits of union with Christ that all of us desperately

need!

Birmingham still has more vestiges of "Christendom" than other places in the country, for which we should be thankful. But even the "Bible Belt" is being rapidly secularized. My sermon from a few weeks back on the church as nation and culture was an attempt to help our people think through what it would mean to live in an America that does not support "traditional Christian/family values." We have to learn to think and act like missionaries living in a non-Christian host culture. We need to be less concerned with how to "take America back" (as a lot of conservative rhetoric puts it these days) and more concerned with learning to live as holy counter-culture, a city on a hill, a light in the darkness. God will give America back to the church when the church herself is faithful -- but not before. We have to understand the times; the church's relationship to culture is fluid and dynamic, not fixed and static.

All of this, of course, has a bearing on how we deal with the gay agenda. I think we need to work the political angle, but finding ways to reach gays through the church's ministry of word and need is far, far more important in the long run.

In the meantime, we need to prepare ourselves for the gay agenda running its course. This means we will be confronted with some difficult challenges, especially on the religious liberty front, which are unprecedented for this part of the world.

Even if we do not know many gays, we all certainly know a lot of people who approve of the gay lifestyle. I would not go so far as to say such a person cannot be a Christian because Christians can be confused about many things. But one thing we have to do as a church is train those under our pastoral care to interact with people who think the gay lifestyle is morally acceptable, because that's where more and more of the general population is ending up. Unless we're going to crawl under rocks and go into hiding, we need to be able to address the gay agenda in a biblical/missional way. Just as we'll need to train our people to interact with Muslims and point them to Christ, so we need to be training our people to interact with a pro-gay culture, so we can point people in that culture to Christ. That means a lot more than getting them to parrot the biblical teaching that homosexual practice is an abomination. It means helping them understand the beauty of God's true design for human sexuality. And most importantly, it means connecting that design for sexuality with the gospel of salvation in Christ.

I cannot enter into all the aspects of the gay marriage debate. I won't even get into how Christians should respond to it politically. But I think the whole thing boils

down to one simple issue: Is marriage of divine or human origin? If it's a human institution, a matter of convention, then sure, we can redefine it to suit ourselves. But if God ordained marriage, if God has woven marriage into the very fabric of our being so that's normative, just part of the way things are, then we are most certainly not free to redefine it. In fact, if marriage is of divine origin, to tamper with it, by changing up the roles, the duration of the relationship, or the genders involved, is a highly dangerous move. Of course, for Christians, there is no question that marriage is one of God's creation ordinances. It designed to be an exclusive, lifelong, whole-person covenant commitment between one man and one woman. This means that two men, or two women, really cannot enter into the relationship we call marriage.

The two terms, translated as "homosexuals" and "sodomites" in 1 Cor. 6, refer to active and passive partners in a homosexual act. (Robert Gagnon is the best author on this issue.) Or, as I put it in the sermon, Paul is intending by these two terms to cover the whole range of homosexual activity. That means Paul is not forbidding only homosexual rape, homosexual acts with minors, or homosexuals acts performed by those who are "naturally oriented" to heterosexuality; Paul's condemnation applies just as much to a committed, consensual homosexual couple as it does to homosexual "cruising." (Of course, the notion that two homosexual men are going to have a stable, long term monogamous relationship analogous to traditional hetero marriage is just ridiculous anyway.)

The bibliography on homosexuality is absolutely immense, and I cannot even begin to mention all the worthwhile books and articles that are out there. Briefly, I would strongly recommend Robert Gagnon's *The Bible and Homosexual Practice* as the most definitive treatment of the Bible's teaching on the topic. Ed Welch has small booklet entitled *Homosexuality* that is helpful to read and pass along. J. Budziszewski has a number of writings that critique homosexuality from a Christian natural law viewpoint. Robert Rayburn has a helpful sermon series available here: <http://www.faithtacoma.org/series/homosexuality.aspx>.

