

St. John's Lutheran Church Winter Bible Study
"The Bible and Homosexuality"
Session Five – Creation and Marriage

"In the beginning, God created..." (Gen 1:1)

The Creation Accounts (Gen 1:1-2:4 & 2:5-25) are part of the *primeval history* or *pre-history* presented in Genesis 1-11 (Boadt, page 110)

- ~ Genesis 1-11 recounts what took place *before the history of Israel* – before God's call of Abraham & Sarah (Gen 12) and the beginnings of the nation of Israel (ca 2100 BC)
- ~ tradition holds the Pentateuch (first five books of OT) was written by Moses (ca 1400s BC) – oral tradition written down at least centuries later
- ~ these stories reflect back on the history of humanity in general and Israel in particular – and may therefore be considered *descriptive* – explaining how things are – as well as *prescriptive* – dictating how things should be (Boadt, page 130)
- ~ the Genesis creation accounts declare there is one God, who is wise and benevolent, who intentionally made "the heavens and the earth" in goodness and beauty, who created human beings in God's image to share in God's divine gifts
 - *in direct contrast to* the creation stories of the cultures around Israel at the time (e.g., Babylon's *Enuma Elish*, ca 1700 BC), which spoke of many gods, who were volatile and violent, who accidently made the heavens and earth as they battled against each other, and who considered humans disposable slaves
- ~ God made us to be in loving relationship with God and each other
- ~ Genesis 1-11 declares God's *steadfast* love (Ex 34:6-7, Num 14:18, Deut 5:9-10) for his creation, in stories that present a pattern of 'creation, fall, redemption;' God creates, humans fall, God redeems
- ~ the Genesis creation accounts do not specifically address homosexuality or same-sex relationships

Based on these Genesis texts, opponents of same-sex relationships assert that homosexuality is not what God intended in creation, and is therefore a sin, because

- ~ male and female anatomies 'fit together,' while homosexual unions do not
 - God created "male and female"
- ~ marriage is between one man and one woman
 - husband and wife become "one flesh"
- ~ heterosexual unions produce children and homosexual unions do not
 - God said "be fruitful and multiply"

While the Genesis creation accounts indicate that the primary pattern for human sexual relationship is between a male and a female (Gen 1:27) who unite physically (Gen 2:24) for the purposes of procreation (Gen 1:28), productive work (Gen 1:28), companionship (Gen 2:18), and family structure (Gen 2:24) – this does not necessarily mean that all departures from this pattern are unnatural and/or immoral.

“Male and Female”

“So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” (Gen 1:27)

The creation accounts offer a *descriptive* explanation of human origins – where do we come from? – the answer is “from the union of a man and a woman. That biological fact is attended by the cultural assumptions of the world in which the writers lived.” (Gorman, page 150)

~ does anatomical compatibility between men and women establish the moral superiority of heterosexual relationships over homosexual relationships

The creation accounts do not offer a *prescriptive* prohibition against same-sex relationships – while “heterosexuality” is assumed, “homosexuality” is not addressed

~ does it follow that because heterosexuality is the dominant sexuality, it is the only morally acceptable sexuality

The creation accounts demonstrate the diversity in God’s good creation – and Lutheran theology affirms that God continues to create – in the past, God created (*creatio ex nihilo*) – in the present, God continues to create (*creatio continua*) and invites us to participate in his productive work – in the future, God will make creation new – “For believers, it is hope in God’s future, not in an idealized past, that inspires participation in God’s changing, open, and inexhaustible creation.” (ELCA Human Sexuality Social Statement, pages 5-6)

~ might heterosexuality and homosexuality be part of the diversity of God’s creation

Gen 3 describes the human fall into sin – a biblical text that indicates “*everyone’s* sexuality is sinful, broken, and disordered, just like everything else about us. Nobody has Genesis 1-2 sexuality...Everyone’s sexuality needs to be morally disciplined and ordered.” (Gushee, page 97)

~ might the same standards of sexual morality be applied to homosexuals and heterosexuals

“One Flesh”

“Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh.” (Gen 2:24)

The creation account in Gen 1 – in which God says to the “male” and “female” (Hebrew, *zachar* and *nekeva*), “be fruitful and multiply” (Gen 1:27-28) – does not refer to “marriage” and does not use the Hebrew terms for “husband” and “wife”

The creation account in Gen 2 offers a *descriptive* explanation of marital relations between a “husband” and “wife” (Hebrew, *ish* and *isha*) (Gen 2:23-24) in the context of its composition, and not necessarily a *prescriptive* directive for the relations of all men and all women for all time in all places

