

Sermon: What's That Smell

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What follows is the text of the sermon given Sunday, August 7, 2016 at Calvary Chapel Oxnard by Pastor Lance Ralston

As We Begin

1. We're looking at what can only be called a rough passage today.
2. It's not your usual Sunday morning fare.
3. Now: Before we dive in, I need to be clear / People Need Jesus.
4. Humanity's **greatest** need isn't economic, environmental, or political.
/ It's Salvation.
5. The problem today is Sin. The solution is Jesus and the salvation He won for us.
6. The challenge for those of us who've put our trust in Christ & **been** saved, is that we've arrived at a time & place where saying "Sin is the Problem" no longer acceptable.
 1. Things that used to be identified as sin, no longer are.
 2. To **say** they are, is to risk getting in trouble.
7. So, as we begin, I need to make clear that as we follow Christ, our **authority** isn't the opinions of so-called experts.
 1. Our **standard** isn't the percentage of the latest poll on popular opinion.
 2. The Bible, God's Word, Scripture is our Authority & Standard.
 3. And what **IT** calls sin is what **we** call sin.
 4. So while the world **reclassifies** it as something else, we can't.
8. So we begin here / The Gospel is The Answer to the biggest & most important problem the world faces.
9. That Problem is Sin & the Solution is Jesus.

Set the Scene

Jacob & his family have returned to Canaan. // They settle near the city of Shechem, right in the center of what will later be the Kingdom of Israel.

Vs. 1-4 • The Rape of Dinah

¹ Now Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land.

1. Dinah's a curious teenager.
2. She wants to know what the young women of Shechem are like so she heads out to see.
3. Dinah was used to having her 11 brothers watch out for her.
4. But this time she takes off without them.
5. The archaeology of this time tells us the Canaanites were obsessed with sex.
6. An young woman who ventured out in public without adult male supervision was seen as fair game. So à

² And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, saw her, he took her and lay with her, and violated her.

1. Shechem, like all the cities of Canaan, was a city-state controlling the surrounding region.
2. It's ruler was a man named Hamor.
 1. He'd call him a *mayor*, but he was more like a *minor king*.
 2. His son was **Shechem**, named after their ancestor who'd founded the city generations before.
3. Shechem saw Dinah walking the streets of his city unattended, was attracted to her, & raped her.
4. While his interest was at first merely sexual, he fell in love with her.

³ His soul was strongly attracted to Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the young woman and spoke kindly to the young woman. ⁴ So Shechem spoke to his father Hamor, saying, "Get me this young woman as a wife."

1. Shechem was determined to marry Dinah and told his father to set it up.
2. That's the way it was done.
3. The fathers worked out the arrangements by deciding what the bride price would be.
4. But before Hamor could speak to Jacob, he was told what had happened to his daughter Dinah. >

Vs. 5-24 • The Wedding Arrangements Negotiated

⁵ And Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah his daughter. Now his sons were

with his livestock in the field; so Jacob held his peace until they came. ⁶ Then Hamor the father of Shechem went out to Jacob to speak with him. ⁷ And the sons of Jacob came in from the field when they heard *it*; and the men were grieved and very angry, because he had done a disgraceful thing in Israel by lying with Jacob's daughter, a thing which ought not to be done. [Well, yeah!]

1. Shechem was urgent in his appeal that his father speak to Jacob, so BOTH of them went to him.
2. But someone took word of the rape to Dinah's brothers as they watched their flocks & they hurried home to find them speaking to their Dad.
3. The brothers were BOTH > Bummed for Dinah, & justifiably angry at the guy who raped her.
4. They were probably **shocked** to find their father negotiating her marriage to the creep, rather than demanding his punishment.

⁸ But Hamor spoke with them, saying, "The soul of my son Shechem longs for your daughter. Please give her to him as a wife. ⁹ And make marriages with us; give your daughters to us, and take our daughters to yourselves. ¹⁰ So you shall dwell with us, and the land shall be before you. Dwell and trade in it, and acquire possessions for yourselves in it."