It's sometimes asked: Is homosexuality the worst of all sins? Is it sin's final frontier, the final maturation of human depravity? On the one hand, we need to stress that homosexuality is not any different than any other sin. It deserves God's punishment, but it is certainly forgivable and remediable. Homosexual behavior shows up in lists that include all kinds of other sins including greed and disobeying parents (Rom. 1, 1 Cor. 6). In that sense, there is no need to single out the sin of homosexuality for special treatment.

At the same time, Rayburn provides some helpful insight:

It is interesting that in the Bible homosexuality is sometimes treated as one among many sins. In Paul's catalog of sins for which God's judgment and wrath is reserved, such as we are given in 1 Cor. 6:9-10, homosexual acts are listed together with all other forms of sexual immorality – promiscuity and adultery, for example – *and* with theft, drunkenness, and slander. Indeed, the Lord Jesus makes a point of saying that there are worse sins than homosexuality. On more than one occasion he said that it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment – cities you remember that were notorious for their homosexual perversion – than for the towns of Galilee that witnessed the coming of the Messiah, saw him perform miracles, and yet did not believe in him. [Matt. 10:14-15; 11:22-24]

It is very important for Christians to remember this. Homosexual sin is, first and foremost, sin, one of many forms of rebellion against God and the rejection of the Creator's will for human life. Homosexuality is a form of sexual sin, and we are all sinners and it is very doubtful if any of us is not a sexual sinner, sinful in the way we think and act under the influence of sexual desire. If we do not sin in precisely the same way as the homosexual sins, we sin in other ways equally damning – including other ways of sexual sin – more often than we know and more egregiously than we ever care to admit. That is very clear in Paul and in the rest of the Bible. The homosexual is no different from any other sinner and from any other sexual sinner: he is a rebel who needs to be reconciled to God his Maker. He is a sinner who needs forgiveness in Jesus Christ. And, as we will point out next week, the Bible's greatest word about homosexuality is that it is a sin that can be and often has been utterly forgiven and swept away by the grace of God in Jesus Christ. The homosexual need have no less hope than anyone else of eternal life if only he or she will come to Christ for forgiveness and for new life.

But it is also true that Paul seems here to regard homosexuality as a terminal form of sin, a sin that is the riper fruit of previous sin, as sin in its maturity and full development, sin that has gone beyond the normal course of human sin. Paul certainly seems to be giving an anatomy of sin's development and its course in human life in these verses. One thing leads to another and sin worsens as it goes. The implication very clearly in vv. 26 and 27 is that however offensive, however repellent is fornication and adultery, homosexuality is still more so, more degenerate, more perverse. And this is everywhere the Bible's view. In Genesis' account of Sodom and Gomorrah and in Judges' account of the men of Gibeah homosexual practice is regarded as worse than other forms of sexual sin. In Leviticus 18 homosexuality is listed together with sins of incest and bestiality, especially awful sexual sins. As you may know, efforts have been made to get round the impression of this material – to argue that only homosexual abuse is condemned or only uncommitted homosexual sex or homosexual sex that does not proceed from a homosexual orientation – but these are desperate and utterly unconvincing

attempts and founder on the plain words of the Bible. What the Bible condemns and consistently condemns as especially egregious sexual sin is sex with the same sex -- the desire for it and the practice of it. It is unnatural.

At the social level this is obvious enough. Homosexuality as a public lifestyle has developed only after our society's widespread acceptance of other sexual sins: promiscuity, pornography, abortion and the like. But at the personal level it can also be seen. We are not surprised to read, for example, that Hugh Hefner, who made a life of seducing and using young women, and who has publicly gloried in his life of endless promiscuity, now finds that even with young women he must resort to homosexual pornography. Sated on heterosexual promiscuity, this now eighty-year-old man must move to something still further removed from his nature to gratify his self-expression as a rebel against God and to satisfy his lust for pleasure. Or, we might consider the fact that homosexual orientation is often the result of abusive, troubled, or confused relationships on the part of children with his or her parents or peers. Such a life, in other words, is regularly the fruit of other ways in which lives have gone wrong.

