

This is a sermon not a how to vote card.

There has been discussion, bordering on descension about the issue at the moment of same sex marriage. While I am not into entering in the political world there has been a request for some of my thoughts on the matter.

During the week follow the service last Sunday when I announced I would speak on it, there has been numerous conversations “reminding me” of what I should be saying.

There is a statement going around between different preachers at the moment “if you want to create disunity preach about Same sex marriage but if you want to start a conversation on how to love people, preach about same sex marriage.”

There have been stories of people storming out of services before the pastor revealed his viewpoint and people arguing about “those type of people”. (I’m not sure whether the “those type of people “ are LGBTI or the so called bigots.)

That's not where we are at. Well at least not where I am at. This is about having a look to see what the bible says and giving you the start of the tools to make your decisions.

So here we go -

Firstly, **I am not telling you how to vote, you must make that decision.** There are numerous implications on both sides and our political world will be changed no matter the outcome. Your decision must be taken with not only responsibility but consequences. More importantly with integrity.

I have problems with how both sides have handled it.

I have a problem with the no vote in some ways. The use of scriptural references by many Christians has shown a shallowness to biblical understanding.

Ex. Leviticus 18:22

Leviticus 18:22 (NIV2011)

²² “ ‘Do not have sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman; that is detestable.

That is pretty clear.

The problem is this:

Following chapters

Lev 19:16 – slander

Leviticus 19:16 (NIV2011)

¹⁶ “ ‘Do not go about spreading slander among your people. “ ‘Do not do anything that endangers your neighbor’s life. I am the LORD.

Lev 19:27 hair and beard not to be cut

Leviticus 19:27 (NIV2011)

²⁷ “ ‘Do not cut the hair at the sides of your head or clip off the edges of your beard.

Lev 19:28 – tattoos

Leviticus 19:28 (NIV2011)

²⁸ “ ‘Do not cut your bodies for the dead or put tattoo marks on yourselves. I am the LORD.

Lev 19:32 - stand in the presence of the aged

Leviticus 19:32 (NIV2011)

³² “Stand up in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God. I am the LORD.

(MMM it doesn't say how long to stand for!)

Lev 11:10-11 -prawns crabs etc no to be eaten

Leviticus 11:10 (NIV2011)

¹⁰ But all creatures in the seas or streams that do not have fins and scales—whether among all the swarming things or among all the other living creatures in the water—you are to regard as unclean.

Lev 11:7-8 - pork is out.

Leviticus 11:7-8 (NIV2011)

⁷ And the pig, though it has a divided hoof, does not chew the cud; it is unclean for you.

⁸ You must not eat their meat or touch their carcasses; they are unclean for you.

What is the significance here? You can't pick and chose your laws to follow, if you say that's cultural or that the times have changed for the food laws, consistency say the same for the others.

The other thing we have to work through is our attitude to homosexuality and the bible.

Do we call homosexuality a sin?

The bible certainly takes that tact. Yet where do we put it?

Is it sin or is that view out dated?

Is sin just Old Testament and not contextually normative for us today?

Personally I have to take my reading of scripture and say

“The bible says it's a sin -it must be a sin”

Thou shalt not actually means thou shalt not.

Sorry if you aren't comfortable with that. It's just what the bible says.

One person stated to me that God's grace deals with it.

Now around that are issues of God's grace. God deals with sin forgives it so no problem.

Well no.

Romans 6:1-2

What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?

Now before 60% of you walk out or that is the polls figures of who are against the old fashioned biblical viewpoint. Don't use those Old Testament verses to defend your world view. They will just point out inconsistencies in your or our biblical interpretations. Those verses set up your world view, but look to Romans1.

Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen. Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations

with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error.

Ok, that gives you different but continuum to work with.
Notice though.

1. God gave them over. God respects their decisions to let them make the wrong ones. We have to allow people their decisions.
2. It is their responsibility (due penalty) it is not ours to judge.
3. Romans 2:1 You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things.
4. This refers to the Old Testament concept. "Break one law you are as bad as them".

Here is my first aside, I do not believe parliamentarians should have a conscience vote but they should vote with the views of their constituents in mind. If our country is to make this decision I believe we are have a say. The parliamentarians do not have more right than us, nor more wisdom which I think is becoming evident, they should consult their people. (maybe the plebiscite would have been best, but postal votes, legal or not should give an idea)

I also am cranky about politicians and academics (both secular and theological) saying that our country is not mature enough to make this decision. That is blatant hubristic elitism and belittles every single person in our country.

Also I think Facebook censoring the no vote comments because it offensive to Facebook staff is childish.

Now that is over,

Now, I have problems with the yes vote. Some of those passages are the basis of my issues. God says don't. I find that straight forward but I realise that all of us have sin issues, even though for most of us here those issues aren't related to gender.

As another aside, one of the biggest issues is the changing of a set meaning of a word. Marriage is defined as the union of man and woman. I personally don't think that should be changed. If the laws change - find another word. Again my view and it is not a biblical issue but semantics.

Yet my biggest issue is not with the issue but with the politics. I am not a bigot because I have a different opinion, I have and do listen to people's comments as I have done over the last two weeks yet as soon as I say I disagree I am labelled a bigot, that is again changing the meaning of the word. A bigot is someone who has intolerance of people with an opposing viewpoint. I find it interesting that caring loving people turn to using terminology and hurtful language just because my opinion is different. In one case it wasn't different I just shared another view. I am tolerant, I listen, I actually enjoy the debate and discussion, i understand their feelings, I know they want a level playing field. I just think that is not God's way. But neither is the sins of adultery, lust, lying, cheating, slander etc. we all battle those things.

