

Jesus and Homosexuality

GOD'S WORD AND SEX:

Mark 7:20-23

August 22, 2004

Bethany Church

Wesley J. Gabel

Two men were fishing on a lake. They felt guilty that it was a Sunday morning, that they were not attending church, and the fish were not biting. One said, "I should have stayed home and gone to church." The other replied, "I couldn't have gone to church anyhow. My wife is sick in bed." All of us have witnessed twisted thinking like this. What we have learned in the past two weeks is that this kind of thinking dominates our views about sex. We will reprise some of what we learned because it is foundational for understanding what we discuss today.

However, as we consider Jesus and homosexuality, I must acknowledge how personal and painful this subject is. A short time ago a father shared with me that his son is unchangeably gay and he wept. He believes no one can change and that the idea that people can't change validates his son. Therefore, he believes ministries that claim transformation prolong stereotypes and perpetuate intolerance that hurt his son.

Aren't we all protective of our children? No matter their age, if you mess with them, you mess with us parents, right? How do you suppose God the Father feels when he hears words about his children like pervert and deviant? Words, jokes and condemnation like that bring nothing but God's anger. They have no fellowship with Jesus. Their source is the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Christianity is not about right and wrong. It is about life from God, that has been destroyed by sin and now through faith in Jesus is restored by God.

Christianity is about eating from a Tree of Life that heals. God gave his Son Jesus not so that we would believe in him. He gave His Son so that we would live through him. The sign of that life is not religious behavior. It is not prayer, Bible reading or worship. The sign of that life is love, not talk or beliefs about love, but pure, holy, sacrificial love from Jesus. That love never indulges sin, never rejects the sinner; but since sin kills and destroys, it confronts sin and died for the sinner... at the hands of sinners.

It is popular to claim that Jesus never said anything about homosexuality. That cannot be proven. None of us were there to record every statement Jesus made. The most that can be said is that the gospels record no direct statement of Jesus on the subject. It would be naïve, however, to assume that Jesus was neutral or even permissive. Jesus' perspective on sexuality floored his disciples. His teaching about adultery, lust, marriage and divorce caused them to despair. He left them feeling unrighteous and convicted. Jesus was anything but sexually indulgent. His respect and use of what we call the Old Testament was like that of a person who was conversing with the author and obeying *his* every command.

Jesus did not wipe out the notion of anger or judgment in the Bible. He showed us that every act of God (mercy, patience, judgment and anger) is rooted in a holy love for all humanity. Since we are made in God's image, we are free to act with a goat-like heart that is rebellious. We are not free, however, to orchestrate the consequences. The permeation of suffering from our actions is not under our control. Our actions affect family, friends and community. For example, drunk driving brings endless pain to a community. It is a personal sin and requires personal responsibility, but it normally results from a host of sins, many of them committed by others. Consequently, drunk driving and its pain constitute judgment on the entire community including the innocent.

In the same way, we discussed in recent sermons that we are suffering judgment as a community for suppressing the truth about our Creator. In Romans 1:18-32 three signs of judgment express God's anger with us. Sign #1 is that we as a society have been handed over to the rule of sexual impurity and become driven by passions that destroy relationships. (We spoke about that two weeks ago.) Paul puts sign #2 this way:

God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. (Romans 1:26-27, NIV)

Sign #2 is sexual appetites among a people that go contrary to their created order. Powerful homosexual attraction is described. Sign #3 follows in verses 28 through 32.

(God) gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. (Romans 1:28, NIV)

The society suffers depraved thinking. The people feel that up is down, right is wrong and wrong is right. Then they act on it.

As we examined courtship cultures last week, we saw that our view of sexuality is upside down. We think and act as if the gift of sex actually brings fulfillment. Instead, it is a hunger to be awakened after marriage. It reinforces bonding in a marriage. When it is awakened or fanned outside marriage, it rules as a demanding god rather than a supporting gift. It leads people into relationships to feed its appetite. That is not love, and love is not some chemistry of attraction. Our society's patterns of courtship result in us defiling one another's bodies. Our hearts become haunts for God's enemies; and the resulting chemistry leads us astray.

If love is not chemistry, then sexual passion does not define a person and should not lead one into a relationship. That is why courtship in many cultures took place after marriage. Only

pure hearts and common vision produce healthy life-long relationships. In fact, Jesus declared that a defiled heart spills out defiling passions and actions.

Out of a person's heart, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, wickedness, deceit, eagerness for lustful pleasure... All these vile things come from within; they are what defile you and make you unacceptable to God. (Mark 7:21-23, NLT)

If you follow your heart, and your heart is impure, you'll walk away from God and create a lot of pain. Haven't we all done that? No one's righteous!

Since that describes our family, our community and our people, what do we do? First, we must admit that we've exchanged a convenient image of God, a god who indulges our sin, for Jesus and his Father. We must seek forgiveness for ourselves and our people. Second, we must recognize that we've been handed over to the dominion of impurity. Consequently, our hearts are corrupted and our passions destroy those we love. Instead of trusting our hearts, we need to trust Jesus. It is time to confess to one another our sins against each other, and also confess our sins against God. Third, recognize that our society has been handed over to sexual appetites that go counter our creation and to twisted thinking that poisons relationships. Every person who struggles with homosexual appetites, or any other appetite, hungers most for one thing, love. It is love, not sexual activity, that completes all of us. God pours that love into hungry hearts through his Holy Spirit. Love is the sign of his presence. The water of love comes to us in Jesus. As it releases us in forgiveness, it births in us a new identity. That divine love then is to flow from one person to another as a great stream or river.

If you are struggling or if you are concerned about a loved one struggling with homosexuality or other sexual appetites, let God minister life-changing love to you. When you are dominated by the Spirit, you are dominated by love; so be continually filled with the Spirit. That is Jesus' answer. That is Jesus' gift. He cleanses our hearts and fills lives with love.