I don't mean to suggest that Paul means that sexually depraved societies will eventually become entirely homosexual – the prevalence of homosexuality in societies generally seems quite stable in fact – only that there is that about the sin in itself that renders it still further from the ideal of the creator than other forms of sexual sin. There is something more, something additional that is wrong with it. It represents, the sin in itself, a full-flowering of sin and rebellion against God. It is not simply that sexual activity is not pure and chaste, but now is in fact unnatural. It is not enough that men and women are having sex who should not; in this case men are not having sex with women at all, nor women with men. It is as if we have moved beyond men not wanting to *do* what God commands; now they do not even want to *be* what God has made them to be. Listen carefully; I am not saying that such a progression has taken place in any particular homosexual's life. Not at all. Very often people who struggle against homosexuality do so in large part because they have been sinned against, not because they themselves have sinned and been punished with this greater sin. What I am saying is that the sin in itself and as a feature of society is sin "down the road," sin that has gone beyond. That the Bible says very clearly. Homosexuality was a Canaanite sin, the sin of people who had lost their moral compass entirely; the sin of people who sacrificed their own children to idols, as we do in our abortion practicing age.

Now, as is well known and can be easily demonstrated, Paul wrote these words to Christians who lived in a culture that, very much like ours, was decidedly tolerant of homosexual activity and, as today, heard voices trumpeting its virtue, even its superiority to heterosexual sex. But he also speaks here as if his condemnation of homosexuality – in itself and in all its

forms – were perfectly uncontroversial *in the church*. The reason for this is precisely his argument that God created men and women for each other sexually and that homosexuality is and must be, in the nature of the case, a betrayal of the Creator's intention and of his goodness and wisdom in making man male and female. *The fundamental issue here and in every other part of our lives is this: are we creatures of a Creator? Have we been made with a purpose? Are our lives our own or do we belong to the One who made us? Is our way of life ours to choose or must we do the will of our Maker? Is the Jesus merely our friend or is he the Lord of the cosmos to whom all human beings are subject?*

All of man's rebellion against God, Paul here says, takes the form of a denial of God as the creator of heaven and earth and of every human being. It is utterly predictable that in an age that denies creation and our creation – the age of Darwin and evolution – we should hear the very practices that amount to a repudiation of God the creator being recommended and celebrated. We kill babies in the womb for one reason and one only: we do not believe that they are creatures of the living God who, as their creator, will hold accountable those who kill people whom he has made. We have sex outside of marriage for one reason and one reason only: we do not believe that God made sex for very specific purpose and appointed marriage as the only proper sphere of sexual intimacy. We have sex outside of marriage because we do not believe that God has established an order for human life and that those who violate that order *are defying his will*.

Nothing should be less surprising than that in a day such as ours, a day when the very idea of God's creation of heaven and earth and of men and women is now so far removed from the mind, man exults in the doing of what the Creator forbids, that man celebrates the violation of his nature. It is the most convincing way to declare that his nature belongs to himself alone and does not come from God. It is the perfect act of rebellion. That is what homosexuality is: a protest against the very idea that a man has a creator, a creator with a will, a plan, and a purpose for human life, and a law that governs that life. Homosexuality is the denial of God the Creator. But God *is* the Creator and that is why homosexuality is a scourge for those who practice it and for the society that endorses it. Man can deny his Creator; he cannot escape him. Man can deny his nature; he cannot escape it. Man can rebel but he cannot prevail. To proclaim God the Creator is to give men the only hope there is: the way back to what is real.

