

Rainbows, God, and Man

Last Tuesday evening, the day's rain had slowed to an intermittent sprinkle enough that I decided to slide the kayak into the pond behind our house and fish a while before dark (you're shocked and amazed, I'm sure!). I caught a couple of fish, but soon found myself more interested in something else. I looked up from my "other occupation" and was immediately struck (my mouth flew open but no words came out, shocked and amazed again, I know!) but the awesome wonder of the biggest, brightest, and most colorful rainbow I had ever seen. It was like standing under The Arch in St. Louis, except it was massively bigger, and immensely more brilliant. It was huge, and so bright near one end that it reminded me of a lightening bolt striking the ground. I put my rods down and sat there doing my best to capture its beauty on my phone- all the while knowing that the photographs would be but poor facsimiles of the real thing. I could not only see the whole thing from one end to the other (and a fainter second one above it), but it was so bright that it reflected in the glass-calm water below making a complete circle of color. It was truly amazing to behold God's glorious handiwork!

But the rainbow, like many other *signs, covenants, and blessings*, has been bruised and corrupted by mankind. June has been designated as LGBTQ Pride month. This group has adopted the Rainbow as its official symbol. Obviously, rainbows mean different things to different people. Here's the truth of what rainbows signify, Gen.9:8-17.

I confess that I had thought about addressing the subject of LGBTQ Pride month a couple of weeks ago, but had kind of tabled the subject... mostly because I was sure I could address it in a way that would be appropriate for our "little ears" in the congregation. But that bright, brilliant, wondrous rainbow Tuesday evening changed my mind. I still have those same concerns about using clear but appropriate terms for our younger members of the audience, and will do my best, but there are some things we need to know and consider...

1. As we read previously from Gen.9:8-17, the rainbow has a specific meaning given by God. But physically, to get a rainbow, you first need rain; and the *first* rain (cf. Gen.2:5; Heb.11:7) was sent by God for *spiritual* reasons, Gen.6:1,5-7,11-13.
2. And of course, the destruction of the ancient cities of Sodom and Gomorrah was directly resultant to homosexuality specifically, cf. Gen.18:20; 19:4-5,24-25.
3. But homosexuality is specifically addressed and condemned in the NT as:
 1. *Impure, dishonorable, unnatural, depraved, and improper*, Rom.1:24-28. It is not merely "gay" or an "alternative lifestyle" or to be accepted and endorsed by anyone who has regard for the Word of God.
 2. *Gross immorality and going after strange flesh* that brings one *under the punishment of eternal fire*, Jude 7.
 3. Like *fornication, idolatry, adultery, theft, covetousness, drunkenness, reviling, and swindling, homosexuality and effeminacy* will prevent one from *inheriting the kingdom of God*, 1Cor.6:9-10. And just like these other *sins*, they can be overcome by *washing (baptism for remission of sins)* and *sanctification to justification (from sin not in it)* v.11. But just to be clear on a couple of things: *homosexuality* is spiritually no different from and no less destructive to the "moral fabric" of society than *fornication or adultery*; and in v.9 includes both "the pitcher" and "the catcher" with the Greek terms utilized (not trying to be graphic, just convey the meanings without offending little ears).
1. Injecting chemicals, ingesting hormones, and having body-altering surgeries do not change your gender because it is unalterably genetically encoded. If you or someone you know is unhappy with their genetically encoded gender, rather than seeking to alter it through such futile means, why not try adapting yourself to the God-given ways your gender is supposed to think, feel, and act? We *choose* to either think, feel, and act *according* to God's Word, or in *opposition* to it. Wearing a dress, putting on make-up, and going into the wrong restroom doesn't make a man a woman

anymore than a Mockingbird mimicking and Blue Jay makes it one- it's still a Mockingbird regardless of who or what it imitates. Read the Word of God and discover and live according to the gender He gave you, and stop demanding that everyone else "accept" you as Blue Jay despite the reality that you are, in fact of reality, a Mockingbird.

Applications: How Should Christians Feel and Act Toward...

1. **LGBTQ Pride Month?** There should be no "pride" involved with living a life or a "life-style choice" (it is a "choice") of sin and rebellion against God. But remember, the Assyrians had been living lives of sin and rebellion against God for centuries before He sent Jonah to them. Be careful lest in your disdain for the sin of others, you adopt and adapt to the sin of Jonah, Jonah 4:10-11. Each and every LGBTQ participant and supporter:
 - a. **is a fellow human being** that either external circumstances, lack of proper upbringing, or societal tolerance or pressure has indoctrinated to believe what they believe, cf. 1Tim.1:13ff;
 - b. **has a soul** that is just as precious to their Creator and yours, and that Jesus died to save, cf. Matt.16:26 and Luke 19:10;
 - c. **needs to be shown love and compassion** without "tolerating," "accepting," "condoning," or "enabling" their sinful choices. It is easy to hate and despise the sinner along with their sin- but it isn't Christ-like, Matt.9:10-13. It is much more difficult to *imitate* Christ by hating the sin WHILE loving and being compassionate to the sinner, Jude 20-23. What if it was your son or daughter that adopted the LGBTQ lifestyle? Everyone who has done so is *someone's* son or daughter.
2. **Homosexual feelings or desires?** It is also important to realize the difference between *being tempted* (or having *feelings/desires*) and *sinning*, cf. Heb.4:15. A man (or woman) who no longer has a Scriptural right to marry certainly may still desire to have a mate and enjoy the benefits thereof. Such *feelings/desires* are not of themselves wrong- however, *fulfilling* that desire in violation of what God's words says becomes sinful, cf. Matt.19:12b. In much the same way, having *feelings* or *desires* for members of the same gender is not necessarily wrong, but *acting upon* them brings one under condemnation. Obviously, allowing *feelings* or *desires* to mature into *lust*- whether *heterosexual* or *homosexual*, brings one into spiritual condemnation, cf. Matt.5:27-30, so care must be taken to curb and control our desires. As I've long said, "You can't argue with how someone *feels*," but *conduct* is another matter. The person with *homosexual* or *effeminate* (if male) *feelings* is in exactly the same position as the *heterosexual*: having to *curb* and *control* their *feelings* (whatever they may be) so that they do not produce sinful *lust* or *activities*. Unchecked *heterosexual feelings* produce *fornication* and/or *adultery*. Unchecked *homosexual feelings* produce *sexual immorality/impurity*.
3. **Someone who expects us to use their "chosen pronoun" to address or describe them?** We *can* and *should* always be *kind* and *gracious*, Eph.4:29-32; Col.4:5-6. My advice is this: If you *don't know* their gender (and it isn't obvious), be accommodating; if you know their gender (or it's obvious), either use their name instead of a pronoun, or choose and use a *neuter* or *gender neutral* pronoun. If the latter is the case and your efforts are rebuffed (they still demand that you ignore the obvious reality), I could not encourage and endorse their lie by acceptance and usage of their *choice*, cf. Eph.5:5-12; 2John 2:10-11.

Conclusion: We live in a *challenging world* where "*evil men and imposters will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived*. You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them; that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus," 2Tim.3:13-15. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord," 1Cor.15:58.