1. Those of you who've been with us over the last weeks know Jacob's family isn't supposed to marry Canaanites.
2. That's why Abraham sent his servant to Padan Aram to get a wife for his son Isaac.
3. Isaac & Rebekah were **super**-bummed when their son Esau married a **couple** Canaanites.
4. They sent their other son Jacob **back** to Rebekah's relatives to get a wife.
5. Hamor, king of Shechem, doesn't know any of that. He's just anxious to cover up his son's crime.
6. So he suggests they intermarry.
7. Now: Here's the deal > Hamor is appealing to what he assumes is Jacob's desire for influence & wealth.
 1. In that society, marriages were often **alliances** between families to enhance their prestige.
 2. And that's why the parents that arranged them.
 3. Hamor proves he's a politician here.

1) He sees a crisis, & tries to take advantage of it.

2) He suggests to Jacob they shift this loss to a win by intermarrying.

8. Jacob ought to have categorically shut it down.

9. Before he can, Shechem, whose been standing there listening, speaks up
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¹¹ Then Shechem said to her father and her brothers, "Let me find favor in your eyes, and whatever you say to me I will give. ¹² Ask me ever so much dowry and gift, and I will give according to what you say to me; but give me the young woman as a wife."

1. The **custom** was for the fathers to **negotiate** the dowry. They'd go back & forth till an agreement was made.

2. Shechem says, "Forget all that! Just tell me what you want & I'll make good."

3. That's when Dinah's brothers take over.

¹³ But the sons of Jacob answered Shechem and Hamor his father, and spoke deceitfully, because he had defiled Dinah their sister.

1. They see Shechem's vulnerability & decide to exploit it.

¹⁴ And they said to them, "We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to 1 who is uncircumcised, for that *would be* a reproach to us. ¹⁵ But on this *condition* we will consent to you: If you will become as we *are*, if every male of you is circumcised, ¹⁶ then we will give our daughters to you, and we will take your daughters to us; and we will dwell with you, and we will become 1 people. ¹⁷ But if you will not heed us and be circumcised, then we will take our daughter and be gone."

1. This is a complete ruse.

1. Jacob had made it clear they were **never** to become 1 with the Canaanites.

2. It was a deeply ingrained part of their family legacy.

2. They're hatching a plan to make Shechem pay for his crime.

1. You see, if Hamor **refuses** their requirement of circumcision, they'll have grounds to go after his son.

2. If he agrees, all the men who consent to circumcision will be vulnerable while recovering.

3. Jacob's sons would be free to do whatever they want.

¹⁸ And their words pleased Hamor and Shechem, Hamor's son. ¹⁹ On the morning

~ And their words pleased Hamor and Shechem, Hamor's son. ~ So the young man did not delay to do the thing, because he delighted in Jacob's daughter. He was more honorable than all the household of his father.

1. This guy Shechem is a complex figure.
2. He starts out committing a despicable act in raping Dinah.
3. But then he goes to great pains (literally) to make it right by marrying her.
4. He owns up to what's he's done, & puts himself into her family's hands by asking how to make it right.
5. When they lay out the terms, he **eagerly** complies without balking.
6. Well, it's 1 thing for **Shechem** to agree to circumcision.
 1. After all, it's a way to save his neck & acquire the woman he's deeply in love with.
 2. But imagine Shechem and his father trying to sell that to the rest of the men of the city.

²⁰ And Hamor and Shechem his son came to the gate of their city, and spoke with the men of their city, saying: ²¹ "These men *are* at peace with us. Therefore let them dwell in the land and trade in it.

1. Ah – there it is, the economic incentive. > Politicians are great at appealing to our pocketbook.

For indeed the land *is* large enough for them. Let us take their daughters to us as wives, and let us give them our daughters. ²² Only on this *condition* will the men consent to dwell with us, to be 1 people: if every male among us is circumcised as they *are* circumcised. ²³ *Will* not their livestock, their property, and every animal of theirs *be* ours? Only let us consent to them, and they will dwell with us." ²⁴ And all who went out of the gate of his city heeded Hamor and Shechem his son; every male was circumcised, all who went out of the gate of his city.

1. There must have been tremendous respect for Hamor & Shechem that the men of the city agree to this.

Vs. 25-31 • The Treachery of Simeon & Levi

1. In vs25-29, 2 of Dinah's brothers, Levi & Simeon, wait 3 days till the men were sorest after being circumcised.
2. They enter Shechem, and slay every one of them; including Hamor & his son.