The creation account in Gen 2 describes

- ~ how God made “a woman” (*isha*) from a rib of “the man” (Hebrew, *adam*), and “the man” declared, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh...” (Gen 2:21-23)
- ~ “*Therefore a man...*” (Gen 2:24), Hebrew *al-ken*, “thus upon,” “hence on the ground of, so” (BDB, Hebrew Dictionary) – the text does not read, ‘Therefore a man *must...*’ or ‘Therefore a man *should...*’ – an explanation, not a command

“The creation story is the basis and not the end of human diversity, and thus to regard it as excluding everything it does not mention is to place too great a burden on the text and its writers.” (Gorman, page 150)

- ~ while the creation accounts affirm the morality of heterosexual marriage, they do not address the morality of all human sexuality – including publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships

“Be Fruitful and Multiply”

“God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.’” (Gen 1:28)

In contrast to the *explanation* for heterosexual marriage (Gen 2:24), this presents a *commandment* by God to procreate – “God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply’”

- ~ and yet Scripture does not morally condemn a sexual relationship only because it fails to produce children

If the only moral imperative for marriage is procreation – in other words, the only reason to get married is to have children – and procreation makes heterosexual marriage a moral imperative – in other words, celibacy is not an acceptable option – then

– persons who cannot have or do not want children should not get married

~ this is not biblical and not compassionate

– unmarried persons are morally inferior

~ Jesus Christ was unmarried

~ along with the Apostle Paul (1 Cor 7:8), Mother Theresa, St. Francis, Pope Francis...

As with the Holiness Code (Lev 17-26) that promotes procreative sexual behavior, these creation accounts were given to a particular people in a particular time and particular place – they affirm that marriage is good because it produces children, and they affirm there are other moral reasons to marry – companionship, productive work, family structure...

~ might these also be moral reasons for publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships

Paul on “One Flesh”

In 1 Corinthians (6:16) and Ephesians (5:31), Paul quotes Genesis 2:24, “...the two will become one flesh.”

~ In 1 Corinthians (6:15-20), Paul is speaking specifically about “prostitution” and “fornication” and not specifically about same-sex relationships

~ In Ephesians (5:21-33), Paul is speaking specifically about the relationships of husbands and wives, as a metaphor for Christ and the church, and not specifically about same-sex relationships

Jesus on Marriage and Divorce Mark 10:2-12 (Matt 19:3-9, Luke 16:18)

A Question on Divorce

The Gospel of Mark (and a parallel passage in Matthew) presents an encounter between Jesus and the Pharisees in which they “test him” by asking the question, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?” (10:2)

Jesus asks what Moses commanded (10:3), and they reply “Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her.” (10:4)

- ~ The Greek word for “certificate of dismissal,” *apostasiou*, indicates “in the sense of relinquishment of property after sale, abandonment, etc.” (BDAG, Greek Dictionary)
- ~ The “law of Moses” (Deut 24:1) states, “*Suppose a man enters into marriage with a woman, but she does not please him because he finds something objectionable about her, and so he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house...*”

Jesus replies, “Because of your hardness of heart he wrote this commandment for you. But from the beginning of creation, ‘*God made them male and female.*’ [Gen 1:27] ‘*For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.*’ [Gen 2:24] So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.” (10:5-9)

- ~ Jesus indicates this commandment was given by Moses to persons set in their moral failure – perhaps *because* men were simply divorcing their wives for no reason, Moses formalized a process in which they had to give some reason
- ~ in the patriarchal culture of the time, when women (generally) had no independent sources of income, divorce and the subsequent lack of male financial and social support could have devastating consequences
- ~ Jesus quotes the Genesis creation accounts specifically to counter the sinful practice of men arbitrarily divorcing their wives

In these passages, Jesus is addressing heterosexual marriage and divorce, he is not addressing same-sex relationships.

Divorce and Remarriage

In Mark, Jesus continues, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.” (10:11-12, also Luke 16:18) – Jesus makes *no exceptions here* that allow divorce and remarriage. In Matthew, Jesus adds, “except for unchastity” [Greek, *porneia*] (Matt 19:9)

Yet, the ELCA “recognizes that in some situations the trust upon which marriage is built becomes so deeply damaged or is so deeply flawed that the marriage itself must come to a legal end (Matthew 19:3–12). This church does not treat divorce lightly nor does it disregard the

responsibilities of marriage. However, in such situations, it provides support to the people involved and all who are affected...Further, it believes that those who wish to remarry may gain wisdom from the past and may be assured of the Gospel's freedom, in the midst of brokenness and forgiveness, to enter into their new responsibilities in joy and hope." (ELCA Human Sexuality Social Statement, 17)

Regarding the issue Jesus specifically addresses in these passages, for valid biblical and moral reasons, the church has made exceptions to the letter of the law in the Spirit of love.