

Week 5 – The Beauty

Read

There is something mythic in the way a man is with a woman.

Our sexuality offers a parable of amazing depth when it comes to being masculine and feminine. The man comes to offer his strength and the woman invites the man into herself, an act that requires courage and vulnerability and selflessness for both of them. Notice first that if the man will not rise to the occasion, nothing will happen. He must move; his strength must swell before he can enter her. But neither will the love consummate unless the woman opens herself in stunning vulnerability. When both are living as they were meant to live, the man enters his woman and offers her his strength. He spills himself there, in her, for her; she draws him in, embraces and envelops him. When all is over he is spent; but ah, what a sweet death it is.

And that is how life is created. The beauty of a woman arouses a man to play the man; the strength of a man, offered tenderly to his woman, allows her to be beautiful; it brings life to her and to many. This is far, far more than sex and orgasm. It is a reality that extends to every aspect of our lives. When a man withholds himself from his woman, he leaves her without the life only he can bring. This is never more true than with how a man offers—or does not offer—his words. Life and death are in the power of the tongue, says Proverbs (18:21). She is made for and craves words from him. I just went upstairs to get a glass of water from the kitchen; Stasi was in there baking Christmas cookies. The place was a mess; to be honest, so was she, covered with flour and wearing a pair of old slippers. But there was something in her eye, something soft and tender, and I said to her, “You look pretty.” The tension in her shoulders gave way; something twinkled in her spirit; she sighed and smiled. “Thank you,” she said, almost shyly.

If the man refuses to offer himself, then his wife will remain empty and barren. A violent man destroys with his words; a silent man starves his wife. “She’s wilting,” a friend confessed to me about his new bride. “If she’s wilting then you’re withholding something,” I said. Actually, it was several things—his words, his touch, but mostly his delight. There are so many other ways this plays out in life. A man who leaves his wife with the children and the bills to go and find another, easier life has denied them his strength. He has sacrificed them when he should have sacrificed his strength for them. What makes Maximus or William Wallace so heroic is simply this: they are willing to die to set others free.

This sort of heroism is what we see in the life of Joseph, the husband of Mary and the stepfather to Jesus Christ. I don't think we've fully appreciated what he did for them. Mary, an engaged young woman, almost a girl, turns up pregnant with a pretty wild story: "I'm carrying God's child." The situation is scandalous. What is Joseph to think; what is he to feel? Hurt, confused, betrayed no doubt. But he's a good man; he cannot bear to have her stoned, he will simply "divorce her quietly" (Matt. 1:19). An angel comes to him in a dream (which shows you what it sometimes takes to get a good man to do the right thing) to convince him that Mary is telling the truth and he is to follow through with the marriage.

This is going to cost him. Do you know what he's going to endure if he marries a woman the whole community thinks is an adulteress? He will be shunned by his business associates and most of his clients; he will certainly lose his standing in society and his place in the synagogue. To see the pain he's in for, notice the insult that crowds will later use against Jesus. "Isn't this Joseph and Mary's son?" they say with a sneer and a nudge and a wink. In other words, we know who you are—the bastard child of that slut and her foolish carpenter. Joseph will pay big-time for this move. Does he withhold? No, he offers Mary his strength; he steps right between her and all of that mess and takes it on the chin. He spends himself for her.

"They will be called oaks of righteousness" (Isa. 61:3). There, under the shadow of a man's strength, a woman finds rest. The masculine journey takes a man away from the woman so that he might return to her. He goes to find his strength; he returns to offer it. He tears down the walls of the tower that has held her with his words and with his actions. He speaks to her heart's deepest question in a thousand ways. Yes, you are lovely. Yes, there is one who will fight for you. But because most men have not yet fought the battle, most women are still in the tower.

Reflect

1. Right now, at this point in your journey, are you hopeful about love and sexuality, or are you cynical? Why?
2. If you are married, how do you usually feel in the presence of your wife? Is it thrilled, loving, strong...or do you feel threatened? Like a boy?
3. How much of your life have you spent looking to the woman for validation? How has that gone for you?

Scripture

Proverbs 30:18–19

There are three things that are too amazing for me, four that I do not understand:

the way of an eagle in the sky,

the way of a snake on a rock,

the way of a ship on the high seas,

and the way of a man with a maiden.