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3. When the other brothers heard, they rushed in & plundered the city; taking the women & children captive.
 4. **Their** crime was **far worse** than the rape of their sister.
 1. They murdered a bunch of innocent people.
 2. And they haven't helped their sister.
 3. What's **she** supposed to do now that the one guy who'd marry her is dead at their hands?
 5. Their **outrage** at what happened to her was merely a ruse for their greed.
 1. Listen: If **Hamor** was a politician who tried to use a crisis to for his own ends >
 2. Jacob's sons proved even more political.
 3. Like father – Like sons. There seems to be a lot of Jacob in his boys.

³⁰ Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, "You have troubled me by making me obnoxious among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites; and since I *am* few in number, they will gather themselves together against me and kill me. I shall be destroyed, my household and I." ³¹ But they said, "Should he treat our sister like a harlot?"

1. Jacob had no part in the actions of his sons & rebukes them for their treachery.
2. He complains they've become **obnoxious** to the people among whom they live.
 1. Literally: They stink!
 2. They're **noxious**; like a bad odor that turns your stomach & makes you ill.
3. It's troubling that Jacob's main concern after this hideous crime is how his neighbors will view it rather than how God sees it.
4. What Jake ought to be grieving over is how like himself his sons have turned out.
5. They've watched him connive & scheme on how to cheat others for years. They're just doing what they've seen.
6. He's not taught them to be righteous. He's raised them to manipulate and scheme.
7. And now the chickens have come home to roost; he's reaping what he's sown.

What's That Smell?

1. There are many lessons to be drawn from this story.
 2. Especially poignant are what it says to parents.
 3. But I want to go another direction with it this morning because it speaks with special force to our time and the emerging challenges we face as we follow Jesus.
 4. We begin with Jacob's complaint there in v30 when he says that he's become a stench to his neighbors by the actions of his sons.
 5. Indeed Jacob's family had.
 6. They committed a horrible crime that turned the surrounding tribes against them.
 7. And that is NOT what God wanted!
 8. Back when God FIRST appeared to Abraham, He made it clear He intended to bless the entire world through Abraham's descendants.
 1. That promise was repeated to his son **Isaac**, then again to **his** son Jacob.
 2. When Jacob's family arrived at Shechem, they had the potential to bring blessing as they shared the benefits of their covenant with God.
 3. But they became a curse rather than a blessing.
 4. They brought death rather than life.
 9. The blessing God promised to bring the world thru Abraham's descendants is the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
 10. You & I, as followers of Jesus are the recipients of that promise & blessing.
 1. We're part of Abraham's **spiritual** family.
 2. The question & challenge to us is this >
- 1) Will we be like Jacob's sons & bring a curse to those around us?
- 2) Or will we bring the blessing of the Gospel by living out His grace & truth?
11. That's an important question for us this morning because a major corner has been turned in American society.
 1. You & I live in a different environment than just a decade or two ago.
 2. The Biblical & Christian worldview that once framed Western Civilization has been replaced by secular humanism.
 3. The influence of Christianity pervasive in American society for 300 yrs is no more.
 4. And the culture that was **home** to it is now **hostile** toward it.
 5. We're Abraham's **spiritual** descendants, living in a modern Shechem

among **spiritual** Canaanites.

6. Here's why I say that . . .

Modern Shechem

1. For years, secularists used the principle of the separation of church and state to weaken Christianity's influence in the public square.
 1. They removed prayer from public schools,
 2. The Ten Commandments from courthouse walls,
 3. And Nativity scenes from city lawns.
 4. All that seemed minor at the time.
2. But they steadily nudged society along to the place where now, they no longer speak of the separation of church.
 1. **Now** they're **pressing into** churches with legislation **limiting** religious freedom.
 2. I'm going to share 3 examples of this. [See footnote].

1) In a recent article in *USA Today*, veteran reporter Richard Wolf wrote,

"Still reeling from the death of its most devout justice, Antonin Scalia, the high court has put preventing discrimination **above** protecting religion in a series of cases over the past year, from same-sex marriage to abortion and contraception."