Does God judge men for homosexuality? Or is homosexuality itself the punishment? Does it carry in itself punishment? Of course, both are true. Doug Wilson writes:

Just as the image of God is being restored in those who are being saved, so it is being destroyed in those who are drifting toward the outer darkness. On the precipice of the abyss, there is no aristocracy, no nobility, no friends, no

courage, no integrity. Another way of putting this is that everyone on the brink of damnation is pathetic—a gollum. This is not just true of the intellect, or the soul, or the heart. The whole man is saved in Christ, and the whole man is lost apart from Him. Mankind, male and female, is saved and restored in Christ. Mankind, male and female, is lost, turned, twisted and perverted outside of Christ. The twists and turns along the way can be many and various—sodomite and catamite, dyke and doll, one man with many women, one woman with many men, adults with children, or men with beasts—but all of these have one thing in common: they are desperately trying to erase what remains of the image of God within them, and they are resisting the restoration of that image in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This is why the apostle Paul describes homosexuality as the tail end of a dead-end flight from the living God. Because men and women do not want to honor God as God, and do not want to give Him thanks, God gives them up to the corrosive effects of their corrupt lusts (Rom. 1:26-28). This is why it is so important for us to recognize that while all sins will incur the judgment of God (Matt. 12:36), there is a category of sin which in itself constitutes a judgment from God. When the sin is committed, the judgment has already arrived.

For example, the mouth of an adulterous woman is a deep pit. The one who is abhorred of the Lord will fall there (Prov. 22:14). Such a sin does not just bring subsequent judgment—it is a judgment brought. Paul teaches the same thing with regard to homosexuality—it is not just a sin that will incur the wrath of God. It is the wrath of God. Because men will not repent of their ingratitude, and because they will not recognize the ultimate honor of the living God, He turns them over to lust after grotesqueries.

But all these scriptural truths have ramifications for Christians. We are considering how we should live as our nation is obviously coming under the judgment of God. What is happening to the United States is not because the homosexual activists have out-spent us, or out-organized us. It is happening because God is visiting a judgment upon us.

Too many Christians want a society of decent Leave It to Beaver family values without that society acknowledging the restoration of humanity in Christ. In short, they want something that cannot be. Nature abhors a vacuum. Despite the best of intentions, those Christian activists who want to chase homosexual marriage out of the public square without also acknowledging the lordship of Jesus Christ in that square are condemned to hopeless defeat after hopeless defeat. Further, those who want the ultimate lordship of Jesus Christ proclaimed in the public square without that same lordship being acknowledged first in Christian families and Christian churches are asking the world to lead the church to Christ, which is backwards.

Many Christian lobbyists for public purity have taken the stand that we need to keep our public house empty, swept and garnished (Matt. 12:43-45), and they want to follow it up with a constitutional amendment that will forever outlaw seven demons coming back worse than the first. This stand,

obstinately persisted in, is worse than the objectives of the sodomite activists. We can explain why non-Christians do not want Christ to rule over us. But why would Christians fight for that?

In the face of such judgments, our only appropriate response is repentance. But even this needs to be explained further, because in the grip of American individualism, we have come to believe that repentance is something that takes place in the hidden recesses of our hearts. And to be sure, it begins there. But if it begins and ends there, it is not repentance at all but rather a comforting emotional idol. Consequently, we must say that the only appropriate response is public repentance. But what does public repentance look like exactly? And how can we publicly repent when we are on the verge of any such public repentance being declared to be a hate crime by the highest courts of

our land? And the answer, of course, is that if the civil authority outlaws public repentance, then so much the worse for the civil authority. But if we are pressed to the point of civil disobedience (and we will be), the repentance for which we will risk everything must go to the root. The axe is to be laid at the root of the tree, not thrown up into the branches.

First, we must repent of how the American Church has trivialized the marriage between Christ and His bride, the Church, through how we blaspheme in our worship services. All across America, Christians will be signing petitions in favor of a constitutional amendment against homosexual marriage, and then they will return to worship services in which beach balls are batted around the sanctuary, trite ditties are endlessly sung, movie clips are shown instead of sermons, and the Lord's Supper is something that the older Christians remember having done years ago. And what these petition signers will not realize is that a country in which Christians worship the Triune God this way is a country which deserves the judgment of homosexual marriage. And so why are Christians trying to fight off a judgment we so richly deserve?

