



SERMON OF THE WEEK

First Presbyterian Church of Honolulu at Ko'olau

September 23, 2012

"The Eye: The Gateway to the Soul" (Gospel of Luke Series)

The Rev. Dr. Dan Chun

As followers of Jesus, one of our challenges is having the mind of Christ, meaning how can we fill our minds only with thoughts of Christ so that we can be more like Him. We know this from countless verses like:

1 Cor. 2:16 "For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

Phil. 2:5 Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,

Col. 4:2 Devote yourselves to prayer with an alert mind and a thankful heart.

We read about another continual metaphor in the Bible: light in the midst of darkness. Our minds must also be filled with the light of Christ.

Eph. 5:8 For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light—

Jesus says He is the Light of the World. We need His light to shine on every dark nook and cranny of our sinful souls.

But how does the light of Christ get into us? How do we fill our minds with thoughts of Christ and His teachings?

It has to do with our eyes. Seriously. Let's look at our Luke passage:

Luke 11:33 "No one after lighting a lamp puts it in a cellar, but on the lampstand so that those who enter may see the light.

Luke 11:34 Your eye is the lamp of your body. If your eye is healthy, your whole body is full of light; but if it is not healthy, your body is full of darkness.

Luke 11:35 Therefore consider whether the light in you is not darkness.

Luke 11:36 If then your whole body is full of light, with no part of it in darkness, it will be as full of light as when a lamp gives you light with its rays."

These are the words of Jesus. He wants our whole body to be filled with His light so it can push out any part of darkness. But what is the key gateway for light to come into our body? Jesus says -

Luke 11:34 "YOUR EYE is the lamp of your body. If your eye is healthy, your whole body is full of light, but if it is not healthy, your body is full of darkness."

Jesus said the eye is the lamp of our whole body. Our eyes greatly affect us not only physically but emotionally and spiritually as well. What we look at DETERMINES whether we're filling our bodies and our minds with light or with darkness. Do we believe that?

What Jesus said in the Bible 2000 years ago echoes to us today: be careful of what we look at. Be careful of what we watch or look at on TV, in movie theaters, computers, tablets, Kindles, and mobile phones because what we watch will either ERODE or ENHANCE our minds and souls!

The Nielsen ratings report from February 2012 said that the average American watches more than 33 hours PER WEEK of video on TV, computers, tablets, and phones. 33 hours a week means the average American is watching nearly two and-a-half months of solid video watching.

What are we putting into our minds and souls through our eyes through the consumption of video? What shows? Are they of the mind of Christ?

I was amazed when I found out from some Christian men recently of how they love to watch extreme fighting, known as Ultimate Fighting or Mixed Martial Arts (M-M-A), where two men punch and kick and strangle each other in a ring, pretty much no holds barred. It's violence for entertainment.

I challenged them, "How does that fill you with the mind of Christ? Could they imagine Jesus watching M-M-A with them and cheering that one guy would be beaten to a pulp?"

They confessed, "No."

We have choices on what we feed our souls through our eyes.

We sing hymns and praise songs, but when we're done with that, what movies and TV shows are we watching? Do they focus on violence or revenge or sex or lust or promiscuity?

Are we being wise in how we use Facebook, or are we using it to communicate with old flames or friends that would endanger our marriage?

Do the books and magazines we read honor God?

I am not asking us to be prudes. All I am saying is that we must be wise, discerning, and discriminating of what we allow our eyes to see. As followers of Christ, we need to be more like Him and be filled with light, not darkness.

A variety of sociological reports are consistent in their statement that 30% of women, and 70% of men confess to viewing online porn. And those are only the ones who confess!

This is a problem for all people either directly or indirectly because chances are we are close to someone who's into porn. It's a big problem, the secret problem that churches and small groups don't want to talk about, and yet it is there.

As your pastor I believe that we need to talk about pornography and be honest of how hard it is to combat. So being a church that is willing to tackle hard issues, we will hit this straight on today.

I have said that this church is a hospital for sinners. So please, don't interpret this talk as me beating up on you or your loved ones. I am trying to give some perspective, help, and hope today.

We started off with a lot of Scripture, but now I want to borrow

from the medical field. It will seem technical but don't worry; it will be spiritual in the end.

Recently, I watched an online talk on TED (Technology, Entertainment and Design). The talk was entitled "The Great Porn Experiment" by Gary Wilson, the host of a website called www.yourbrainonporn.com.

