**4th Sunday after Pentecost – Year C – June 16, 2013 – Faith Lutheran, Radcliff, KY**

**Based on 1Corinthians 6:9-11 written by Pastor Paul Horn**

**“God’s Plan for Fatherhood”**

*9 Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God?* *Do not be deceived:* *Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers* *nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders* *10 nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers* *will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And that is what some of you were.* *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.*

It’s Father’s Day! A time for celebrating everything “dad.” The newspaper and television advertisements seem to know what fatherhood is all about – grills, power tools, widescreen TVs, sports stuff, man stuff. God the Father, our Creator, gave us his holy intention for fatherhood and marriage in the Garden of Eden, **“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and become united to his wife and the two will become one flesh.”** (Genesis 1:21) God the Father’s design for marriage is the union of one man and one woman. God’s plan for the man in the marriage is to be the head and leader of that home, and his responsibility is to build the foundation of that home on God’s Word, to raise his children in the training and instruction of the Lord (Ephesians 6:1-4). How many fathers sit down daily and read God’s Word to their families? Discuss a devotion book with their spouse? In that instruction of the Lord the father sets a model for fatherhood and for the kind of marriage that God designed.

But society seems to be giving us an alternative perspective to fatherhood. Last month the Minnesota state senate voted to legalize same-sex marriage, one among 12 states that now recognize marriage between same-sex couples. Who or what is “father” in a marriage of two men or two women? Society is telling us that children don’t need a father and a mother to be raised in a happy home. Society is telling us that sex is not a special gift God has reserved for married folks. Society is pulling us in another direction, and says marriage doesn’t have to be between a man and a woman.

These hot-button topics aren’t anything new. Almost 2,000 years ago, the Apostle Paul in 55AD dealt with the same social issues. In the Apostle Paul’s letter to the church in Corinth, he addressed a growing problem. The culture of Corinth influenced the way the Christians lived. The city of Corinth was home of unbridled immorality. One of the temples in the city was dedicated to Aphrodite, the goddess of love. Part of “worship” was religious prostitution. Corinth was a place where anything goes, “What happens in Corinth stays in Corinth.” Sex outside of the marriage relationship and homosexuality were so prevalent that it was “normal” in Corinthian society. The Corinthians thought it was their right to have sex whenever and with whomever they wanted. They denied it as sinful behavior and even went so far as to reason that it was simply a natural desire, like eating food, a desire that must be fulfilled. And the members of the church there believed all of these ideas. Sounds like the opinion of many in our nation today...

Paul was very blunt with the Christians in Corinth, **“Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.”** (vs9-10)

Those sins are popular topics today, aren’t they? Notice I called them sins, as God does. Unfortunately there are many people who would not refer to homosexuality or even sex between two non-married heterosexual people as sin, as something that deeply offends God. Scripture clearly teaches that sexual relations between same-sex partners is sin. It is contrary to God’s intention of creating man and woman. The sin of homosexuality is a rejection of the natural knowledge of God’s law. Biology 101 makes it clear that the male body was designed for the female body. Sadly, people suppress that natural knowledge of God’s design for intimate relationships.

After they suppress that natural knowledge, they begin to use their sinful human reason to excuse the behavior. Maybe people have homosexual tendencies because it’s in their DNA? Lady Gaga’s “Born That Way” song title has never been the end of the discussion on the causes of homosexuality. There is no definitive scientific proof that supports that claim. But the Bible teaches us that our sinful nature incites us to sin, it tells us that our bodies are weak, that our culture influences us with evil, other sinners tempt us and encourage us to sin, and our own sinful choices lead us to sin. But then some will point out that some individuals have homosexual tendencies but don’t act on it. God is clear – even the desire is not according to his will for us. He demands that our thoughts be pure as well.

Some will accuse us of being unloving, “How dare you judge!” Notice that the Apostle Paul addressed this letter to Christians in Corinth. He pointed out the sin of Christians who had engaged in these behaviors. His purpose was to remind them of God’s judgment, “Those who live this way will not inherit the kingdom of God.” His purpose was to call sinners to repentance, to receive forgiveness in Christ Jesus, and turn from their sinful ways. That’s the most loving thing that a Christian can do.

And we are not here to single out the sin of homosexuality because then we would be hypocrites. Homosexuality is not in a category all by itself. Notice where Paul places this sin: among a list of other damnable sins – heterosexual couples who are not married and having sex, greed, drunkenness and slander – sins that all of us are susceptible to. We cannot and dare not single out the sins of others and ignore our own “pet sins”. We have much in common with someone who struggles with the sin of homosexuality. We, too, have a sinful nature that incites us to sin, to commit specific sins that are unique to each one of us. That desire to sin is born in us, too. It is also a choice we make. In fact, our sinful nature takes pleasure in our sins and even defends them.

