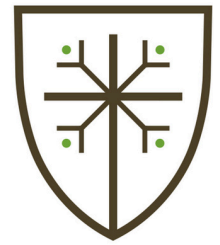


The Best Use of the Time

An Ephesians Sermon Series

SERMON NOTES



June 14, 2026

SERMON INFO

TITLE

"River Banks of Love"

PREACHER

Rev. Josh Keller

TEXTS

Hosea 11:1-4

Ephesians 5:1-8, 15-16

John 8:3-12

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is your "dam" that you store up, check on its size, and give no regard towards how that behavior may impact others downstream?
2. Do you feel that you need to provide for yourself? Do feel like you lack love in your life?
2. What are some gifts from God that you give thanks for? Are there areas in your life that you could have more gratitude for? If so, what are they?

SERMON IN SUMMARY

After evaluating how to walk in holiness and unity in our last two weeks in Ephesians, Josh turned to an examination of what it means to walk in love. Christians in Ephesus and Christians today were and are called to imitate the love God bestowed on us rather than engage in sexual immorality and covetousness.

Wrong Ends

Josh began with the question of why Paul linked sexual immorality and greed as examples of what not to do when walking in love. The answer is that both can be treated as ends in and of themselves rather than as a means to an end. This disordered desire can come from a need to feel love or a need for more. Neither sexual love nor money is negative on its own; sexual love can be beautiful between a husband and wife, going so far as to create life and sustain that new life and family unit through continual self-giving love, even as money can be a means to providing for others. But our fallen nature can warp these gifts. Rather than being self-giving, we tend to take for ourselves, wanting something for no other reason than to have more of it (the Greek meaning of covetousness is literally I want more). A river can illustrate both the right love and the wrong love that Paul describes. A healthy river teems with life, gives of itself as it ever flows downstream, and is restrained by healthy and strong banks. An "unhealthy" river can flood and bring destruction, or be hoarded up because of dams with no thought of impact on others. Because of sexual immorality or greed, we have all rebelled against our banks, or boundaries, bringing destruction on our own lives on varying scales, or have stored up the love that was given freely to us. But, like the woman in the Gospel reading, we do not need to be defined by this sin because Jesus took the judgment of that sin for us on the cross.

Book Ends

In Christ, we receive more than a new and good judgment, however. We are adopted into the very family of God. Paul bookends the Ephesians passage by calling the readers "beloved in the world" at the beginning and "children of light" by the end; these bookends illustrate the transformation for familial connection. Our new identity as a son and daughter of God alleviates worries rooted in sexual immorality and covetousness. The world may whisper that we are unloved, pushing us toward sexual immorality. Similarly, the world may tell us that we need to provide for ourselves because no one else will, so much so that we must not regard the effect such behavior may have on others. With God as our father, we do not need to worry if we are unloved or unprovided for. Looking back to ancient times, as written in the book of Hosea, God loves his people Israel as a child, calling them out of slavery, teaching them how to walk, and revealing his ways with cords of love and kindness. These truths are still true today. God loves us, and out of love puts up banks and boundaries for our freedom and fullness of life.

Thanksgiving

The best way we can respond is through thanksgiving. It is through thanksgiving that our worship can be reordered and restructured with healthy banks for a full and flourishing life. We know that worship must be the vehicle for this change because Paul calls sexual immorality and covetousness idolatry. Disordered desire assigns material goods the highest importance in our lives, rather than our creator. Directing our gratitude towards God for the gifts he has given reorders the priorities of our life and reestablishes the banks so that we can be a healthy, life-teeming river. Also, the more we let thanksgiving to God abound, the more delight abounds.

Motivation out of love, grounded in thanksgiving to God, is much more sustainable than living a life out of shame or guilt. We can become like Christ, loving sacrificially and generously for His glory and our good. If you believe in Jesus, you have been brought into his family, you are given a new judgment, and you can rebuild the banks of love while tearing down the blockages and dams of desire, all with thanksgiving.