

Sermon for July 6, 2025 - 4th Sunday after Pentecost

1 Corinthians 6:12-20 EHV

Theme: Your Body Belongs to the LORD, who...

- 1) Sanctified it.
- 2) Made it a member of Christ's body
- 3) Dwells within it.

¹²“All things are permitted for me”—but not all things are beneficial. “All things are permitted for me”—but I will not allow anything to control me. ¹³“Foods are for the belly, and the belly is for foods, but God will do away with both of them.” However, the body is not for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body. ¹⁴God raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. ¹⁵Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then remove the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Certainly not! ¹⁶Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute is one body with her? For it says, “The two will become one flesh.” ¹⁷But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with him. ¹⁸Flee from sexual immorality! Every sin that a person commits is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. ¹⁹Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, ²⁰for you were bought at a price. Therefore glorify God with your body.

When God created humans as male and female, He also blessed husband and wife with the gift of sexual intimacy. He not only did this so that they may have children, but also that husband and wife would enjoy each other physically as they share and celebrate their unity in marriage to the praise of their Creator, who gave them this gift.

Sadly, ever since the fall into sin, the devil attempts to corrupt this gift by tempting people to view it selfishly. Instead of seeing sexuality as a blessing to strengthen the bond between husband and wife, our Western society sees it as a free-for-all, to do whatever you want whenever you want.

Worse yet, our physical flesh, corrupted by Adam and Eve's fall into sin, overwhelms us with selfish, physical urges to misuse God's gift of sexual intimacy.

To protect ourselves from the influence of society and our corrupted flesh, we must remember the awesome honour God has granted our bodies through Jesus' work of saving us. Let us do this today under the theme: **Your Body Belongs to the LORD, who...** 1) Sanctified it; 2) Made it a member of Christ's body; 3) Dwells within it.

Part One: Your Body Belongs to the LORD, who Sanctified it.

The morals of Corinthian society in Paul's day shared many parallels with ours today. The city was so bad that the term “Corinthian Girl” became a euphemism for a “prostitute” throughout the

Roman Empire. We can only imagine the pressure Christians felt in Corinth to conform to secular society's "anything goes" attitude surrounding God's gift of sexuality.

Even worse, the devil tempted the Corinthians to believe that since Jesus had liberated them from their slavery to sin, they were now free to do whatever they wanted because they lived under grace and not law. However, as Paul so masterfully points out, Jesus didn't free us from our sins so that we could return to them. No, He freed us so that we might belong to Him.

Therefore, Paul addressed the Corinthian "*all things are permitted for me*" attitude by adding, "*but not all things are beneficial.*" Just because no one can stop you from eating junk food all day, every day, doesn't mean you should. Why not? Because the short-term pleasure junk food offers will hurt you in the long run. Similarly, just because no one will stop you from indulging in pornography or other sexual sins doesn't mean you should. Why not? Because these sins will hurt and haunt you in the long run.

"All things are permitted for me," the misguided person says. Paul responds, *"But I will not allow anything to control me."* We often believe we have complete control over our bodies, allowing us to do whatever we want without becoming addicted. But that is a lie. We can't master sin without God's help; it masters us, tempting and taunting us into a seemingly inescapable slavery.

Perhaps that's why the world defends its immorality by saying: *"Foods are for the belly, and the belly is for foods."* This suggests that since it's not wrong to satisfy our natural hunger with whatever foods we desire, it should be just as natural to satisfy our sexual appetites.

Paul responds by saying, *"But God will do away with both of them."* The world's pursuit to satisfy its fleshly cravings will be revealed as utterly meaningless on Judgement Day, as the Bible says: *The world and its desires pass away, but the one who does the will of God remains forever.*ⁱ

However, the body is not for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body.
¹⁴*God raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by his power.*

The unbelieving world views the human body as an evolved animal that needs to selfishly fulfil its various cravings and appetites. God wants us to view our bodies differently: as masterpieces, created in His holy image to enjoy fellowship with Him.

Sadly, sin has corrupted us to such a degree that our bodies have lost the honour with which God created them. However, the LORD, in His mercy, has restored it. How? By sending His own Son to take on human flesh and blood to purify both our bodies and souls from all sin. Jesus accomplished this through His perfect life and innocent death. And to show that His work was more than sufficient to purify both our bodies and souls, God physically raised Jesus from the dead and exalted him to His right hand in heaven. As He raised Jesus' body, so He promises to raise our bodies too. Why? Because He purchased and cleansed us for Himself, sealing us as His own through Holy Baptism.ⁱⁱ

This is the first step in resisting the devil when he tempts you with sinful sexual desires: Remember that Jesus redeemed and sanctified your body for the LORD. You do not belong to yourself; you

belong to Christ. Keep focused on Jesus and the unique connection you have with Him, as Paul explains next.

Part Two: Your Body Belongs to the LORD, who Made it a Member of Christ's Body.

¹⁵Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?