Yourbrainonporn.com was created, and I quote, "in response to a growing demand for solid scientific information by heavy Internet erotica and the users experiencing perplexing, unexpected effects: escalation to more extreme material, concentration difficulties, sexual performance problems, social anxiety, irritability, inability to stop, and obsessive-compulsive symptoms." End of quote.

According to Canadian researcher Dr. Simon Lajeunesse, most boys seek pornography by age 10.

According to Stanford University psychology researcher Dr. Philip Zimbardo, the average boy watches 50 porn clips a week. That means some guys are watching 100 porn clips.

Porn is the fastest growing industry in the U.S - \$15 billion annually. Hollywood makes 400 movies every year. The porn Industry makes 11,000 movies every year, which is the leading sector for more Internet broadband use (Broadband Only Good For Porn" by Tim Richardson, The Register, June 6, 2001)

With drug addiction you want more of something. But with arousal addiction you want something different every time, and the porn industry is supplying it.

With magazines, you would go to the store to get it. With the internet, pornography is setting up shop in your home, in your phone, in your computer

in your bedroom! The addiction is not necessarily to nudity, but to the unending novelty. It's not so much to the sex but to the fast response of the internet itself.

Gary Wilson says a young man today can see more porn in 10 minutes than his father or grandfather saw in 10 lifetimes due the internet.

Being voyeuristic and alone at a computer with the ability to search, click, and open multiple tabs to view image after image causes an arousal addiction.

It's the Internet novelty factor that hooks people in, not the nudity. Every time a new mate possibility comes up on the screen for the porn viewer, a charge of the chemical Dopamine is secreted in his or her body, which is then sent to the brain.

Dr. Simon Lajeunesse wanted to do research on porn, and he needed, as in all experiments, a control group made up of people who weren't doing what you are testing for. In other words, Dr. Lajeunesse needed a group of men who were not into watching porn.

But then Dr. Lajeunesse discovered something: guys who do not watch pornography do NOT exist, or at least he couldn't find any. Specifically, he couldn't find college age males who were not viewing porn.

This creates a huge problem for research with no control group. It creates a huge blind spot. He would ask men, "Is watching porn affecting how you communicate with or deal with women?" They would say, "Nah."

But if they were watching porn non-stop, how would they know? They had a blind spot. It would be like asking a fish what it thinks about water. They couldn't tell what it thinks about it because it's always there.

Yet, researchers could clearly see the symptoms of arousal addiction, which can sometimes be mistaken as ADHD, social anxiety, depression, performance anxiety and OCD.

Often, some of these symptoms are seen as the cause of their arousal addiction, instead of the arousal addiction being the cause of these disorders. Often, patients with these symptoms get medicated without being asked if they have an Internet porn addiction. Many don't realize that these symptoms can be overcome if they change their Internet behavior.

It is hard for some to believe that sex can cause these unhealthy addictions because sex is basically healthy. But Internet porn is not sex. It's as different from real sex as fantasy football is different from an actual football game.

Of all activities on the Internet, porn has the most chance of becoming an addiction. Why? Because the mind works like this: The reward circuit in our brains goes from the VTA – nucleus accumbens to prefrontal cortex. This drives us toward natural rewards like sex, bonding, and food.

Extreme versions of rewards—like high-calorie food or sexy-looking men and women—have the unique ability to capture us. They can give us so much dopamine that they override our natural satiation mechanisms.

All the hits of dopamine, brought about by excitement from clicking again and again on a computer mouse or track pad, surges in and kicks in a molecular switch in which a chemical called Delta-FosB accumulates in the brain which then causes a craving for more and more.

It alters the brain, and causes binging and craving and more binging. It leads to actual physical brain changes as seen in the brain scans of addicts.

Jesus was right—the eye is the lamp to our bodies. What we view actually changes our thoughts and literally our brains. So guard your eyes!

One of the first changes in the brain from addiction arousal is a numbed pleasure response. These numbed pleasure responses in the brain are also seen (are you ready for this?) in video game, gambling, and food addicts. Yes, the over-playing of video games has the same affect on the brain as Internet porn.

But where is there hope? Don't worry; I'm getting to a spiritual solution. I have to talk about the physical solution first though, which will make the spiritual solution possible.

Here's the game changer. Remember the research group that I mentioned earlier that could not start its research on internet porn because it could not find a control group? Well, the researchers finally found a control group of people who did not use porn. So how did they find these people?

