

WD January 9, 2023

## “A Response Part 2”

Good morning. I hope that you doing well as the New Year as gotten itself rolling. Today I would like to continue our response to an article written before Christmas. As I said last week, because the author wears the title of “pastor” and because she is of a Lutheran background I felt I needed to respond. The topic of same sex attraction is often a delicate subject that deserves a respectful discussion because personhood is often confused with sexuality. In last week’s devotion we share a lot about this.

When Our Creator created us male and female in Genesis 1 and 2, He placed the image of our Creator upon us. And then later said, “be fruitful and multiply.” The Multiplying had two purposes neither of which had anything to do with sexual identity. The first, was to produce children. Effectively, make more images of God. Secondly, it was the binding point, the consummation of a covenant of marriage. On this in Matt 19:5-6 Jesus says, “A man shall leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and the two will become one flesh so they are no longer two but one flesh.” But the action of becoming one flesh does not determine personhood. Personhood is established and settled before God said be fruitful and multiply.

Again we also remember what happened in Genesis 3 where everything God designed was distorted and ruined by sin. The way in which temptation came to Adam and Eve was to doubt God’s specific words not to touch the tree of knowledge of good and evil. “Did God really say...you will not surely die....you will be like God knowing (in fact, determining) good and evil.” And this is where we start this week.

The Word of God is either the truth or it is not. The author’s article states that we are “reading a translation of what is originally written. Throughout time and through the process of translation, the meaning of the Bible as we know it today has lost much of what the original authors actually intended.”

We could spend the rest of our time just on this segment and topic so I will do my best to keep it brief. For starters Luther was big on scripture alone as the sole authority of faith, truth, and practice. Today it is still a fundamental doctrine of the Lutheran Church. Councils and popes often tried to read into scripture things that were not there as well. And so, the practice of indulgences, for example, were put into practice and even incorporated into the culture of the church. Luther challenged all of it based on the authority of the Word of God as the sole authority. Not by popes or councils but solely by the grace of God are we forgiven as is taught in the Sacred Word of God. For a Lutheran to suggest that the Word is incomplete without adding modern interpretation falls into the same realm of rebellion against the Word of God. When we defend our sin in any form, we replace God as the final authority of things; we determine good and evil and usually justify our sin. Like indulgences we find ways to sanctify our sinful behavior as something the church should endorse. “We all sin and fall short of the glory of God” when it comes to following God’s Word.

But let’s take a moment to hear what the Word says about itself. And for the sake of time, I will stick to John knowing that everything John teaches is also repeated in and throughout scripture. John 1 tells us that Jesus and the Word are inseparable. Since Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8) and was there in the Beginning, would not His Word also remain the same. Since, Jesus himself defends Himself as Savior in John 8 and declares His word to be truth in His High Priestly Prayer in John 17:17 should we not take Jesus at His Word? After all we want to believe in things like heaven and love right? Why wouldn’t the rest of what the Word says also be in tact as truth. And since Jesus tells us in John 10 that as the Good Shepherd, He lays down His life with authority to take it up again shouldn’t it stand to reason He can preserve His Word as well. Wouldn’t the same one who created all things as John 1 tells us also be able to preserve His Word for as long as the Word remains? Of course! The error is not in the Word of God but in the sinner and the sin that has ruined us, spoiled our thinking, and skews our hearts toward ungodly things. The Word of God is perfectly preserved and intact regardless of whether we believe it or not. And I say this without having the time to go into the mountain of extra Biblical evidence such as the number of manuscripts available to check the accuracy of the Bible. Or that when the Dead Sea scrolls were found with complete books of Isaiah that those books were nearly word for word with texts written a thousand years afterward. No one who believes the Word as Sacred would be as careless as is presumed or implied by this article. A Lutheran pastor should know better than that.

Finally, I go back to the article with the words, “It is also written...” When Jesus was confronted with temptation in the wilderness the devil tried to quote scripture to defend his position. To quote an authority is one of the oldest tactics of debate. However, rather than argue the text that was misquoted Jesus simply says, “It is also written...” One of the hermeneutical principles is that scripture interprets scripture. Hermeneutics is the study of interpreting and understanding scripture.

To remind ourselves again this week, the author writes of “diverse examples of marriage that are found in the Bible. The bible endorses monogamous marriages between one male and one female in addition to polygamy, sexual slavery, incest, and forced marriages to virgins and blesses all the varieties of marriage.” Last week we made the point using the example of David and Solomon’s polygamy to say that the mention of something is not the same as an endorsement of something.

What she is referring to are passages like Deuteronomy 21:10-14 which lays out a purification ritual to prepare a captive woman for life as a concubine. In another example, a Hebrew man who rapes a woman is required to pay 50 shekels to her father and then take her home as his wife, (Deuteronomy 22:28-29). The point is not to justify the crime but to put the responsibility on the man to care for the woman as a legitimate bride. The money paid is a dowry not slave money as is often implied. A dowry was traditionally paid to the father of the bride if the proper marriage process was followed. The price Jesus paid to the Father for His bride (the church) was His life on the cross.

In each case the law included such things because God’s people are sinful too. The law was to limit the damage or the actions of the Israelites much in the same way laws are written today. The writing of a law is not to legitimize or endorse the crime but to put limits and punishments in place to enforce godly behaviors.

At this point it is worthy to mention what is also written. Jesus teaches in Mark 7:20-23 about what is sacred in terms of sexuality. Jesus is not neutral on the subject of sexuality.

“<sup>20</sup> He went on: “What comes out of a person is what defiles them. <sup>21</sup> For it is from within, out of a person’s heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder, <sup>22</sup> adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. <sup>23</sup> All these evils come from inside and defile a person.” The word for sexual immorality is the Greek word, *porneia*. *Porneia*, a word where we get pornography from, is a cover all word that would include any act of sex outside of the marriage covenant. The word applies to all forms of sexual practice outside of the original marriage design including, sex slavery, human trafficking, incest, promiscuity, pedophilia, pornography, prostitution, even any consensual sex outside of marriage, and the practice of homosexuality. The word implies a deliberate, conscious action that dismisses oneself as an image bearer designed to be a temple of the Holy Spirit. The word is also deliberately separate from adultery which involves a conscious giving of one’s heart to someone other than the beloved, a covenant breaking. This passage is certainly uncomfortable to any who are sexually active in any other form outside the original pattern of Genesis 1 and 2. And historically, it is no accident that just about every culture that has endorsed idols has also become sexually immoral. *Porneia* is a strong sign that a culture is drifting from the Lord.

So, here we go. This was part 2 of my response to the article I mentioned last week. Of course, I welcome ongoing conversation and encourage any exploration of God’s Word on this subject or any other. So, if you have other topics you would like to explore here I welcome your suggestions. Again, I appreciate that the article gives us opportunity to study the Word deeper. This is always good. After all, look how much we gained over a discussion about indulgences back in the day. I pray that in the end what I have given to you here is helpful. I share it in humility and in absolute trust in God’s Word. May the Lord bless you in this new week.

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John 3:30