

June 26, 2015

Dear TPC,

In light of today's Supreme Court ruling regarding same sex unions, I thought it would be good to provide a few pastoral reminders. These are challenging times for the church, and we need a great deal of wisdom and courage, but there is no need to despair. How should we process today's Court decision?

First, the Supreme Court is not the Supreme Being and cannot redesign reality, nature, biology, or divine law to suit the latest trends and fashions. In other words, marriage is the same as it ever was and ever will be, a male/female covenant bond that makes the two one flesh, symbolizing Christ's union with his church. There is no such thing as "gay marriage," just as there is no such thing as a four-sided triangle. What American law now calls "marriage" is actually just a legal fiction, a figment in the minds of five black robed, arrogant lawyers. Whatever a same sex couple does together will never be, and in the nature of the case never *can* be, a marriage. The definition of marriage did not change today because it cannot be changed. It is fixed by God in the order of creation, revealed in Scripture, and grounded in the gospel. Period.

Second, what *did* change today is the status of those who want to defend the ancient, natural, and biblical definition of marriage. We Christians are now officially viewed as intolerant bigots by the powers that be. Of course, we are not bigots, but our calling at this point is to live in such a way that those kinds of charges are laughable. Remember, accusations of intolerance and bigotry are being made in order to intimidate us and bully us into acquiescence or at least silence. We must not cave in. Instead, we must proclaim the truth with winsomeness and boldness. We must love our neighbors, including and perhaps especially our gay and gay-sympathizing neighbors. You cannot hate people and reach them with the truth at the same time. You cannot preach grace when you are smug or self-righteous. To be sure, as the sexual revolution enters its next phase, we should call Americans to repent. But we should also recognize that the church over several generations has failed in countless ways, which helped get us to this point, and so we must lead the way in repentance. Let's show the world what true

repentance looks like! If we are going to disciple our nation, we must first humble ourselves and confess our own sins and smash our idols. The war against sin begins in our hearts. But as we turn outward to address the world, we should not be naive about the kind of reception we are going to get, no matter how winsome we seek to be. Be ready to suffer for what you believe, but do not back down. Be ready to make sacrifices, but resist temptations to change your views for the sake of fitting in. Do not be surprised when those who proclaim tolerance seek to persecute you. Now is not the time to try to withdraw from culture; indeed, even if we refuse to engage the culture, it will engage us and “you will be made to care,” as the saying goes. We are called, by God’s grace, to fight for truth, goodness, and beauty, and now is not the time to slacken in that warfare.

Third, this means our response should be the same as in any other cultural crisis, namely prayer and mission. Do not fear, do not panic, and do not lose hope. Pray, especially for unbelievers you know and for those being led astray by cultural influences and wicked laws. Pray for leaders in the church to boldly preach from the Scriptures. Pray for state and local magistrates who might be our only line of defense against sheer tyranny at this point. Evangelize and serve your neighbors. Minister to the poor, sick, and lonely. It may be that we are being exiled from American culture, but we know how this story goes. Every biblical account of exile is followed by a new exodus. Every exile is a great opportunity for God’s people to be a blessing in new ways. In God’s economy, exiles are actually missionaries — and usually very successful ones! When Jeremiah sent a letter to the covenant people who had been exiled from Jerusalem into Babylon, he commanded them to seek the peace of city (Jer. 29). Likewise must seek the peace of our land — though certainly in a culture that is completely confused about sex, gender, and marriage, doing so includes teaching our fellow citizens the true meaning of what it is to be created male and female. The best way to do good to America right now is to be good Christians; the best way to truly be patriotic American citizens is put kingdom citizenship first.

Fourth, rejoice because even in the midst of this cultural darkness God reigns as king. From one point of view, the Supreme Court ruling is something our culture has done to God — we have rebelled against him and tossed his Word into the trashcan and made a

mockery of his created ordinance. The Supreme Court ruling instantaneously institutionalized our sexual rebellion. But from a deeper perspective, *this ruling is something God is doing to us*. Romans 1:18-32 indicates that when a culture falls into homosexuality, calling evil good and good evil, exchanging natural sexual relations for unnatural ones, that culture is being judged and blinded by God. God is simply handing us over to our sins and our idols — and we are about to find out that the false gods we have been serving are very cruel. The judicial wrath of God is falling on us. We are not chastening God, God is chastening us. We think we are lashing out at God when in reality he is lashing out at us. We are throwing rocks at heaven, but they are going to land on our own heads. The gay rights movement is all going to come crashing down at some point because it is an unnatural violation of the way God made the world. It simply cannot sustain itself. When you break God's law, God's law ends up breaking you. When the sexual revolution finally runs out of steam, as it must, faithful Christians will be there to pick up the pieces and rebuild our civilization (Christendom 2.0). Sure, there is a place for righteous anger over the gross injustice of the Supreme Court's ruling — but more than that, we should be glad and rejoice, knowing our God is in the heavens and laughs at the foolish devices of men (Psalm 2). Chesterton wrote, "The triangle of father, mother, and child cannot be destroyed. It can only destroy those civilizations which disregard it." Such societies will be destroyed not because they have disregarded the family per se, but because they have disregarded the law of God which established the family. Know what's coming...and prepare accordingly.

Fifth, remember the best defense of marriage will always be marriage itself. If you are married, recommit yourself to keeping your vows. Husbands, love your wives as Christ loves the church. Wives, respect your husbands as the church does Christ. Parents, disciple your children in the truth of God's Word. Personal and familial holiness is the greatest need of the hour. The best witness we can give the world at this moment is the witness of happy and holy Christian families. Whatever our marital status, we should all recommit ourselves to sexual purity in mind and body because we cannot expect our witness to be effective if we are compromised in this area. I certainly encourage Christians to respond to the ruling through political channels, according to our various vocations, but a political response not founded upon personal, familial, and ecclesial integrity will not get us anywhere.

Finally, recognize that the battle over marriage is far from over. Indeed, it might just be getting underway. Under the sovereign hand of God, we have been dealt a difficult blow. And no doubt, many faithful Christians will disagree over the particulars of how to respond culturally and politically. Those who have been pushing the gay rights agenda on us will not rest until we are forced to give open approval to the homosexual lifestyle; in other words, the endgame is to have true Christian faith outlawed altogether. But, of course, we simply will not give in, no matter the cost. We treasure and prize Christ above life itself. Being on the right side of history does not matter; standing with the One enthroned at the right hand of the Father does. We will seek to be faithful and leave the rest to our reigning King. I am confident that future historians will expose the foolishness of today's Supreme Court ruling, and those who have taken their stand on Scripture will be fully vindicated, but in the meantime we will stay the course. We may have lost this battle, but fear not, the war has already been won. As Luther taught us to sing, "Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also; the body they may kill: God's truth abideth still."

It will be some time before we know all the implications of today's ruling, particularly for churches and Christian educational institutions. Of course, the ruling did not catch us by surprise. The TPC session responded preemptively when we added an appendix to our church constitution regarding marriage and our marriage policies last year (<http://trinity-pres.net/documents/TPCConstitutionRevised2015.pdf>, page 38). We intend to stick to those policies, come what may. I have also preached on this topic recently, and this may be a good time to review that sermon: <http://trinity-pres.net/audio/sermon15-03-15.mp3>. I will be out of town this week, but will have more to say about all of this when I return.

Grace and peace,
Pastor Rich Lusk