

Sex, Marriage & the Gospel

[Pickerington Church of Christ]

On Friday, June 24th 2015 the Supreme Court of the United States delivered a landmark ruling that declared the banning of Same-Sex marriage unconstitutional. On that day the laws of the nation changed. The understanding of the constitution changed, and the implications of those changes are still largely unknown.

On Friday, June 24th 2015 the Supreme Judge of the world did not change. His laws did not change. The constitution that governs the Kingdom of Heaven did not change. Those who have received a Kingdom that cannot be shaken¹ do not live in uncertainty as His citizens.

Therefore, on Friday, June 24th 2015 absolutely nothing changed with the Pickerington Church of Christ. Our foundational purpose, mission, beliefs and doctrines remain the same. Specifically, our understanding of the sacred relationship of marriage did not change. It remains the same as it did on Thursday, June 23rd.

It seems prudent at this time to reaffirm our beliefs regarding marriage and sexuality. The Pickerington Church of Christ holds the belief that marriage and sexuality are sacred, a gift from God which is not something we are to change.

Sacred Gifts - Marriage & Sex:

God designed marriage and sex to be the ultimate parable of how we are to relate to Him.² The intimacy of one man and one woman united in the covenant of marriage, where protection, procreation and pleasure can be enjoyed, reflect the manner in which God desires to relate to His people.³ The Pickerington Church of Christ disapproves of all departures from the biblical revelation of sex and marriage because we approve of all people knowing the beauty of a perfect union with God.

The Pickerington Church of Christ also recognizes that sexuality can be complex. People are unique in their sexual experience. Early exposure to sexual content, molestation, broken homes, rejection, fear, and many other factors have direct impact on the sexuality of a person. From the moment sexual brokenness occurs in our life, distortion of our sexual desire begins. This is a universal experience.

Because of sin, our desires end up deceiving us.⁴ As people experience sexual desire, whether it is for multiple partners, pre-marital sexual activity, sex outside of the marriage covenant, same-sex attraction, pornography, or lust, these desires alone are not a trustworthy guide to our life. Therefore, trusting these desires alone to bring us our fullness of joy will never work. This, too, is a universal experience.

[The disapproval of departure from God's pattern for sex and marriage comes out of an approval for all people's highest joy - a relationship with God through Jesus Christ]

The deepest longing of the human heart is to be reconnected to our perfect Father who redeems, restores, validates, and saves us in Jesus Christ. It is in our relationship with him that we get our ultimate love, acceptance, affirmation, approval, fidelity, security, and ecstasy.⁵

To those who have a traditional sexual experience we warn: do not let the love, approval, and affirmation of your spouse become your god. Let that love point you to a higher love found in Christ.

To those who have sexual desires that do not lead to a path of sexuality and marriage as defined by Scripture, we say: let the longing of your heart for love drive you into the arms of the only one who can really satisfy you - Jesus Christ.

This path forward can bring you suffering and loneliness. We share with you in the experience of suffering. The Word of God confronts each of us with ways we must reject living out of our desires, and through that confrontation, we suffer together. Yet, it is in the process of suffering where all our temporal hopes are dissolved, and our ultimate hope - a reunion with the One who made us - rises to the surface and becomes the anchor to our soul.⁶ Suffering serves us well.

This is our hope. This is our doctrine. This is our offer: to walk, in love, with anyone while we support, hold accountable, and grow together on our journey to know Jesus Christ.



A word to the local Christians in our care:

The ruling handed down by the Supreme Court can certainly cause a great amount of fear, doubt, and anxiety as we walk into uncharted territory. We want to share a few thoughts with you on how to move forward as the beacon of Christ:

First - *Overcome fear and doubt.* Fear and doubt are not words intended to describe Christians. The foundation of our life and anchor of our soul is unchanging.⁷ Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.⁸ When you sense fear and doubt, let it remind you that you may be trusting in something other than the Living God, and let that move you forward with faith and confidence in your God.

Second - *Shine your light.* Light shines brightest when it is surrounded by darkness. Never, in our lifetime, has there been an opportunity for the Christian message to be so distinct. Now is the time to clarify the central truth of the gospel - that your highest joy and deepest peace are found in a restored relationship with God, through the person and work of Jesus Christ.⁹ Let your life emanate that what is offered through sin (joy, life, pleasure, relief) can truly only come from God. Shine the bright light of a contented and fulfilled soul. Ensure that you are light in the world, and not just heat in an argument.

Third - *Renew your hope.* The hope of the Christian faith is a full reunion with our Creator, which was secured by the life, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. Live in the inexpressible joy of this hope.¹⁰ Let it mark your personality and shape your mind. It is those who have a transcendent, unshakable hope who will be approached by those without it to inquire.¹¹ Focus on renewing your hope day by day, and the rest will take care of itself.

Fourth - *Rest in the Lord.* He promised tribulation.¹² He promised the need for faith.¹³ He promised the usefulness of trials and suffering. Let the sin within you, and the sin outside you, cultivate a longing for heaven. Let the promise of heaven calm you, knowing a world is coming when sin will be no more. Also let the prayer of Christ motivate you. He said “Your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.”¹⁴ Let that longing for a heavenly world motivate you to do what you can to bring it here. And when the space between sinless heaven and sinful world wears you down - rest fully in the work of Christ. His life and death should prove that He would not leave you or forsake you.¹⁵

Fifth - *Prayerfully participate.* God has called us to be resident aliens. That means we participate in our world even though we don't belong. This must begin first with serious prayer. Only those empowered by God can truly do His work. Pray, seriously pray. Then participate. This means being prepared to have meaningful dialog. Spend time understanding both the message of God and the questions of our world. When you understand what people who oppose you are seeking, then you can respond with the gospel. You can't give an answer without a question, and until you hear the question you are just interjecting another voice in the already crowded chorus. This also means to participate in civic life. Find ways to be engaged in your local community and prayerfully consider participation in the democratic process. The Christian voice is important. But it is just as important that the voice actually be Christian.

The elders of the Pickerington Church of Christ love each one of you dearly. We are here to help you deepen your faith, strengthen your hope, and empower you to be a person of love. Remember, Scripture is full of accounts where troubled circumstances became the catalyst for God's greatest work. This can be seen clearly at the cross. That event appeared to be a moral and civic victory for almost everyone in that world. As the majority celebrated their apparent victory, a small group of uneducated disciples waited without knowing what the future held. God did not just survive that event. It was the very thing He used to defeat sin! Let's be people of faith. Let us trust in the Living God, who will take this event and not just survive, but use it for the growth of His Kingdom and the glory of His name.

Notes:

¹Hebrews 12:29, ²Ephesians 5:25-32, ³Genesis 2:18-25, Matthew 19:5, ⁴Ephesians 4:17-24, ⁵1 John 1:1-4, ⁶1 Peter 1:3-9, Romans 5:1-5, Hebrews 6:19, ⁷1 Corinthians 15:1-4, ⁸Hebrews 13:8, ⁹Galatians 1:3-5, ¹⁰1 Peter 1:8, ¹¹Colossians 4:2-6, ¹²John 16:33, ¹³Mark 11:22

¹⁴Matthew 6:10, ¹⁵Hebrews 13:5

