

On the matter of same-sex blessing/marriage. How and where to begin?

The question I ask is "What is the history, particularly the recent history that has led to this? That we, in the Anglican Church are even discussing this matter demonstrates just how far removed we are from the foundations of the faith we profess and the recognition of the authority of Holy Scripture. Gen. 3:1, "Did God really tell you not to....?" When it comes right down to it that is what this is really all about. Is Holy Scripture still regarded by this denomination as an authoritative revelation from the Lord of the universe or have the voice and demands of culture pre-empted it?

That the Anglican Church seems to be taking its directive on so important a matter as marriage from special identity groups within society whose demands spring from a socio-political movement, the foundations of which are not rooted in Judeo/Christian belief, is disturbing. For millennia marriage has been recognized by Judaism and Christianity as constituting a specifically heterosexual union. We find this position consistently reflected in Scripture from Genesis to Revelation. The only template provided for marriage in Scripture is between male and female. Our Lord Himself affirmed this template in the Gospels. Same gender marriage never arises in Scripture and whenever homosexual behaviour is addressed in Scripture it is always in the negative. Indeed, the universality of marriage as being a heterosexual union is recognized cross-culturally. Why, at this time in history, are we questioning this universal, age-old understanding of marriage?

The past several decades the Western world has seen the liberalization of many social laws, including those governing sexual behaviour. Unfortunately, this liberalization has resulted in attendant negative consequences for society as a whole, particularly with respect to the breakdown of the traditional family unit. (Neither the Church nor the civil courts possess the capacity to anticipate the far-reaching ramifications such a drastic step as changing the definition of marriage will have on society; that alone should be grounds for refusal to do so, or at the very least, evoke extreme caution in considering the matter.)

The drive for greater civil freedoms was appropriated by a highly motivated and well-organized gay political movement which saw this increased liberality as an opportunity to promote their particular agenda concerning the legitimizing of homosexual behaviour. Gaining society's acceptance of the lifestyle could only come about if society's perception of it changed and key to this was the altering of traditional views held in the political, educational and religious arenas. As the basis for the gay movement's agenda was not predicated on religious belief and in fact constituted a denial of traditional Judeo/Christian teaching on the matter, persuading the religious segment of society was considered to be particularly challenging. (Dr. Jeffrey Satinover in his book, 'Homosexuality and the Politics of Truth', provides an incredibly insightful and passionate commentary on the matter of homosexuality from both a medical professional and Judeo/Christian religious perspective and touches on the change in our social climate towards homosexuality.)

Whether or not most of us within the Church are aware of it, we (society) are the beneficiaries of an extremely methodical and well-organized social campaign for change of quite recent origin that has succeeded far in excess of the wildest dreams of its founders. Homosexuality has been seamlessly woven into the fabric of our social landscape via aggressive social awareness campaigns, the effective use of media - particularly in advertising and entertainment - and the altering of political platforms and educational curriculum to reflect the new status quo. The revamping of all elements of society to gain acceptance and legitimacy has been the focus of the movement. The tactics employed however, have not always been commendable.

And so we come to our present situation. The Church is being pressured by current cultural trends to embrace as appropriate what Scripture plainly and clearly teaches is not. The Church is called to be 'salt and light' and is to be 'Christ's representative on earth'. How can the Church do that if it's contradicting Him? Jesus demonstrated the Father's love for all by affirming their personhood, **but not once** do we find Him affirming their sinful behaviour. I understand sin is not a popular term for many in the Church any more, but Jesus did talk about sin and its effect on humanity. We are all guilty of committing sin and sin, or its effects, is what Jesus came to save us from. We focus a lot on 'social justice' which is a human construct, yet the true Gospel is the Gospel of Christ Jesus. He was born as a man, was crucified and died for our sins and was resurrected on the third day and there is no other in whom we have salvation. How do we know what is sinful? God in His grace and mercy tells us in His **Word**. The contemporary

Church however, seems more concerned with social agendas than sharing and teaching the message of salvation. Just as the serpent beguiled Eve in the Garden, we in the Church seem to be beguiled by the language and emotion of the times - agendas predicated on sentiment, or words which are either persuasive or intimidating. If, however, we regard the values of culture over the Word of God and for the sake of cultural convenience embrace as good lifestyles which our Lord clearly indicates are not right, we are not exhibiting Christian love but the antithesis of true love.

Scripture declares that 'God honours His Word as His Name' Ps. 138 and also warns against 'calling good what is evil and evil what is good', Is. 5:20 & Malachi 2:17. Jesus never contradicted or negated Holy Scripture. For a Christian to hold a position on Scripture which is at variance with that of the Lord in whom they professes belief in as God makes for a problematic theology and frankly, is not logical. The Christian belief is reduced to some kind of 'religious fast-food experience' with a 'choose what appeals to you' menu. That is not true Christianity.

We live in an era where the terms 'transhuman', 'transpecies', transgenic, and 'posthuman' permeate the scientific literature. The issue of acceptance of same-sex relationships is just one of many other decisions confronting humankind that will impact what direction we are headed in relationship to God – towards or away from Him. Scripture states 'God created us in His image and likeness'. We were made for relationship with Him. Humanity is on the precipice of things unprecedented in its history and experience, and yet seems bent on creating itself socially, physically and spiritually in whatever image **it** desires, although 'it is in Him we live and move and have our being'. For those who are familiar with the Hebrew calendar, you know this is a Shemitah Year (every 7th year), which, among other things, has to do with repentance and judgment. Is it a mere coincidence that this particular issue has come up for discussion at this time? I think not. I also do not consider the diminishment of this denomination over the past several decades to be unrelated to its distancing itself from orthodoxy and Scriptural integrity. God will not bless what He has not countenanced. We are being presented with an opportunity, as a denomination, to repent and turn towards God. How will we respond?

As I mentioned at the outset, God's Word **is** clear on what constitutes marriage. The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, will only affirm the Word of Truth, anything else is of another spirit nor matter how 'good' or 'persuasive' it may seem. Scripture is the plumb line by which we are to measure all things and a rule of thumb is to 'allow Scripture to interpret itself'. Our Lord says that if we love Him we will obey His Word. Do we take that command to heart or has His Word become 'an inconvenient truth' for us? This culture we live in is transient – it will pass. The Word of the Lord is eternal.

Thank you for the opportunity to share some of my thoughts on this issue.

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