Actually, what they found were people who no longer do Internet porn. They found people in the thousands who had given up Internet porn. And why did they give it up? I would love to say, at this point, that it is because of Jesus, but it is actually because of something more mundane. Why would any porn-loving guy give up the internet? Shockingly, it's because of two words that begin with E and D: erectile dysfunction.

A study came out this year called "Internet Porn is Killing Young Men's Sexual Performance." It was a

study by the Italian Society of Andrology and Sexual Medicine, Feb. 2011. Italian men! This is real serious!

Sexual enhancement doesn't work for these guys because there have been physical changes in their brains brought about by constant arousal addiction. Their numb brains are sending weaker and weaker signals to certain body parts.

Gary Wilson says that we didn't have widespread ED in society before the Internet. So researchers finally got a control group because ED was the only symptom that got these guys' attention.

And this was the major discovery. If men completely stopped porn or high video activity, then the brain would change back to how it was. The unused parts of the brain could once again function.

But depending on their ages, the men would have to fast from watching porn for at least two to four months, a longer time for the younger ones because they experienced high speed internet longer time than the older men did.

As the brain returns to normalcy, it starts looking for natural interaction with real live people. Without Internet porn, the brain opens up and the flow of creativity resumes.

Gary Wilson quoted a guy who quit porn: "I feel like the next Sir Isaac Newton or Leonardo da Vinci. Since I quit a month ago I've literally started a business, taken up piano, been studying French every day, been programming, drawing,...and have more awesome ideas than I know what to do with....my confidence is sky high.

"I already feel like I can talk to any girl. I'm the same guy who took two and a half extra years to graduate from college because of procrastination and depression."

So how does one fast off of porn?

First, through education. There are three website that have lots of helpful resources.

1) yourbrainonporn.com

I know that's a funny name, but it's legit. It's a site designed to help those with arousal addiction. The site has a lot of documents and videos that will instruct you far more than I have today on how the brain works and how porn works on the brain.

2) xxxchurch.com

It's a respectable ministry. Founder Craig Gross has spoken at Hawaiian Islands Ministries conferences several times to the youth and adults. The site has had high reviews of being incredibly helpful, supportive, and understanding.

One of its ministries involves asking those addicted to register their computer so that every time they log onto a porn site, three of their friends are alerted by e-mail. It's an accountability measure.

3) covenanteyes.com

It has the same set-up encouraging those with arousal addiction to have accountability partners.

Covenant Eyes website reports that 56% of divorce cases involve one party having an obsessive interest in online porn; 67% of children clear their internet history to hide their online activity; and 29% of adults accessed explicit websites on work computers.

Jesus said,

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He didn't say that to frustrate us but to give us hope and a promise. He wants to fill us with His light if we allow Him to. And how do we do that?

First, like I've said many times in this sermon, let's be careful of what we watch. Choose what will enrich our soul and deepen our relationship with God.

Second, let's read and meditate on the Bible. God's words are meant to transform and encourage us.

And third, pray. Pray for your loved ones. Pray for yourself that He will send His Holy Spirit and His angels to fill you with Christ's light.

Today I have given you a safety net, some tools, and the promise that God is with you. Preaching should always be practical infused with God's truth.

You can take on His strength to address this addiction. God has your back. His people are with you. We are with you. God is behind you. Love is around you. Hope is before you.

One last thing: If some of you might be interested in a support group or a meeting on this issue, you can write me confidentially at pastordan@fpchawaii.org.

If there are enough men or women that would like help in this, we will form two support groups, one for men and another for women. I will get

back to you on and let you know of the time and place for a first meeting.

When we share our issues with others, somehow the addiction loses its power on us because it's the secret that gives the addiction its power. So when you tell someone about it, it's like light is brought into the darkness.

God is a forgiving God, a gracious God, and He wants to help all of us become what He designed us to be. This is not a time for us to now go home and get angry with your spouse or children or loved ones. That would not be helpful. Do not be judgmental of your spouse, relatives or friends.

We all need to pray. Pray before you talk to anyone about this. We all need to receive prayer, God's wisdom, patience, and supernatural power.

We have a healing service on Sunday, October 7th. Join us for that as a fellow struggler. The week after that we start our all-church fast for the fall, and maybe this is an area some of you might consider fasting from. (But you don't have to wait till then to stop engaging in activities that fill you with darkness.)

On October 30, I will be speaking at the Men's Dinner on the topic why men pray. And men, I ask you to join me for that.

This is to say that you will not be alone in dealing with your problem. We want to be part of your safety net. Let me now do a mass healing prayer for you.

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