Second, we must repent of how Christian husbands have neglected to sacrifice biblically for their wives and children. Homosexual unions are a caricature of what a marriage should be—but perhaps we ought to be asking why, since God is the cartoonist, He has decided to draw these caricatures in the midst of this society.

Third, ministers must repent of their silent voices on this and all related subjects. From this time forward, the pulpits of America must be filled with holy demands for reformation of liturgy and worship, sound teaching on what marriage is and what it is for, and prophetic calls for the nation as a nation to repent—and as a nation to come to Jesus. Christ told us to disciple the nations, and that includes this one. As events are demonstrating, there is no third way. Either we will see reformation and glorious revival in the Church, such that the Church recovers her authoritative and prophetic voice, or we become the cities of the plain.

This entire situation is a textbook case that demonstrates that our politics need to be saved—but shows just as clearly that politics is no savior. Before

we as Christians can call upon non-Christians to repent, we must repent first. We are on the brink of solemnizing all our sexual corruptions with the holy vows of marriage. Who will save us from this thing? Jesus? Will He save us from this if we refuse to call upon Him?
Why should He?

Wilson on homosexuality and bestiality as opposite sides of the same sexual problem:

Sin resents what God is like and tries to suppress what He has done in this creational glory. Extreme cases of this resentment are seen in homosexuality, discussed at length elsewhere in this issue. But my concern is with what may be called a quasi-homosexuality, a problem that exists in many Christian marriages. When a man browbeats his wife, demanding that she be something other than his other, he is demanding that she act as though she really thinks like a man. When a woman gets her husband to crawl around her feet emotionally, she is demanding that he think like a woman. When either sex falls into this type of sin, they are resisting living and sleeping with someone who is genuinely different.

This is why the Scriptures forbid a perversion at the opposite pole from homosexuality—which is bestiality. The scriptural word for this is profound: "it is confusion." But we should think of this as Christians who believe in the Trinity. Homosexuality is resentment of the other, insistence upon sameness. Bestiality is a rejection of sameness, and insistence upon complete otherness. There is no way to marry same and other except in the creation account of Genesis. Woman is the same for she was taken from man. Woman is different for she was taken from man. Man and woman may come together for they are the same. Man and woman may come together for they are not the same. Our God confounds the wisdom of the wise.

Sexual security is not threatened by otherness, for we are the same. It is not threatened by sameness, for we are other. A man and woman may come together in harmony for they both know that the other is not threatened either.

The way God made the world is simply to be accepted and enjoyed.

The Bible has nothing to say about homosexuality as an "orientation." The only "homosexual" the Bible knows is one who practices, so even if you have same sex desires, but remain celibate, you are not a "homosexual" (or "sodomite") by the biblical definition. The scientific evidence against a "gay gene" is overwhelming, but it's not really the Bible's concern anyway. After all, even if there were such a gene, we'd chalk it up to the disordering of nature brought on by the fall, not something that was part of God's design from the beginning. All sins are now "natural" in the

sense that we are born with an anti-God bias built-in, so homosexuality is no different.

What passages like 1 Cor. 6 are concerned with is not homosexual orientation as such, or even homosexual attraction, but homosexual PRACTICE. Of course, lust, whether of the hetero or homo variety is sin. But Paul's point is that acting on those lusts is what disqualifies you from the kingdom; he's listing certain ways of life, certain lifestyles, certain patterns of behavior that simply cannot be tolerated among God's people (and would thus require discipline, ala 1 Cor. 5). You cannot be given over to your lusts and remain in the kingdom; you have to fight them and resist them, and if you do fail, you must repent. Those struggling with homosexual desires are most certainly welcome to join other struggling sinners in the church; we do not expect or demand that their repentance to be any more perfect than anyone else's. But those who approve, encourage, and celebrate homosexuality are most certainly not welcome, unless and until they confess and repent. They are the deceived ones Paul is talking about, calling good evil and evil good.