Which sin is it for you? Sin that you easily fall into, sin that you sometimes even enjoy? Perhaps you are not attracted to members of your gender. It may not even be the act, but the desire, the greed for someone or something else. Maybe they are the other sins that Paul mentioned - drunkenness? Gossip? And it may not be the words that come out of your mouth but the thoughts that simmer in the heart and boil into animosity.

And God thunders from heaven, “Those who live like this, who live with no remorse for their sins, who have no desire to change their sinful actions, they will not inherit the kingdom of God.” There is no wiggle room when we stand before the throne of God’s justice. Those who do not repent of their sinful living will not go to heaven.

What is our solution? Where can we go? Where do we find forgiveness for the times we, in ignorance, have defended, promoted and engaged in these sinful behaviors? What about my friends and family members who are gay? What about them? What hope is there for me or for them? Surely God would not condemn us?

But he must condemn us! Because he, as our Father, demands that we repent of our sins. He demands that we be as he is: holy, without sin, pure and righteous according to his laws. Notice what Paul does as soon as he condemns the Corinthians of their sin, **“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.”** (vs11) These are the kinds of people you were, Paul says, but this is what God did to you because of Jesus Christ, “**You were justified**.” We all stand in the courtroom of the Judge, who must punish us because he sees the evidence stacked against us. But the Judge looked at the cross and there he saw that all the blame had been placed on his Son Jesus, all of your guilt and condemnation on Christ. And the Judge looked at the empty tomb and saw that Jesus was raised from dead, evidence that the transfer of guilt had been completed, that the punishment of death was acceptable. And the Judge declared you and me “not guilty” of our sin, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. And by faith you stand innocent in the courtroom. There is the answer to our question, there in Christ Jesus we find a solution, we find hope and forgiveness.

Paul continues, **“You were sanctified**.” Sanctified means *to make holy*. Jesus is called the holy one, and rightly so. Jesus is the only one on this planet who never lusted in his heart for some woman or another man, who faithfully promoted God the Father’s plan for marriage, who never condoned sinful behavior or desires but called sinners to repentance. By that holy life, God the Father sanctified you. He made you holy through faith. God supplied the holy life he demanded in Jesus and gave that life to you through faith. There again is the answer to our question, “How can I be as God expects me to be?” You are holy in Christ Jesus.

Finally Paul says, “**You were washed**.” We can’t help but see the beautiful cleansing waters of baptism in Paul’s words. Yes, the waters of baptism, used by God’s command and connected to Jesus’ promise, was the power that gave faith, and through faith the Holy Spirit washed away your past, no matter how immoral and disgusting it was. No matter how high that mound of dirty sinful desires you’ve been piling up in your heart, Jesus’ blood cleansed your heart through baptism. You were washed through faith.

Those who are washed, sanctified, justified will inherit the kingdom of God. That includes you. We look forward to the Last Day when Christ will come again, and transform our weak, sinful bodies and souls into bodies and souls that will be free from the influence of a sinful nature, bodies and souls that will be free to serve Jesus the way we want to, perfectly and purely in everything that we do. In heaven, there will be no more struggle against my pet sins.

In the meantime, while we wait for that glorious day, Jesus tells us, “Go and sin no more.” You will live the way God wants you to, not the way your sinful will wants you to. You will go and struggle against your sin, you will pick up the boxing gloves and put on the armor of God and fight against those sins with the power of God the Father. Because you will have friends who will encourage you to sin. You have a sinful nature that incites you to sin. You live in a culture that tells you that you have the right to those sins. But we must struggle against those sins in faith and repentance.

What about those who struggle with the sins of homosexuality, or the single folks who struggle with their sexual desires, or the greedy or the gossips or the alcoholics? What do we do about them? God’s will is that we approach them the same way he approaches us, with his law, and allow God’s law to convince them that they, like us, are sinful in thought, word and deed. They, like us, need a Savior from sin. They, like us, have that Savior in Christ Jesus. They, like us, will struggle to overcome the sins that remain in their lives. They, like us, are motivated by the good news of Jesus, will use the law as our guide in Godly living. They, like us, will turn to Christ in sorrow and repentance when sincere efforts fail, and they slide into the sin that they hate. And we will remind them that they, like us, will one day stand together, totally free from the power of sin, and inherit the kingdom of God. That’s the most loving thing that we can do for those who struggle with sin.

And what about our sinful society? What about the influences that threaten God’s good plan for our children and families, for marriage and fatherhood? As fathers on Father’s Day, we will renew our commitment to be the men that God intends us to be. We will recommit ourselves this day to be faithful in our own study of the Word of God, to be faithful with the reception of the Lord’s Supper. We will build a foundation in our homes and read the Bible to our families, and lead our spouse in the study of God’s Word. We will lead our families in prayer and ask our heavenly Father to help us honor his will for marriage and fatherhood. Amen.