

JUST AS IT WAS IN THE BEGINNING

There have been a lot jokes about marriage. “Marriage is not a word, it’s a sentence: a life sentence.” Or, “a little boy at a wedding asked his mother why the bride wears white. His mother replied, ‘She wears white because it is the happiest, most cheerful day of her life?’ ‘Oh!’ He replied. ‘Why then does the groom wear black?’” But the recent action regarding marriage by your State legislature is not a laughing matter. I am speaking its legalization of same sex marriages.

The longer I live, the more I agree with Luther’s statement, “*Marriage is a civic matter. It is really not, together with all its circumstances, the business of the church. It is so only when a matter of conscience is involved.*” (“What Luther Says” CPH 1959, Vol. II, page 885) The Reformer went on to say, “*No one can deny that marriage is an external, worldly, matter, like clothing and food, house and property, subject to temporal authority, as the many imperial laws enacted on the subject prove.*” (Vol. 46: page 265) Luther felt that all marriages should be performed by the state. Then those couples who wished to have their marriages blessed by the church could have a religious ceremony at their local parish.

At the writing of this sermon, news reports suggest that in the very near future the Maryland legislature will legalize same sex marriages. The people you elected to the legislature will make it law that a legal marriage can be between two men or two women; or one man and one woman. It would not surprise me, tongue in cheek, if sometime in the future they decided that marriage licenses should be like fishing, dog, or driving licenses – renewable after so many years.

The sad thing is that anyone who dares to speak out in opposition to same sex marriages is made out to be an ignorant, Neanderthal, viscous homophobe. So, let me be perfectly clear, I am not a homophobe, and I am not supportive of the same sex marriage laws. I know many gay folks. There are seven in my wife’s and my extended families combined. They are good citizens, respectful, hardworking, caring, sincere, honest, and productive people. Many of them believe Jesus died for their sins and receive Him as their personal Savior. They are helpful and generous. I believe that gays should have the same opportunities for housing, education, employment, military service, and medical care as heterosexual folks. I also believe that they are entitled to make commitments to each other and jointly buy property, hold mortgages, share indebtedness, inherit from each other, and share medical coverage and benefits. They can even make a commitment in writing to be faithful and supportive of their chosen “partner.” But do not call it marriage. Marriage is more than a litany of legal rights and promises.

It is important for us to understand that one cannot legislate morality. You cannot pass a law that forces people not to commit adultery, not to be prejudice, or not to commit any other sin. Nor can you legally force people to do the right thing like love and respect all people, help the poor, or reframe from other sins. But note, while governments cannot legislate morality but they can legalize immorality. Just as in the case of the legalization of the murder of unborn children is immoral, so to making a marital union of a same sex marriage is wrong.

The state's main concern with marriage deals with property, not morality. The state is interested in the economic and commerce side of marriage. Whose names are on the title, which is liable for any indebtedness and the taxes, who is entitled to inherit the property, and who is responsible for raising any children of the marriage? The state could really care less about the question of morality.

The question the church must wrestle with is not a question of legality, but one of morality. Just because the state deems something legal does not make it moral. In pre-Civil War days owning slaves was legal in many States. But that did not make it morally right to do. Abortion may be legal, but it is not right or moral. So too, same sex marriages may be legal but that does not make it morally right.

In the question of same sex marriages, let us follow Jesus' example when He was questioned about marriage. Look at Matthew 19:4. What did Jesus do when He was question about marriage? Our LORD took them back to Creation to see what God the Father had intended marriage to be. After all, since God the Father instituted marriage, who better to consult for answers regarding marriage?

Let's open our Bibles to Genesis 1-2 and try to understand the purposes for marriage and the creation of man and woman. Genesis 1:27-28 shows us that man and woman were created for the intended purpose to share together in managing God's creation, which includes encouraging, supporting, assisting, partnering, and sharing together in that management. Moses also writes that marriage is for purpose of procreation, for which you need a man and a woman. And look at Genesis 2:18, 20b-24. Marriage is to be a lifelong intimate relationship of oneness, uniting a man and a woman together. St. Paul, in 1Corinthians 7:2, gives us a fourth purpose for marriage. It serves as an antidote for sexual immorality.