Obviously, then, we live in a day in which many are deceived. Even in the name of Christ, we see many today who support the gay lifestyle as an equally valid alternative. This is simply wrong. God will not be mocked and will deal with it.

Here are some questions the church must be asking as she considers how to minister to homosexuals:

[a] How can the church regain the rhetorical high ground on this issue? Right now, the media has all kinds of ammo to use against the traditional/biblical Christian view, e.g., calling us hate-filled homophobes, calling us sexually repressed, comparing the debate over homo rights to the civil rights movement with the use of loaded terms like "equality" and "rights," etc. This is why so many pastors are afraid to touch the issue.

According to opinion polls, the tide has started to turn with regard to abortion. Most Americans now would be happy to outlaw abortion. Why? In part, this is because the stigma of having a child out of wedlock has diminished; abortion is no longer needed as much as a "face saving" measure for unmarried women. But the change in public opinion is also due to the sonogram machine. Those images are powerful: How can anyone deny that's a living person in the womb when you see him/her on screen? I wonder: What is the rhetorical equivalent to the sonogram image in the homo debate? (One of my professor friend of mine [who shall remain nameless] tried to reclaim the rhetorical high ground in this way, albeit in his office with a small group of students, not in the classroom. When a student said in the midst of an intense discussion, "God *made* homosexuals that way," the prof replied, "No, God did not *make* any man's anus to be a receptacle for the penis." After a brief discussion of the medical condition known as Gay Bowel Syndrome, the discussion was pretty much over!)

We're at a point, culturally, where it's not enough to simply give biblical condemnations because those condemnations sound shrill, while the other side makes it sound as if they have something to celebrate. If we're going to guard biblical convictions in the next generation, we have to do more than simply teach right from wrong. We have to present the beauty of what is right, the beauty of God's design for human sexuality. We have to make what is right compelling, reasonable, and attractive. We have to be straightforward about the ugliness, sterility, and lifelessness of homosexual practice -- all the while guarding against typical heterosexual sins on the other side. It's a narrow path.

[b] How much does a congregation need to be trained in biblical thinking on this issue? To what depth do we take it? What can we still take for granted and what needs to be spelled out? How much should we delve into the political aspects of the debate? How can we encourage and equip people to interact with gays and those who approve of the gay lifestyle (the latter being more common, of course)? If you look at how quickly public opinion polls are shifting to favor gay marriage, it's really incredible, even revolutionary. A generation ago, psychiatrists viewed homosexuality as a disorder from which one needed to be cured; now those who oppose homosexuality are considered to have an abnormal disorder. Gay marriage is in the news all the time; should the public teaching of the church just ignore that and settle for making "private" moral judgments? Are we supposed to be indifferent to the consequences for society as a whole? Is that really compassionate? Granted, marriage was "redefined" in our society a long time ago, with the advent of no-fault divorce laws. But because we lost that battle, should we acquiesce on the next round?

On idolatry, also included in Paul's list, see Tim Keller's book *Counterfeit Gods* This book is especially good on money, sex, and power, which basically sum up Paul's list in 1 Cor. 6:9-11. See also Martin Luther's Large Catechism, which defines idolatry this way (highlights added):

Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.

That is: Thou shalt have [and worship] Me alone as thy God.
What is the force of this, and how is it to be understood?
What does it mean to have a god? or, what is God? Answer: **A god means that from which we are to expect all good and to which we are to take refuge in all distress, so that to have a God is nothing else than to trust and believe Him from the [whole] heart; as I have often said that the confidence and faith of the heart alone make both God and an idol. If your faith and trust be right, then is your god also true; and, on the other hand, if your trust be false and wrong, then you have not the true God; for these two belong together faith and**

God. That now, I say, upon which you set your heart and put your trust is properly your god.

