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**Series: Marriage God's Way**  
**Message: Let Marriage Be Held in Honor**

**Transcribed Message**  
**August 14, 2022**  
**Genesis 1-2**

I would say in the course of the last few years, last few months, even last few weeks, it's felt an awful lot like a tsunami is coming against us and towards us in relation to matters related to marriage and even the broader picture of human sexuality. Earlier this spring, the Florida legislature passed the Florida Parental Protection Bill. You would have thought it was a bill that was specifically intended to harm children because of the outcry against that bill by so many of the cultural elites. It was actually a bill that in its writing had as its specific intent to prohibit instruction in the classroom for kindergarten through third graders regarding their sexual identity. Earlier this spring a number of states are considering, as we come to the beginning of school again, policies. I don't have any idea how many states have these kinds of policies. Maybe there are already a number that do. Policies that prohibit school teachers and administrators and personnel from discussing with parents the possible gender transition that their child is going under. They aren't supposed to by policy speak to parents about those kinds of things. On July 19<sup>th</sup> the US House of Representatives codified into federal law what we call same-sex marriage, something that had been established by the Supreme Court in 2015, but now the House of Representatives, and perhaps to be taken up and followed by the Senate, to bring into federal law the acknowledgment that marriage is now viewed as being between two men, two women, or a man and a woman. 71% of Americans now support that kind of legislation.

Just this past week, Anglican bishops (we call them Methodists in the United States) from all around the world met in Lambeth, England to discuss their church's future stance with regard to these very issues of marriage, the ordaining of men and women to perform same-sex marriages. The Archbishop of Canterbury, at the end of their sessions together, came down with both feet firmly planted in midair and said we

have Anglicans who support traditional biblical marriage, and we have Anglican bishops who do not support it. And that's where we are as a church.

On a brighter note, one of the largest Methodist churches in America just this past week, a mega church of 14,000 members in Texas, voted at almost 97% approval to sustain the biblical teaching with regard to marriage between a man and a woman, and voted in that resolution to leave the Methodist Church because they no longer have taken a stance on that issue. As well, the Christian Reformed Church, which is the third-largest Reformed Church in America, just recently did something very similar in what surprised many people in their denomination. Their denominational leaders came together and affirmed what has been a significant struggle going on in their denomination for many years and that they too were going to drive a stake in the ground and say marriage is between a man and a woman. They also said that those within the church leadership and within their colleges that teach otherwise are going to be subject to church discipline.

Jeremiah chapter 9 verse 1. You may remember Jeremiah was known as the weeping prophet. He makes this statement in that 9<sup>th</sup> chapter: "O, that my head were waters and my eyes fountains of tears that I might weep day and night." For what he saw happening among his people. O, that my head were waters and my eyes were a fountain of tears that I might weep day and night for I see what is happening among my people. 1 Chronicles chapter 12 verse 32 speaks of the men of Issachar who you remember understood the times in which they lived and they knew what it was that they needed to be doing.

Well, we're wrapping up our marriage series this morning. There were all kinds of things that I thought of as related to this last message in this series. I decided that instead of some of those that I wanted to step in to this broader picture of marriage and sexuality and the cultural confusion of our time. Hebrews 13:5 says that we are to hold marriage in honor. I believe that God's plan for marriage is for one man and for one woman to be married to each other for life. I believe that if we step away from that and we compromise at that point that we cannot do that without great cost.

Let's look at this matter this morning of marriage and human sexuality. I'm going to divide the outline into those two larger headings. I'd like to just put before you what I

think is the standard of Scripture with regard to these issues. Then we're going to compare that to the culture, to what culture is saying in our day and time. Let's begin with marriage. What does the Bible say about marriage? The very first Sunday of our series we looked at this seven weeks ago. We said marriage is God's idea. Marriage is God's idea. Genesis 2:18. When God saw that Adam was alone He said it's not good for Adam to be alone. I will make him a helper suitable for him. So God for the first time says something isn't good out of all of His creative work. Something that he looked at was not good and God did something about it. He didn't consult with Adam. He didn't get any ideas from Adam. God reacted to this that which was not good and He provided a solution.

Marriage is not a social construct. You can't go back in human history and see some point in time where in history two people decided to commit to each other for life. They didn't decide to covenant together and then call it marriage. No, marriage is not a social construct. Marriage is not the result of some human evolutionary social process. Marriage is in fact God's idea. God is the one who brought the woman to the man. God is the one who conducted the first marriage ceremony if you will. We read in that second chapter and that 24<sup>th</sup> verse: Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife and they shall become one flesh. I suggest to you right at the beginning that what the Bible says is that marriage is God's idea and He gets to define for us what it is and what it looks like and how it's to be lived.

