

As you know there has been a sea-change in our culture regarding our perception and reception of those with same sex attractions. I am hopeful that with this change, greater love and charity would be expressed to those in same-sex relationships. I welcome a day when those who are same-sex attracted or who are in same-sex relationships will not have to fear for their life or well-being. I welcome a day when those in same-sex relationships will not be called names or gossiped about. The call to love and charity is the supreme command of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. I also welcome the day when our Christian communities will more boldly proclaim the Gospel: that no matter what our struggles are (and we ALL struggle with sinful desires), our loving God offers forgiveness and healing to all. Those Christian communities will be marked by humility in the knowledge that all are in need of this grace, and will be sources of strength for those striving to live lives of chastity—whether they are called to faithful marriage, or to celibacy (those with same-sex attraction or those who are heterosexual but are single).

A true Gospel witness, however, recognizes that neither the Bible--the word of God, nor two millennia of church teaching support such a change in our marriage canon or the definition of marriage. While all human beings are loved by God, not everything we do is loved by God. The Bible says nothing positive about same-sex sexual practice, and in fact forbids sexual relations between people of the same sex: see Leviticus 18:22; Leviticus 20:13. Article VII of the 39 Articles of Religion (page 701 of the BCP) explains why these moral laws continue to apply. See also Genesis 19 & Jude 7; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9; and 1 Timothy 1:10.

Apart from these texts, the entire scope of the Bible lifts up the logic and good news of opposite-sex sexual expression and marriage from beginning to end. Marriage is a gift that has already been instituted by God, not a “right” that is malleable to fit the social mores of the time. Marriage is God’s idea.

Men and women are created equal before the eyes of God and we are both designed to reflect God’s glory back to Him. But we do so in different, complementary ways. Men and women are equal but different. Men and women tend to react to stress differently, process our feelings differently, communicate differently, and, of course, in the most elementary way, we are physically different. Bringing that “differentness” together in marriage is part of the beauty of the way God created us and is the only way new life can be brought into the world. Marriage is a testament that that which is different can come and live together in unity “until death do us part.” In the glorious account of creation in the Bible (Genesis 1), we have a list, in the words of N.T Wright, of “complementary pairs working together:”[1] Genesis 1.1 heavens and earth, 1.4 light and darkness, 1.5 evening and morning, 1.9-10 seas and dry land, 1.14 sun and moon and 1.27 male and female. Creation itself is designed with the principle of binaries working as one, complementary pairs, opposites designed to work together. Even more importantly, as the Bible teaches, marriage

points to the wedding of that pairing that seemingly cannot be put back together-- God and humanity (Isaiah 61:10-11, 2 Corinthians 11:2, Ephesians 5:25-27, Revelation 19:7, Revelation 21:3) As creation teaches, God designed such possibility within the very fabric of his first creation (Genesis 1) to be restored in His final creation (Revelation 21): the wedding of Christ and his bride the church, God and humanity, earth and heaven. With God “differentness” was designed to come together and in living within that differentiation we grow as human beings. God commanded Adam and Eve – the first married couple -- to be fruitful and multiply. In obedience to that command, humanity can only create new life--children--from the pairing of a man and a woman.

If General Synod does indeed change our marriage canon in 2019, we will have lost a clear witness to the logic, good news and plan of God for the Biblically defined limits of marriage between one man and one woman for life. Marriage is God’s idea, not our right.

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