Therefore it is the intent of this commandment to require true faith and trust of the heart which settles upon the only true God and clings to Him alone. That is as much as to say: "See to it that you let Me alone be your God, and never seek another," i.e.: Whatever you lack of good things, expect it of Me, and look to Me for it, and whenever you suffer misfortune and distress, creep and cling to Me. I, yes, I, will give you enough and help you out of every need; only let not your heart cleave to or rest in any other.

This I must unfold somewhat more plainly, that it may be understood and perceived by ordinary examples of the contrary. Many a one thinks that he has God and everything in abundance when he has money and possessions; he trusts in them and boasts of them with such firmness and assurance as to care for no one. Lo, such a man also has a god, Mammon by name, i.e., money and possessions, on which he sets all his heart, and which is also the most common idol on earth. He who has money and possessions feels secure, and is joyful and undismayed as though he were sitting in the midst of Paradise. On the other hand, he who has none doubts and is despondent, as though he knew of no God. For very few are to be found who are of good cheer, and who neither mourn nor complain if they have not Mammon. This [care and desire for money] sticks and clings to our nature, even to the grave.

So, too, whoever trusts and boasts that he possesses great skill, prudence, power, favor friendship, and honor has also a god, but not this true and only God. This appears again when you notice how presumptuous, secure, and proud people are because of such possessions, and how despondent when they no longer exist or are withdrawn. Therefore I repeat that the chief explanation of this point is that to have a god is to have something in which the heart entirely trusts.

Besides, consider what in our blindness, we have hitherto been practising and doing under the Papacy. If any one had toothache, he fasted and honored St. Apollonia [[acerated his flesh by voluntary fasting to the honor of St. Apollonia]; if he was afraid of fire, he chose St. Lawrence as his helper in need; if he dreaded pestilence, he made a vow to St. Sebastian or Rochio, and a countless number of such abominations, where every one selected his own saint, worshiped him, and called

for help to him in distress. Here belong those also, as, e.g., sorcerers and magicians, whose idolatry is most gross, and who make a covenant with the devil, in order that he may give them plenty of money or help them in love-affairs, preserve their cattle, restore to them lost possessions, etc. For all these place their heart and trust elsewhere than in the true God, look for nothing good to Him nor seek it from Him.

Thus you can easily understand what and how much this commandment requires, namely, that man's entire heart and all his confidence be placed in God alone, and in no one else. For to have God, you can easily perceive, is not to lay hold of Him with our hands or to put Him in a bag [as money], or to lock Him in a chest [as silver vessels]. But to apprehend Him means when the heart lays hold of Him and clings to Him. But to cling to Him with the heart is nothing else than to trust in Him entirely. For this reason He wishes to turn us away from everything else that exists outside of Him, and to draw us to Himself, namely, because He is the only eternal good. As though He would say: Whatever you have heretofore sought of the saints, or for whatever [things] you have trusted in Mammon or anything else, expect it all of Me, and regard Me as the one who will help you and pour out upon you richly all good things.

Lo, here you have the meaning of the true honor and worship of God, which pleases God, and which He commands under penalty of eternal wrath, namely, that the heart know no other comfort or confidence than in Him, and do not suffer itself to be torn from Him, but, for Him, risk and disregard everything upon earth. On the other hand, you can easily see and judge how the world practises only false worship and idolatry. For no people has ever been so reprobate as not to institute and observe some divine worship; every one has set up as his special god whatever he looked to for blessings, help, and comfort.

Thus, for example, the heathen who put their trust in power and dominion elevated Jupiter as the supreme god; the others, who were bent upon riches, happiness, or pleasure, and a life of ease, Hercules, Mercury, Venus or others; women with child, Diana or Lucina, and so on; thus every one made that his god to which his heart was inclined, so that even in the mind of the heathen to have a god means to trust and believe. But their error is this that their trust is false and wrong for it is not placed in the only God, besides whom there is truly no God in heaven or upon earth. Therefore the heathen really make

their self-invented notions and dreams of God an idol, and put their trust in that which is altogether nothing. Thus it is with all idolatry; for it consists not merely in erecting an image and worshiping it, but rather in the heart, which stands gaping at something else, and seeks help and consolation from creatures saints, or devils, and neither cares for God, nor looks to Him for so much good as to believe that He is willing to help, neither believes that whatever good it experiences comes from God.

