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The way to Paradise | Luke 23:32-43

One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!" But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

Food for Thought | How to 'respectfully affirm' marriage

The case for same sex marriage touches on easily understood and widely shared feelings and aspirations. Conversation with gay friends and family members quickly reveals that some wish to express a long-term commitment to the person they love, and they want to celebrate that, and invite the people who matter most to them, to celebrate with them. So, when



many Christian people have heard just such hopes expressed by their gay friends and family, and Christians want to 'respect all people' (1 Peter 2:17) and 'do good to all' (Galatians 6:10), why do many remain opposed to changing the definition of marriage to include couples of the same sex?

Jesus teaches that marriage is a lifelong, mutual and exclusive commitment between a man and a woman: "Haven't you read that at the beginning, the Creator 'made them male and female,' and, 'For this

Food for Thought cont...

reason a man will 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. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.” Matthew 19:4-6

For Christians, Jesus’ words are authoritative, trustworthy and good, and involve the implication that God’s gift of sexual intimacy is part of the lifelong, covenantal relationship of one-man-one-woman marriage. To quote same-sex attracted Anglican minister Vaughan Roberts: *“Having made our complementary sexuality (male and female), God instituted marriage as the proper context for its expression. The man and the woman are made for one another. They’re a very good fit, anatomically and procreatively. And when they come together in sexual union, they become one flesh - a wonderful union of two complementary individuals that reflects the unity and diversity of the Godhead...”*

It is our relationship with Christ that is at the heart of our identity, not our marital status, or sexual attraction.

It is for this reason that in the Christian community there are many people - those who have never married, those who are divorced, the widowed and the same-sex attracted - who live faithful lives of devotion, fruitfulness and rich fellowship with others, but who are not involved in sexually intimate relationships. Christians reject the idea that sexual intimacy is essential for personal fulfilment or close and fulfilling relationships. Jesus, who affirmed the goodness of marriage, sex and family life, was neither married nor sexually intimate and yet was the most complete human ever to live.

For Christians, it is our relationship with Christ that is at the heart of our identity, not our marital status, or sexual attraction. The Apostle Paul put it this way, *“It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me”*. So Christians reject as both false and destructive the idea that our sexual desires define who we are and dictate what we do. Our sexuality is a precious gift from God certainly, but it is only to be used according to God’s intention for it. For those who are guided by Scripture in such matters, a vote against changing the definition of marriage will seem straightforward.

However, while being personally convinced of the goodness of God’s teaching on this matter, some Christians may think there are reasons for not opposing the change of definition of marriage or for not participating in the vote to be conducted by post over the next few weeks.

For example, some may think that while the Christian community is glad to submit to God’s word in this matter, the rest of our community has not made such a choice and Christians need not stand in the way of a change desired by a (yet to be demonstrated) majority. I am deeply grateful for the democratic and pluralistic society in which we live. In such a society, the minority voice plays a vital role. It calls the majority to reconsider, and even if unpersuaded to acknowledge that other viewpoints exist which are not necessarily motivated by malice or ignorance, but which give expression to alternative ways of seeing the world. The co-existence of different views respectfully held and practised builds a community of humility and resilience. Failure to vote will give a false impression of community opinion.

Some Christians may think that while God’s word regulates the behaviour of Christians, it has no application amongst those who do not claim to be Christian. They say that there is no basis for the law of the land to reflect Christian teaching. This argument has some merit. The Bible gives no warrant for a Christian theocracy and Jesus said, *“My kingdom is not of this world”*.

Christians reject the idea that sexual intimacy is essential for personal fulfilment or close and fulfilling relationships ...

Food for Thought cont...

However, marriage is part of God's good ordering of the Creation. Marriage is a gift to humanity, not only for Christians. God's pattern of marriage is a 'public good', not just an ordinance of the Church. Indeed, it is precisely because of the 'public' character of marriage that marriages are registered with the government, that 'de facto' marriages and same sex partnerships are treated at law as though they were marriages, (the Anglican Archbishop of Sydney supported the Commonwealth legislative reforms of 2007 that removed inequalities in the treatment of same sex relationships) and that the government can intervene to provide for the welfare of children in cases where marriages are under stress or have broken down. Marriage serves the welfare of families, children and the wider society and is properly a matter for the whole community.

