Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ,

If I was meeting you for the first time and you told me that you belonged to someone else, that another person owned your body, well, I would be calling the Police to report a clear case of slavery.

But very regularly in our worship services, we confess, as we did earlier, that “I am not my own but belong body and soul … to … Jesus Christ.” And we aren’t lamenting this with sadness, but confessing this with gladness! In fact, we confess this as our only or greatest comfort! And we said that because we belong to Christ, we are “wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for Him.” So, why is this such a comforting truth? What does living for Him look like? And why is the believer happy to live like this?

Well, the Scripture reference in the Catechism answer for the part that says that we belong to Jesus Christ is this passage in 1 Corinthians 6. So, today we will consider **the benefits and obligations of belonging to Jesus** that are laid out in this passage. And we will see these benefits and obligations under five headings: **Function**, **resurrection**, **connection**, **habitation**, and **redemption**.

1. So, first of all, **function**. And our chief interest here is the function of the body. And we see this spelled out at the end of verse 13: “*The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body*.”
	1. Now, Paul originally wrote this letter to believers in the church at **Corinth**. And Corinth was a sex-obsessed harbour city. It was infested with prostitution and homosexuality and almost every kind of sexual sin. And there were serious struggles with sin of this sort among the Corinthian believers. So, earlier in the letter, Paul rebuked the Corinthians for not doing anything about a church member who was in a sexual relationship with his step-mother. The man thought it was fine and he had not been called to repentance. So, Paul urged them to excommunicate this man in the hope that he would be brought to repentance and restored to full fellowship. But beginning from verse 9 of chapter 6, Paul broadens the scope of his concern to **sexual immorality in general**. And he did this because it seems, for example, that some church members thought nothing of visiting prostitutes. But this was just one example of a general comfortableness with sexual sin.
	2. And this simply should not be the case among those who belong to Christ. For example, the seventh commandment forbids adultery, which is a kind of shorthand for every type of sexual sin, including even the inward and hidden lusts of the heart, as Jesus made plain in Matthew 5. **Revelation 22:14-15** says this about heaven: “*Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood*.” And if you look back to **verses 9-10** of this chapter, Paul says that those who immerse themselves in, and do not repent of, things like sexual immorality, adultery, and homosexuality, will not “*inherit the kingdom of God*.” Now, Paul went on to give thanks for the fact that some in the Corinthian church who used to be in slavery to those sins had been washed, sanctified, and justified “*in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God*.” But it is clear from our context that others were still immersed in these sins. And if Corinth was a sex-obsessed harbour city, well, our whole world today is a sex-obsessed world. So, sexual sin is still a huge trap for you and me today.
		1. A word we have all learned in the past couple of years is **pandemic**. Well, pornography is a moral pandemic. The statistics for viewing pornography are horrifying, and this includes those who claim to be born-again Christians. Sex outside marriage is seen as perfectly healthy and normal. The LGBTQ movement is about defining yourself according to sex or your preferred gender identity. So, who you are is about how you have sex!

But what do we read in the living word of God? “*The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body*.”