It is also important to know that whenever the Scriptures speak of marriage, it is **always and only** in the context of a man and a woman. Even the Commandment, "**Honor your father and mother...**" explicitly implies marriage is between a man and a woman. When God created Adam and Eve, He did not create Bruce, too, and tell Adam, "Choose your preference!"

Now I know that those who advocate same sex marriage make references to the relationships between King David and Jonathon, and Jesus and John, as justification for homosexual relationships and same sex marriages. They quote where the Bible says “**Jonathon became one in spirit with David, and loved him as himself.**” (1 Samuel 18:1). And again, the apostle John is called, “**the apostle Jesus loved.**” (John 13:23;20:2). Now here, with the word “love,” is where the advocates for the Biblical justification of homosexual marriages make a grave mistake. They assume that the word “love” means a romantic, sexual love. But what do the original Hebrew and Greek words mean that are translated into English as love? The Hebrew word, “*ahab*,” means a love of friends, someone with whom you are familiar. The Greek words used in the John references are “*agapeo*” and “*phileo*.” The former means a sacrificial, giving, caring love that responds to another’s needs’ and the latter means love between friends. Nowhere in the entire New Testament is the Greek word “*eros*” (a sexual love) found or used. The problem is that people today want to impose the behaviors of our culture on the interpretation of the Scriptures instead of letting the Scriptures speak to our culture.

The Sixth Commandment forbids us to adulterate or pollute marriage. On the one hand it forbids sexual intercourse with anyone who is not your spouse. On the other hand it commands us to keep marriage pure and holy, just as God our Creator intended marriage to be when He instituted marriage in the beginning.

When we take the attitude that we don’t care what God teaches us in His Word, we are going to do what we want to do our way, we are guilty of breaking the first two Commandments: we have committed the sin idolatry. Not only are we dishonoring the name of God and ignoring the revelations of God, but we are placing our will above God’s will. We are saying, “I don’t care what God says about marriage. I am now god and I will do things my way from now on!”

Now I realize that my words are not popular with the America political correctness advocates. And I may not ever get invited to be on “*the View*.” Maybe even some of you here disagree with me and the Scriptures. But I am not in a popularity contest. As Paul said in Galatians 1:10 when people challenged him for his condemning those who perverted the Gospel from one of saving grace into one of good works, “**Am I trying to win the approval of men, or of God? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ.**” Sometimes a prophet’s voice needs to speak out. When our LORD Jesus spoke in John 6, and many people deserted Him claiming they could not agree with His words, did Jesus suddenly change His position? Did He worry about being popular? Did He suddenly become silent? Or did He continue to proclaim the truth? Folks, my popularity will not save you. But the Gospel I share with you will! Like the

prophets, apostles, and faithful pastors before, I am called to serve my LORD and proclaim the truth. Even the Maryland legislature cannot change that truth.

Finally, remember, we are all sinners. Scripture reminds us that “**we all come short of God’s glory**” and need a Savior. None of us is perfect: not you, or I, or advocates of same sex marriages or those oppose same sex marriages. We all need God’s love, mercy, and grace. We need God’s forgiveness. We all need the blood of Jesus to wash us clean of all our sins. Remember, Jesus died for all people, straight and gay, those in the church and those outside of it. Jesus even died for those who seek to destroy the sanctity of marriage. May our gentle witness win the hearts of all, even those who in spiritual blindness seek to alter the sanctity of marriage. It is my prayer that all would believe the Good News, and that Jesus would change our hearts so we might live a moral life, faithful to our LORD and His Word.

Gay marriage is not the first issue to challenge the Word of God. And sadly, it won’t be the last time, unless Jesus returns today or tomorrow. But let us learn and take comfort in the Word and avoid confusion and being led astray. Whenever there is a question on Scripture, go to the Word of God. Follow the Word, walk in the Word, live by the Word. And your life will be blessed. And as we strive to live according to God’s Word, let us hold marriage as a sacred union between a man and a woman, **JUST AS IT WAS IN THE BEGINNING!** IJN, amen.