The Supreme Court recently decided NOT to hear the appeal of a family-owned pharmacy in Washington State that was required **by law** to dispense a form of birth control called Plan B. The Plan B pill is a form of chemical abortion. The owners of the pharmacy were Christians who regard human life as sacred and refused to prescribe the Plan B pill. But the State of Washington demanded they do so or face prosecution. The Supreme Court refused to hear their appeal.

Justice Alito said the Court sent an ominous sign of its attitude toward religious liberty by refusing the case. He said, "If this is a sign of how religious liberty claims will be treated in the years ahead, those who value religious freedom have cause for great concern." [1]

2) Then, William Petroski, reporting for the *Des Moines Register*, wrote, "The Fort Des Moines Church of Christ filed a federal lawsuit Monday ... claiming the

[Iowa Civil Rights Commission's] interpretation of state civil rights law prohibits church members from making any public comments — including from the pulpit — that could be viewed as unwelcome to people who do not identify with their biological sex."

2 Iowa churches filed suits after receiving a pamphlet from the Commission briefing them on what was and wasn't acceptable. The pamphlet states that church services ***open to the public***, brought the church under the State's laws regarding discrimination. And that meant they were required to provide restrooms for the transgendered as well as having their pulpits come under review for comments that could be considered discriminatory toward the LGBT community.[2] [3]

3) While there are many more examples I could cite, just 1 more.

SB1146 is a bill working its way thru the CA Assembly. It's a little complicated but the upshot is this. If passed, the bill would effectively end Christian higher education in CA.

Right now, private religious colleges are exempt from certain prohibitions on discrimination; things like homosexuality and the transgendered. Students can get govt aid to attend these private colleges.

SB1146 would end that. LGBT students would be allowed to attend & colleges would have to hire LGBT faculty. That means Christian colleges would either be forced to accept people who fundamentally disagree with their beliefs, or no longer accept students who take Cal grants or any other kind of govt assistance, which may mean they have to close down.

And as distressing as that is, what's even more troubling, is this . . .

There are already a handful of Christian colleges that DON'T accept students who take govt funds, precisely so that they won't be subject to govt interference. History has made it pretty clear that accepting tax dollars eventually means govt control. So these colleges have opted out. But now there's a movement to go after them, requiring that they ***also*** comply with the latest LGBT discrimination rulings.[4]

3. Does all that make you mad / sad?

1. My precious brothers & sisters in Christ – please understand we've

had it pretty good here in the USA for a long, long time.

2. But what we've enjoyed in the way of religious freedom & cultural acceptance is unusual in terms of the larger history of the Church.
3. For most of history and in most places around the world, Christians have been a minority.
4. And those who've ***genuinely*** walked with Christ and not just been cultural Christians, have suffered.
5. The world hates God. Always has, and always will till Jesus returns to establish His Kingdom.

4. You & I, As Abraham's spiritual descendants are called to be a blessing, not a curse, to our Shechem.

1. We're called to bring life, not death. Light, not darkness.
2. Jacob said the actions of his sons made them all sticky amidst those they lived.
3. God doesn't want us to be a stench to those around us. He wants us to be the fragrance of Christ.

2 Cor 2:14–17 // ¹⁴ Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and thru us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place.

¹⁵ For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing.

1. While we're to be a blessing and not a curse, people will react to that blessing differently.
2. Some will be drawn into faith in Christ and be saved.
3. Others will harden against Him, for the same sun that melts wax, hardens clay.
4. As we live the grace & truth of the Gospel, some will be drawn, others repelled.
5. We aren't responsible for HOW they respond; only for how we live & the fragrance we emanate.

¹⁶ To the 1 we are the aroma of death *leading* to death, and to the other the aroma of life *leading* to life. And who *is* sufficient for these things?

1. No one in their own strength. It's only as we walk in the Spirit that we can follow Christ & smell like Him.

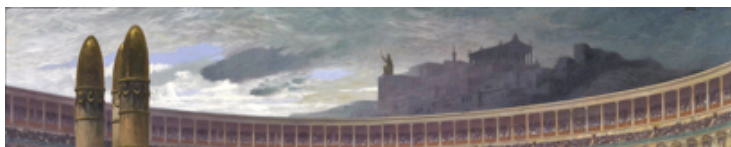
¹⁷ For we are not, as so many, peddling the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ.