Again, because marriage is a 'public' institution and not merely a private matter between two adults, there is now significant evidence from overseas of restrictions being imposed on faith-based schools, hospitals, welfare agencies and other institutions following the introduction of same sex marriage. These are more far-reaching than whether clergy are required to conduct same-sex marriages. They extend to the freedom to teach a Christian view of marriage or to apply such teaching in areas of personal conduct or employment, for example.

Christians say that the teaching of Jesus on the subject of marriage is good and trustworthy and life giving. We love our gay friends and family members, we treasure our friendships with gay colleagues, as Jesus would have us do. And, following Jesus too, we respectfully affirm that marriage is the exclusive covenant union of a man and a woman.

This is why I will be voting No.

Kanishka Raffel (Dean of Sydney).
sydneyanglicans.net



Upcoming & Notes

- **AYF Prayer Meeting 9.15am-10.15am THIS Monday Sept 11** > Armidale High School (Butler St). Meet at the top office.
- **Q&A with Gillian Law 7.30pm Wed Sept 13 @ SMMC** > for all uneChurch members.
- **'In Laws and Out Laws (and how to tell the difference!)' 1pm-2pm Thurs Sept 14 @ St Peter's Cathedral Parish Hall** > An interview with 3 women exploring how we should relate to those who join our families by marriage. . Includes lunch \$10. RSVP Robyn Perry 0409 314 011. More info Liz Parker 0427 932 102.
- **'Fast Bowling for Freedom' with Henry Olonga @ Drysdale Room, Wright Centre UNE Fri 7pm Sept 15** > Invites on Connect Table. More info call 0488 903 374.
- **'Death: The taboo topic of our community' 2pm-4.30pm Saturday Sept 16 @ St Marks** > We'll hear from a doctor, a nurse, a social worker and a minister. All welcome. More info Jan Berkley. **Afternoon Tea contributions welcome.** Let Sue Davies know for catering purposes 6772 7056.
- **AYF Monster Garage Sale 8.30am - 2.30pm Sept 16** > Armidale Central Baptist Church Rusden St. Donated items can be dropped at the Baptist Church or call Rob Dewhurst on 0409 723 522 to arrange pickup.
- **Shed Men 7.30am Saturday Sept 23** > 'Pocket Hole Carpentry (the Kreg Jig)' @ 122 Kellys Plains Rd. Gold coin donation. See flyers.
- **Confirmation with Bishop Rick Lewers Oct 22** > Contact Matt in the Office 6787 4015.
- **'Parenting in a Connected Age' workshop 9.30am-3.15pm Saturday Oct 28 @ Sandon PS** > With James and Simone Boswell ('*Cyber Parenting: Raising Your Kids in an Online World*'). For parents of toddlers up to teens. RSVP to Ruth France bandrfrance@gmail.com or 0490 669 157.

Family Prayer

We do not present our pleas before You because of our righteousness, but because of Your great mercy. Daniel 9:18

- **Baking** > Izzy & Aidan Willams (due March).
- **Betrothed** > Ben Lukins & Laura Millican (Dec 9); Mitch Buster & Emma Austrin-Miner (Apr 21).
- **Grieving** > Rob & Sue McClenaghan.
- **'Tent' Wear & Repair** (2 Cor. 5) > Bill Bruce; David Meares; Owen Chapman.
- **SunAM Prayer Ministry** > See Robert Baker.

Family Finances

Giving 1/9-7/9	\$9496
Average amount needed to meet Budget per week	\$8,484
Overall Giving 1/7-7/9	\$91,586
Average amount needed to meet Budget for this period	\$82,010

Notes | *The way to Paradise* | Luke 23:32-43