Through Holy Baptism, the LORD has united us with Jesus to such a degree that when He looks at us, He sees His Son.ⁱⁱⁱ In Holy Communion, Jesus unites His body and blood with ours. As He lives in us, we live in Him as members of His body on earth: the Church.^{iv} We are His mouth when we tell people about His great work for us, His hands when we help a brother and sister in need, and His heart when we compassionately pray for all the hurting and lost. You, body and soul, represent Christ on this earth as He works through you to glorify His saving name.

So, let me ask you: Would you ever use a cross to scrape off dirty dishes? Would you ever consider using the pages of a Bible to pick up doggy doodoo? If we would never dream of desecrating holy objects in this way, then why would we ever consider desecrating the most sacred object we own, our body, through sexual sins?

Paul asks: *Shall I then remove the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Certainly not!*¹⁶*Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute is one body with her? For it says, "The two will become one flesh."*¹⁷*But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with him.*

The world views sexual intimacy as purely physical, but the LORD intended it to be much more than that. It is a demonstration of the unselfish giving, commitment, and unity promised in the marriage vow. It not only connects husband and wife physically, but also emotionally and spiritually.

Therefore, if we share this special intimacy with someone other than our spouse, we defile God's holy gift. Moreover, since we are one with Jesus through faith, we desecrate His body and reputation.

This, then, is the second tool God wants us to use to resist temptations of the flesh: remember that Jesus loves you so much that He has united you to Himself through faith. He lives and works through you, having washed you from all sin through the blood He shed on the cross. When God looks at you, He sees Jesus, His Son. Therefore, when you look at your body, see Christ^v and heed Paul's encouragement to:

Part Three: Your Body Belongs to the LORD, who Dwells within it.

¹⁸Flee from sexual immorality! Understand the danger it poses for your soul. Stay away from images that lead you to lust and throw away novels that corrupt your thoughts. Turn off the music that glorifies sin and stay away from the person who's trying to turn your heart away from what's

right. Run away from these things like you would run away from a murderer, because that's who the devil is, who tempts you with these things.

Every sin that a person commits is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. The devil wants to corrupt your thoughts, enslave you to your passions, and desecrate your sacred body. Trust me, I have counselled enough people to know how sexual sins fill people with such immense guilt and shame that it separates them from the joy, peace, and forgiveness Christ wants them to have.

¹⁹*Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is within you, whom you have from God?* The word translated in this verse as "temple" is actually the word for the inner sanctuary of the temple: the Most holy place where God dwells. When the LORD called you to faith, He made His home in you. Think about the awesome comfort contained in this verse: God is always with you. He loves you so much that He lives within you with His forgiving love. You can go to Him at any time for help. So, run to Him for help when tempted and don't anger him by willingly desecrating His holy home through sexual sins.

Understand that *you are not your own,* ²⁰*for you were bought at a price. Therefore glorify God with your body.* Our society's mantra is: "My body, my choice." But God says, "No. Your body and soul belong to me. My Son paid for them with His holy, precious blood and innocent suffering and death. Therefore, honour me with your body by using all its parts for the purposes for which I created them."

Oh, how thankful I am that my body belongs to God! He will watch over me, guarding me with His presence, guiding me with His Word, and making sure that all things that come my way must serve my everlasting good.

Therefore, whenever the devil, world, and your sinful flesh tempt you to sin against God's gift of sexuality, remember that God has washed your body clean from all sin and made it His holy house in which His Spirit lives. Oh, how greatly God has honoured you that He dwells in you. Let this wonderful truth move you to seek refuge from temptation in His Word and Sacraments, where He will remind you of His gracious love in Christ.

But what if you succumb to the temptations of the flesh and desecrate your body with sexual sins? What if you find yourself trapped in a pit of sin that you can't seem to escape?

Then go to Jesus in prayer, laying all your sins and struggles before Him and asking for forgiveness and help. While doing that, remember Jesus' cross and empty tomb, which proves your sins have been paid for in full. Remember the LORD's promise: *Though your sins are like scarlet, they will be as white as snow. Though they are as red as crimson, they will be like wool.*^{vi} The Bible also promises: *He does not treat us as our sins deserve. He does not repay us according to our guilty deeds. Yes, as high as the heavens are above the earth, so powerful is his mercy toward those who fear him. As distant as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our rebellious acts from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him.*^{vii}

Even if feelings of guilt and shame remain, know that your sins are completely forgiven in Christ. The Lord promises this, and nothing, including your feelings of unworthiness, can change that fact. Through faith, you are a member of Christ's body, pure and holy. God's Spirit lives in you.

In the peace of these truths, ask God to help you avoid sin. Discuss your struggles with a trusted Christian friend or pastor. They will not condemn you but remind you of God's wonderful mercy; for it is only in God's forgiving, sanctifying grace that we find the power to overcome our spiritual enemies and live in the freedom from sin for which God saved us. Amen.

ⁱ Cf. 1 John 2:15-17

ⁱⁱ Cf. 1 Corinthians 6:11

ⁱⁱⁱ Cf. Galatians 3:26-27

^{iv} Cf. 1 Corinthians 12:12,27

^v Cf. Galatians 2:20

^{vi} Isaiah 1:18 EHV

^{vii} Psalm 103:10-12 EHV