* + 1. So, notice our **obligation** in these words: The God-designed function of our bodies is not sexual immorality but “*for the Lord*.”
			1. **Romans 12:1** says, “*Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-- this is your spiritual act of worship*.” We are to use our bodies *in the service of the Lord*. Our eyes, our hands, even our sexual organs, are instruments for the service of the Lord. They are to be used as He commands. And we will say more about this as we continue.
		2. But note also the **benefit** in the function of the body. For Paul doesn’t only say, “*The body is meant … for the Lord*,” but also “*the Lord for the body*.”
			1. Boys and girls, when Jesus came to earth, did He float around as some sort of spirit being? He didn’t, did He; He had a body, just like yours and mine.
				1. **Hebrews 2:14-17** says this about Jesus: “*Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, He himself likewise partook of the same things. He had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest*.”
			2. Jesus embraced our human nature and He used His body to accomplish our salvation. His death was a *physical* death; His flesh was torn and He bled. And He rose, bodily, from the grave. And He lives, now, in heaven, with His body. Yes, it is glorified, but it is still a human body. One Swiss theologian, Frederic Louis Godet said, “The body is for Christ, to belong to Him and to serve Him, and Christ is for the body, to inhabit and to glorify it.”
1. And we continue to think about Christ being for the body in our second point, which is **resurrection**. And we see this in verse 14: “*And God raised the Lord and will also raise us by His power*.”
	1. One of the major **Greek ideas** **of Paul’s day** was that the body was just a prison of the soul. One philosopher of the time said, “I am a poor soul shackled to a corpse.” So, they had the idea that the soul was beautiful and important and immortal, but not the body. The body was just a temporary shell that would eventually crumble in the ground once the soul had been set free through death.
		1. And from this idea came the notion that what you did with your body did not matter. It is one of the major problems addressed in **1 John**. For the people he wrote to included some who thought that they could not sin because what you did with your body did not matter. They didn’t see sexual sin as an issue, because it was just your body. And this way of thinking existed also in Corinth.
	2. But is this the teaching of the Bible? Is the body unimportant? Does death end God’s purpose *for our bodies*? No.
		1. When Jesus was on earth, He healed people’s bodies! He despaired over their illnesses and diseases and disabilities and even death, because this was not how He had created the body. And all these healings were a foretaste of what heaven will be like – our bodies will be free of disability and disease and dysfunction!
		2. And as we noted earlier, Jesus was raised, bodily. When the women met Him after the resurrection, “*They clasped His feet and worshipped Him*.” The risen Jesus had feet!
		3. And when Jesus returns to earth, and the general resurrection of the dead happens, it will be a bodily resurrection.
			1. **1 Corinthians 15:52-53** says, “*In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye … the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality*.” They will be glorified bodies, but they will be bodies.
			2. As **Job** lay on the ash heap, scraping his terrible festering sores with broken pottery, he said, “*I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes-- I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!*”
	3. So, you belong to Jesus, soul *and body*. He is *for* your body. He *values* your body. He will one day make your body whole and uncorruptible! But He also wants you to use your body well, now.
2. And we see more of the benefits and obligations of belonging to Jesus, body and soul, in our third point, which is **Connection**.
	1. Verse 15 says, “*Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?*” What does this mean? What does being a member of Christ mean?
		1. Well, in the so-called **High-Priestly prayer of Jesus**, recorded in John 17, Jesus prayed some astounding words. He said, “*I pray … that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us … may they be one as we are one … I in them and you in me*.” Jesus prayed that He and His people would be connected as one. Another term that is used is united or joined or entwined.
		2. We see this idea also in **Ephesians**. All our blessings are “*in Christ*” and we have been raised “*with Christ*.”
			1. This morning I talked about how our sins have been removed from us as far as the east is from the west. And I said, when the Father views us, He does not see our guilt, and when He views our guilt, He does not see us. But when it comes to us and Christ, the opposite is in view – when the Father sees us, He sees Christ, because we have been connected with Him by faith.
		3. And we have talked before about how the Lord Jesus yearns to be fully united with His bride, with His body, with His people. And this connection with Jesus is the chief benefit of belonging to Him.
			1. Is this precious to you, believer? Is this comforting to you? I am sure it is!
	2. But this connection with Christ brings solemn **obligations**. Verse 15 continues: “*Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, "The two will become one flesh." But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with Him.*”
		1. Again, as I explained a moment ago, some in the Corinthian church had the idea that sex was a bodily or physical act that meant nothing. So, visiting a temple prostitute or committing adultery or fornication or homosexual sex was no big deal. And this is how many view sex today – hooking up, casual sex, recreational sex, these are all terms which suggest that sex is not really important.
		2. And many people, including professing Christians even, criticize those who preach about sexual sin. They say, sin is sin. Why don’t you preach more about gossip or greed? Why are you so preoccupied with sexual sin? Well, here you have the answer: Sexual sin involves the deepest connection that humans can have. It is about oneness. So, if you are connected with Christ, you must not engage in ungodly connection with another.
		3. One author puts it like this, “If the believer, who is “washed … sanctified … justified” (6:11) and filled with the Spirit of Christ, would be so crass as to casually [engage] in what some have termed “recreational sex,” he would literally be contaminating the body of Christ by involving Him in immorality. It is an unthinkable proposition, and one of the primary reasons [why] sex sins are worse than others.”