Besides, there is also a false worship and extreme idolatry, which we have hitherto practised, and is still prevalent in the world, upon which also all ecclesiastical orders are founded, and which concerns the conscience alone that seeks in its own works help, consolation, and salvation, presumes to wrest heaven from God, and reckons how many bequests it has made, how often it has fasted, celebrated Mass, etc. Upon such things it depends, and of them boasts, as though unwilling to receive anything from God as a gift, but desires itself to earn or merit it superabundantly, just as though He must serve us and were our debtor, and we His liege lords. What is this but reducing God to an idol, yea, [a fig image or] an apple-god, and elevating and regarding ourselves as God? But this is slightly too subtle, and is not for young pupils.

But let this be said to the simple, that they may well note and remember the meaning of this commandment, namely, that we are to trust in God alone, and look to Him and expect from Him naught but good, as from one who gives us body, life, food, drink, nourishment, health, protection, peace, and all necessaries of both temporal and eternal things. He also preserves us from misfortune, and if any evil befall us, delivers and rescues us, so that it is God alone (as has been sufficiently said) from whom we receive all good, and by whom we are delivered from all evil. Hence also, I think, we Germans from ancient times call God (more elegantly and appropriately than any other language) by that name from the word good as being an eternal fountain which gushes forth abundantly nothing but what is good, and from which flows forth all that is and is called good.

For even though otherwise we experience much good from men, still whatever we receive by His command or arrangement is all received from God. For our parents, and all rulers, and every one besides with respect to his neighbor, have received from God the command that they should do us all manner of good, so

that we receive these blessings not from them, but, through them, from God. For creatures are only the hands, channels, and means whereby God gives all things, as He gives to the mother breasts and milk to offer to her child, and corn and all manner of produce from the earth for nourishment, none of which blessings could be produced by any creature of itself.

Therefore no man should presume to take or give anything except as God has commanded, in order that it may be acknowledged as God's gift, and thanks may be rendered Him for it, as this commandment requires. On this account also these means of receiving good gifts through creatures are not to be rejected, neither should we in presumption seek other ways and means than God has commanded. For that would not be receiving from God, but seeking of ourselves.

Let every one, then, see to it that he esteem this commandment great and high above all things, and do not regard it as a joke. Ask and examine your heart diligently, and you will find whether it cleaves to God alone or not. If you have a heart that can expect of Him nothing but what is good, especially in want and distress, and that, moreover renounces and forsakes everything that is not God, then you have the only true God. If on the contrary, it cleaves to anything else, of which it expects more good and help than of God, and does not take refuge in Him, but in adversity flees from Him, then you have an idol, another god.

I'll have more to say about the gospel in this text in the coming week. I didn't really do the last section of the sermon the way I wanted to. Hopefully it was clear enough to make the basic point that the twofold problem treated by our sin – the deformation of our lives and our guilt before God – are both dealt with in Christ.

To be precise, the sanctification in view in 6:11 is our new status as priests/temples. We are refashioned into God's holy people. But since this change in status (publicly inaugurated at baptism) is the beginning of a whole-life process of re-humanization, I felt it appropriate to focus on that transformation. To put it another way, the sanctification in view in 1 Cor. 6:11 is definitive and therefore past tense. But it is also the inception of a process of renewal that continues our whole lives. Dr. Jesus brings us into his hospital, which is the church, and begins to make us well.

We are also justified in Christ. That is, our sentence of condemnation is reversed. We are forgiven. We are declared righteous. We are vindicated. We are legally right with God and accepted by God.

This double blessing is our hope – the “double cure” for sin we sing about in the hymn “Rock of Ages.”