5. And there it is friends. > As we follow Jesus in a society hostile toward the Gospel, we can't allow our message to be tweaked and edited by the whims & fashions of the age.
6. Our message is one handed to us by Jesus & The Apostles.
7. That message is this: The problem is Sin. The Solution is Jesus.

A Major Error

1. I ask you to consider for a moment what Jacob's sons told the men of Shechem to do; be circumcised.
2. The Shechemites said they wanted to be 1 people; Jacob's sons told them to submit to a rule.
3. They took something God had given as the **outward sign** of an **inner relationship** with Him & applied it **without** that inner relationship; without being in covenant with God.
4. Christians often do that in Modern Shechem.
 1. We expect unbelievers to live by our rules, our morality.
 2. We freak out when sinners sin.
 3. But they don't have a relationship with God. They aren't in covenant with Him.
 4. We've put the proverbial cart before the horse.
 5. We expect them to stop sinning but they haven't trusted in Christ.
5. Well / Let's be honest: They aren't likely to trust in Him when we stink.
 1. When we're hypocrites who talk endlessly about the love of God but show such hate.
 2. When we're bring a curse rather than blessing.
6. Jacob's son's murder of the Shechemites wasn't justified by Dinah's rape.
7. The world's hostility toward us as we follow Jesus doesn't mean we get to be angry & hostile in reply.
 1. We're to meet hostility with kindness.
 2. Hatred with love.
 3. Cursing with blessing.

Picture It





1. As we end, I want to ask you to imagine this.
2. See a Roman arena filled with spectators who've come to enjoy the games.
3. The big event is a battle btwn 2 well-known gladiators.
4. But before that, there are several minor contests to warm up the crowd.
5. Just before the battle of champions, the city officials want to make a political statement they know will go a long way.
 1. So armed guards usher a couple dozen people onto the arena floor, then hurry out.
 2. They obviously aren't gladiators or combatants. Their just ordinary people.
 3. Some are old, others young & at first the spectators wonder what's going on.
 4. When the announcer rises, the crowd quiets to listen.
 5. He says these on the arena floor are Christians, followers of Jesus.
 6. They were offered their freedom if they would recant & burn a pinch of incense to Caesar as a god, but they refused.
 7. So, they were condemned to death as dangerous subversives. How DARE they not go along with the system.
 8. Most in the crowd know little to nothing what Christians believe. So they cry out for their death.
 9. Doors open around the edges and lions emerge.
- 1) Their keepers haven't fed them in days; they're hungry.
- 2) They pad over toward the soon to be martyrs huddled together and begin to circle.
- 3) As the spectators hurl curses at them, the Christians kneel around an older man who stands in their midst, gazing into heaven.
- 4) People in the stands start shushing each other because an odd sound is coming from the arena floor.

- 5) It's singing. The Christians are singing a hymn of praise to their God.
- 6) A hush falls over the stadium as everyone listens. Even the lions stop prowling for a moment.
- 7) But hunger wins out over curiosity & 1 of them finally leaps on a woman's back.
- 8) A half hour later, it's over. The floor of the arena is red & the lions are fed.
1. Before they died, the Christians never railed at those in the stands.
 2. They never raised an accusing finger, cursing them all to hell.
 3. They sang praise to the Savior who died for them & they were about to see face to face.
 4. And THAT was far more effective in changing the attitude of those in the stands than anything else they could have said or done.
 5. History tells us many of those spectators left the arena, determined to find out what Christians believed and how they could face death with such courage & grace.
 6. One church father said the Blood of the martyrs was the seed of the Church.
 7. I hope & pray we never face such persecution.
 8. But if we do, may we have the courage and grace as those early believers.
 9. May I suggest we start practicing NOW.
 10. We're called to bless, not curse.
 11. The problem is **still** sin. And the Solution is **forever** – Jesus.

[1] <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2016/07/30/supreme-court-religious-liberty-freedom-abortion-contraception/86819172/>

[2]
<http://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/news/politics/2016/07/05/church-sues-state-iowa-over-transgender-bathroom-rules/86700392/>

[3]
https://icrc.iowa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/2016/2016.sogi_pa1_.pdf

[4] <http://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/07/the-controversial-reason-some-religious-colleges-forgo-federal-funding/490253/>