	3. And to really press the seriousness of this matter upon us, Paul continues in **verse 18**: “*Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body*.”
		1. Sexual intimacy is a beautiful gift of God to a husband and wife. It is intended by God to be mutually satisfying and the ultimate act of oneness. And that is why, as one commentator outs it: “No other sin engages one’s power of bodily personal communication in precisely so intimate a way. All other sins are in this respect ‘outside’ the body.”
		2. And this is why Paul describes sexual sin as against your own body. The sexually immoral person willfully and sinfully uses his or her body against the Lord, who created, redeemed, and sanctified it, and against his or her spouse, whether they are married now or will be in the future.
		3. According to Hollywood, which is where most people get their theology today, sex does not matter. It is casual, recreational, and just a bit of fun. So, you would think then that when a husband or wife commit adultery, their spouse would not mind. After all, it’s just sex. But is that how it is? No, nothing hurts more deeply than sexual betrayal. It is why the penalties for sexual crimes are usually much worse than physical assault or fraud or property crimes. And we all get this. Sexual sin is serious sin.
		4. And this is why Paul says, “***Flee sexual immorality***.” And this is why we read about Joseph earlier. What did he do when the temptation to sin, sexually, was right in front of him? He said, “*How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?*” He understood the seriousness of sexual sin as a great offense to God. And when temptation came again, he “*fled and got out of the house*.”
	4. Earlier in the service, you all said, “Because I belong to … Christ [I am] wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for Him.” Well, that means not playing around with sexual temptation; running away from it. And I have said this many times before, but if you really struggle with sexual sin, please ask for help. If you hate this sin but just can’t leave it, you will not be hammered and condemned. You will receive care and support, you will find friends who can help you with this, and you will draw closer to Jesus than you have ever before!
3. Another benefit and obligation of belonging to Jesus is our fourth point, which is **habitation**. And we see this in verse 19: “*Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God*?”
	1. And habitation, boys and girls, means dwelling place or house or place of residence. Where you live is your habitation. And what we are reminded of here is that our bodies are the habitation or home or place of residence of the Holy Spirit. In chapter 3 of 1 Corinthians, Paul said, “*Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?*” And there is lovely Old Testament imagery in those words, isn’t there. We are reminded of the temple and the glory cloud that came down to fill the temple – symbolizing that God Himself lived among His people. So, not only were the Corinthians wrong about the body being unimportant, it is also where the Holy Spirit has made His home! In fact, to Him, it is a temple! So, you are not alone in your struggle to resist sin; you have the personal presence and power of the Holy Spirit within you. What a wonderful *benefit* of belonging to Jesus.
	2. But it brings with it an **obligation**. And I made this point last week, but what is the ‘first name’ of the Holy Spirit? **Holy**. And so, having the *Holy* Spirit within you puts you under obligation to be holy. And this is perhaps stated most plainly in **1 Peter 1:14**: “*As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy*."”
4. And that brings us, fifthly and lastly, to the matter of **redemption**. And we see this in verse 19b-20: “*You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body*.”
	1. One country in West Africa is **Liberia**. And Liberia means freedom. It was founded as a colony in 1822 by American slaves who had been set free and who returned to Africa to live. And they were so thankful to U.S. President James Monroe for his efforts in securing their freedom that they named the capital of Liberia, Monrovia. And I am sure you will agree that it was appropriate for them to name the capital; after the President; being set free or redeemed should surely lead to gratitude. It would be most rude for there to be no thankfulness toward the redeemer from the one redeemed. Well, “*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life*.” And 1 Peter 1 talks about our having been redeemed not with gold or silver but “*with the precious blood of Christ*.” What a debt of gratitude that we owe our Father for what it cost Him to redeem us. What a debt of gratitude we owe Christ for what it cost Him to redeem us. This is why we must glorify God with our bodies.
		1. This is why, according to **Romans 6:12**, you must not “*let not sin … reign in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. Do not present [your body parts] to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and [your body parts] to God as instruments for righteousness*.”

I told you earlier about the origins of **Liberia**. American slaves who had been set free established it as a colony. Well, the area was populated by various native tribes. And the Americo-Liberians tended to look down on the native people as rather uncivilized. And so, for its first 133 years of existence, there was just one political party in Liberia. And it was made up, exclusively, of Americo-Liberians. Native Liberians could not join that party. And only Americo-Liberians were allowed to vote. So, in a nation established *because of freedom*, there really was no freedom for the local population for decades!

Well, when you use your body for sexual sin, you are being disobedient and ungrateful to God. You are forgetting the **function** for your body, the fact that your body will be **resurrected**, the reality that you are **connected** with Christ, the truth that the Holy Spirit has his **habitation** in you, and that you have been redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus.

And if you are sitting here today with a sense of shame and guilt because of sexual sin, let me remind you that that King David fell into serious sexual sin also. But having confessed his sin, he said, “*If you, O LORD, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness*.” So, confess your sins and know and believe that in Christ, your sins are forgiven.

Believer, you are not your own but belong body and soul … to … Jesus Christ. He has fully paid for all your sins with His precious blood and has set you free from the tyranny of the devil. So, may the Spirit of the Lord make us “wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for Him.” Amen.