

Reflections on the Marriage Amendment

The message of the Gospel is the lens through which the whole of the scripture is to be interpreted. Love and compassion, justice and peace are at the very core of the life and ministry of Jesus. It is a message that always moves toward inclusion. The liberating work of the Spirit as witnessed in the activities of Jesus' ministry has been to address the situations and structures of exclusion, injustice and oppression that diminish God's people and keep them from realizing the full gift of human personhood in the context of human communion.

When Jesus was asked, "What is the greatest commandment?" he said this: "You shall love the Lord with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." The Biblical call to justice and compassion (to love one's neighbor as oneself) provides the mandate for fairness for all people, including same-gender couples. Justice and love seek to eliminate discrimination and hatred based on race, gender, sexual orientation or economic status.

For Christians, justice is founded on love of God and love of neighbor. Christians are called to act for justice and fairness because that is part of what it means to love our neighbor. There are Biblical passages that support slavery; but Christians don't support slavery because we love our neighbors. There are Biblical passages that degrade women; but Christians are not supposed to degrade women, because we love our neighbors. There are Biblical passages that lead some people to hate and discriminate against same-gender couples; but we do not hate or discriminate, because we love our neighbors.

Christians who support same-sex relationships do so on the basis of the commandment to love our neighbor. Without this commandment in mind, the few Biblical passages that deal with homosexuality become as dangerous as those condoning slavery or commanding women to be silent in churches; they reinforce the attitude that gays and lesbians are less human than everyone else.

Jesus' criterion of fairness ("Do to others as you would have them do to you") indicates that we are to treat same-gender couples with the same respect with which all people would want to be treated. The gospel of Jesus Christ calls us to fairness and love, rather than discrimination and hatred. Based simply on fairness, the state of Wisconsin should treat same-gender couples the same way it treats all couples.

We affirm that God is still speaking. As the Holy Spirit led St. Paul to say, "There is neither Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female, for all are one in Jesus Christ," so we are led by the same Spirit to say there is neither black nor white, rich or poor, gay or straight, for all are one in Christ Jesus.

The parable of the Good Samaritan reminds us that it was the priest and the Levite who followed the cultural norms and religious law. It was the Samaritan who broke those norms and laws, in order to help a fellow human being. Jesus called the Samaritan "neighbor." We are called to change cultural norms and religious or human laws that keep us from being a neighbor to our fellow human beings.

---Curt Anderson, Senior Minister