

“(W)Holy Owned by God”

1 Cor.6:12-20 Epiphany2B 1-14-18

Serial robber Robert Wooten of Houston has convicted himself by what he had done to his body—He had his social security number tattooed to his forehead. He won't be hard to capture and convict But there are worse things we can do to our body that convict us of sin. One of those is sexual immorality, Paul write that he who sins sexually sins against his own body. We will get to that, but first understand that what we do with our body is a result of who we believe owns our body.

The title of today's sermon implies a double meaning and serves as the outline. First we are wholly God's because our whole being, body, soul, and mind, belongs to Him. Secodly, as having bodies redeemed by Christ crucified for us, God makes us holy through the Holy Spirit abiding in us.

That God possesses both our body and our soul is an inconvenient truth that our culture conveniently forgets, as did also the Greek culture of Paul's world. Their philosophy divorced the spirit from the body. Paul quotes the saying that derives from their belief: *Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food*—and *God will destroy both one and the other*. It led to with their body whatever pleased them. After all, it was only temporary.

But God does not separate the body and soul. Paul's benediction in 1 Thess. 5 reflects that: *Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*. The human body is part of the creation that God called good. Psalm 139 expresses that we were wonderfully made. In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul teaches about the resurrection of the body. Until then He teaches us in Romans 12: *present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God*. People today speak of suicide as taking one's own life, when it wasn't their life to take. Our body is not our own.

We acknowledge this at the grave side committal of a Christian.

*“May God the Father who created this body; may God the Son, who by His blood redeemed this body; may God the Holy Spirit, who by Holy Baptism sanctified this body to be His temple, keep these remains to the day of the resurrection of all flesh.”* He who made us, has redeemed us and continues to make us holy. True faith that accepts the salvation of God also submits to the sanctifying work of His Spirit.

He gives that Spirit for two reasons: That we may believe the Gospel, and that we may live the Gospel. Making us holy by working in us faith to accept the righteousness of God as a gift, the Spirit dwells in us to help us to live righteous lives. Using the term for temple that refers to the inner sanctuary of the Jewish temple, Paul is saying that with the Holy Spirit in us we have the most intimate relationship to God. We are His and He is ours. It is like the intimacy of marriage. The groom, Christ, as exclusive right to the Body of Christ, the Bride, His Church and the believers in it.

Having understood that, it makes sense that Paul would alert the church to the seriousness of misusing bodies that God has created and cleansed, for unholy purposes. He refers to sexual sins, which includes all sexual activity outside the one boundary God has set for our good: The union of marriage between a man and a woman. Paul mentions sexual immorality because of its connection to the body and its violation of exclusive claims to that body that God, and our god given spouse, has to it.

Besides living sexually pure, there are other ways that we are to glorify God in our body. How we take care of it, as stewards of God's creation, just as we would take care of any of God's creation. It makes sense that we are as careful about what we eat as we are about what we feed our animals.

To imagine how you might glorify God, think of your body as a musical instrument the Holy Spirit plays to reveal the goodness of God to others. Be that instrument always.

Because misuse of the body, particularly in sexual matters, has been around from the beginning, it is a common trap and fequent failure in our society. For failing to render our bodies as holy places for the Holy Spirit, Christ died to remove our sin and shame. So that we may live with bodies not enslaved to ungodly passions, but in true freedom, God gives His Spirit to dwell in us. At the beginning, I read to you Paul's benediction that you would be holy in body, mind and Spirit. In the next verse he says, *“He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.”* By his grace and with His Spirit dwelling in us, we can glorify God with our bodies. And so we shall. Amen