Under our legal system at this stage, I have the right to a say, I have a right to belief, I have a right to decide.

Yet from the way the yes vote media is working, they are assuming our rights or our decision making process is flawed.

For goodness sake people in this room are passion supporters of the liberals, others labour others greens, others nationals. We let that happen, why can't we disagree on other issues.

We as a denomination give people a vote and a say regardless of their relationship to God on the day of the vote. It's a great strength and could be a great weakness.

That media outlets refuse to allow advertising for one or the other is disgusting and deceitful.

One of the things that the yes vote push and particularly the Christians in the category is that God is love. Marriage is about love so what's the problem. This is true, and we need to imitate that

characteristic of God, we are after all made in His image. But What is neglected in this debate is God's characteristics of justice, mercy, and righteousness. You see, it isn't that simple. For either side.

What do we then do with these verses.

Deuteronomy 16:20 (NIV2011)

²⁰ Follow justice and justice alone, so that you may live and possess the land the LORD your God is giving you.

Hosea 12:6 (NIV2011)

⁶ But you must return to your God; maintain love and justice, and wait for your God always.

Hosea 2:19 (NIV2011)

¹⁹ I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion.

The list could go on.

I read a lot of articles supporting both sides during the week. Some great, some dodgy, some pathetic. This "allowing people to love" keeps coming up.

Let me quote a couple of things to you. This one from Murray Campbell.

Love that only ever agrees is a shallow love indeed. A virtue of love through disagreement not only belongs close to the heart of Australian democracy, but comes to close to the centre of the Christian message:

Now something from the bible.

"You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:6-8).

The Gospel isn't God saying, 'I agree with you', but it is God declaring that he disagrees with us and yet loves. The Bible speaks of a God who acted beyond helping his friends. His Son gave his life for people who are disinterested in him and who don't approve of him. God didn't wait to win a popularity vote before acting to redeem and reconcile, but he took the initiative and in doing so God refused the path of blind relativism. God loves too much to agree with every desire and ambition we ignite.

Where does it leave us, to vote no, maybe, yet maybe not.

The big difference between this postal vote and the many polls being flaunted is that there is no "undecided" category.

Do I have a problem with the yes vote? Yep. Do I have problems with the no vote. Yep.

Mostly the lack of integrity in quoting scripture as I mentioned before. And yes some people are bigots and show a lack love and Christian care. Some from the LGBTI community are bigots and show a lack of love.

I think the whole country is showing an incapacity to show respect and love outside of our own comfort zones. We as Christians, which ever side you will vote on have the responsibility to be

above it all. Love regardless, be just, show mercy, care for the widows, orphans, Lesbians, Gays, Bi sexuals, transvestites, Christians, muslims,

This is a great opportunity for us as the people of God to be seen as His people caring regardless. That is my expectation of you lot. No put downs, no jokes, no animosity. Just sharing God's love.

Regardless of the outcome of this vote, life is getting tougher for us as Christians. Maintain integrity.

I have the feeling if the yes vote wins, the no voters will just get on with doing what they do particularly Christians and they will still love and care, but there will be some who are extreme who want to take a different path.

Another issue with the no vote is its natural conservatism. We don't do things just because that is the old way, we should be doing what is best. I am not saying yes is best, but the defence that old is best will not hold up. God's best is best. Because the majority of people don't know God what vote can we expect. We can't use the old "way it's always been done" defence after all sin is older than all of us.

As I said, it's your decision but let me tell you of the consequences of my decision making process. For most Christians the vote is a tick in the box and then live with it. For me, it affects how I do things, in effect it could affect my career, pastoral role, future job options. For me I need to be true to my call and my belief in what the bible says, but also compassionate and caring for my friends who may disagree. Let me explain.

1. Because of how I read the bible, I will not marry same sex couples, yet I will attend the ceremonies to live and support their decision even though I feel I can not be the signatory that allows them to deliberately continue in sin. Having said that, I have said no to couples asking me to marry them in the past for reasons of my conscience.
2. If it becomes law that I have to marry outside of my conscience I will hand in my marriage license. (Politicians want a conscience vote but some want that same conscience right taken away from clergy) now I know some of you will say you have heard that clergy will be given the right to choice. That is not evident in the private members bills that have been released for people to read before they take them to parliament. All I read insist on "the non-discrimination of the couple". That is 5 separate private members bills that could be presented after the vote.
3. I will love and support gays and lesbians, in fact anyone, discover Jesus and God's will for their lives as I do for all of you.
4. I will allow people to have their own conscience on things spiritual, social, emotional, physical and lifestyle and I will try not to discriminate.

Where does this leave us? With personal decisions to make.

I have gay and lesbian friends who will not like my view.

I have conservative Christian friends who don't like my view.

Some of you have not liked my opinions over the last few weeks. Some of you may not like my opinions now.

Basically, whatever I think will be criticised, welcome to my weekly world. It's no different from many weeks I preach, but the big difference here is, you have to decide.

Yes, no or ignore it.

Choose this day who you will serve.

Choose on your own conscience what you think is right.

If the people vote and it's not God's will, He will deal with it.

But as for me I will serve the Lord.

I will do what I think is right. You must too.