

[Exodus 20:14:] "You shall not commit adultery."

[Luther's Explanation to the Sixth Commandment:] We should fear and love God that we lead a pure and decent life in words and actions, and that husband and wife love and honor each other.

1. Luther delicately handles the Sixth Commandment, pointing to what we should do with regard to intimate relations and letting the commandment speak for itself with regard to what's prohibited. Jesus Himself was not afraid to tackle the topic of proper and improper sexual relations. And that topic directly intersects with our Gospel Lesson for today.
2. For our summer series of how Jesus upholds the Ten Commandments, it is important for us to hear what Jesus declares to be normative in the Bible. This is especially since many people in today's society feel that Jesus had nothing to say to us regarding intimate relations, and therefore we are free to do whatever we want sexually. This is not so! In Matthew 19, Jesus gave a positive definition of God's will. This sets the norm—the standard—of what's God-pleasing. Everything else is sin with regard to intimate relations. "Haven't you read ... that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate." The one flesh relationship is designed by God to be in the bonds of marriage: the lifelong union of one man and one woman. That's normative.
3. God's Word also deals with what happens when that union is broken. God's Word allows for divorce when one spouse is abandoned (which can take many forms, including abuse which makes it impossible for the spouse to return home). God's Word also allows for divorce when adultery happens: when husband or wife has the one-flesh relationship with someone other than their spouse. The Bible deals with those very difficult situations which always involve sin. But the Bible never says "anything goes" with regard to intimacy! Jesus upholds the Sixth Commandment, which in our Lutheran shop-talk is shorthand for anything dealing with sexual sin.
4. There is no dearth of things sexual in our culture and society today. Very little is left to the imagination. Yet for some reason, Christians treat the topic so delicately so as not to talk about it really at all. But in retreating from the issue of God's will with regard to intimacy, we are abandoning a topic that His Word directly addresses. We are also foolish, because people talk about "it" whether we're silent about it or not. Instead of abandoning the topic and letting the world have its way, we can follow Christ's example in our reading for today and address it in a positive way.
5. {Read verses 36-39.} God bless this woman for understanding that there is such a thing as sin with regard to God's will about human intimacy! A woman ... who lived a sinful life is a euphemism for someone who has a "Sixth Commandment issue." She repented! She recognized God's authority in the matter. And Jesus did not turn her away. But the self-righteous pharisee would! {Read verses 40-47.}
6. We are not to be self-righteous with regard to sexual sin—or *any* sin! Jesus wants

people who have broken the spirit of the Sixth Commandment to come to Him—just like He wants *everyone* to come to Him. Think about the implication of that. Christ reaches out to people who have had *any* intimate relations outside of the bonds of marriage, meaning Christ also reaches out to people who *wish* they could have intimate relations outside of the bonds of marriage. As Christ's followers, we are not at liberty to point the finger at others and say, "*That* sin is unforgivable," especially when we have failed to talk about it with others, and especially when we have broken the same commandment in different ways. Pre-marital relations are equally forgivable as same-sex ones. Use of legal explicit images to replace relationships is equally forgivable as use of illegal explicit images to replace relationships. We need to repent of all of these!

7. What Jesus says to this woman in our text both upholds God's will with regard to intimacy *and* offers what people need: forgiveness. Jesus upholds God's will by holding her to God's standard, using the word *sin*. In other words, He talked about it! Since He talked about it lovingly and honestly, He offers what she needs the most as a repentant sinner: forgiveness. Her sin is taken away. Sexual sin is not the unforgivable sin. Not thinking we need forgiveness, that is, rejecting Jesus and the Holy Spirit He sends, is the unforgivable sin since we put ourselves outside of God's kingdom.
8. What does this mean for us? We need to hear what the woman heard. We need to hear it no matter what others say. {Read verses 48-50.} Where does peace come from? It comes from the fact that Jesus upheld the Sixth Commandment perfectly. He never had an impure thought with regard to intimacy. He never pretended the topic didn't exist. He stayed sexually pure as a single. He gave His perfect life on the cross for all those sins people are bold to talk about today (and even pretend are good), as well as all those things people are too afraid to talk about today (remaining silent in shame). Just like the woman forgiven of her sins against the Sixth Commandment, our faith clings to the promises that Jesus Himself gives to us.
9. This means that Christians are not to be afraid to talk about the topic of intimacy. Jesus upholds the Sixth Commandment perfectly for us precisely so we can talk about it. There is nothing to be afraid of! The peace the world needs is in that conversation. God established His norm because He knew what He was doing! The peace we believers need is in that conversation. Forgiveness for not following that norm and the motivation to follow it only can happen if we know about what God's Word says about it. Amen.