Secondly, the Bible says marriage is between one man and one woman. Between one man and one woman. That is what we read in these verses that we are looking at. They are ones that we've heard and we're familiar with, but I'm going to keep reading them. I'm going to keep saying them because they literally are foundational to all of this that we're looking at. In that 24<sup>th</sup> verse of that 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter, when the Holy Spirit instructs Moses to say for this cause a man – singular, one man – one man shall leave his father and his mother. And he shall establish a new entity, a new family. For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife. Singular. One woman. He is going to cling to her as his wife.

When Jesus is asked about marriage in Matthew 19, He goes back to Genesis 2 verse 24 and He quotes what Moses had written. When Paul closes up his amazing

passage in Ephesians 5 about marriage, he goes back to Genesis 2 and verse 24 and he repeats the same thing. God is laying the foundation and that foundation is what is then repeated all through the storyline. From Genesis on, the storyline of marriage in the Bible is that it is heterosexual. It is one man and one woman. It is monogamous. One man and it is one woman.

There is no such thing as so-called same-sex marriage. I'm not suggesting that every time we say those words – same-sex marriage – that we have to say so-called same-sex marriage. But it wouldn't be a bad habit, because the reality is by God's definition there is no such thing as same-sex marriage. God has defined what marriage is. God says marriage is between one man and one woman. We don't have the right, we don't have the privilege to come along and say we're going to redefine what marriage is. We're going to change what God has clearly instructed. It simply isn't that it shouldn't exist. It isn't that it doesn't exist. Hear me. It can't exist. It can't because God says marriage is between one man and one woman. It is heterosexual and it is monogamous. Those of us who believe that God has spoken clearly and He has spoken truthfully should not concede that a partnership between two men and between two women is now to be called marriage. Call it what you will. Call it a partnership. Call it a civil partnership. Call it some other kind of arrangement, but I do not think that we should be referring to it as marriage. It is not and cannot be defined as marriage which is one man and one woman.

The third thing that the Bible tells us is that marriage is with a view to procreation. It is with a view to procreation. Look at verse 27 of the 1<sup>st</sup> chapter of Genesis. "So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him. Male and female He created them. And God blessed them and God said to them, be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it." We call this the cultural mandate, but within that cultural mandate is the command for procreation. This is sexual complementarity. One man and one woman, created in the image of God who are given the command by God to be fruitful and multiply. Who can be fruitful and multiply? Who can bring about the answer to procreation? It is not Adam in Genesis 2:18. He's by himself. He's alone. That's the nature of the problem. He doesn't have anybody. It isn't until you get to verse 22 of the second chapter where we read that "the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man

He made into a woman and He brought her to the man. and the man said, this is at last bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman because she was taken out of man.” Procreation is one of the designs and intent that God has for marriage. It is not the only reason that God has given to us the gift of marital intimacy. But one of the things that God intends within marriage is for there to be procreation, to fill the earth and then to multiply it. Understand that within the context of marriage there is the pain of infertility and we understand that. That does not nullify in any sense that marriage. It is certainly a burden that that couple is dealing with at that time, but God's overall general intent is for a man and a woman to come together, to be married, and to fill the earth and procreate.

When I do premarital counseling, in the premarital counseling form that they get before we come to the first session, one of the questions on the form is if God blesses your marriage with children how many would you like to have. I ask that question for two reasons. The first reason is if one of them comes from a very large family and they're fully expecting that they're going to have a very large family, and they write down that they want to have seven or eight kids, and the other one writes down that they came from a single child family and they're very happy to think about having one, that is something that we need to talk about. We need at least to step in and have that conversation. But you know the other reason why I do that? The other reason why I do that is because if they would say on that form we want to get married but we don't want to have children. I would simply have to say to them I won't be able to marry you. You can't enter into marriage and say at the outset of a God-honoring, Christ-centered marriage we're unwilling to fulfill the very first command that God gave to a married couple. Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. It's a part of the divine mandate. It is a part of God's command to us that we follow through and do that.

The blessing of children is only possible with a man and a woman. Two men cannot have children. Two women by themselves cannot have children. God is underscoring that marriage is between a man and a woman. To fulfill this command necessitates that, requires that. God gives us His design. I think it also is clearly to establish the importance of the father and mother within the home.

The fourth thing that the Bible says marriage is to be held in honor. Marriage is to be held in honor. It's a blessing. It's meant to display the glory of the gospel. That's what we've talked about. A man and a woman in marriage are picturing the relationship between Christ and the church. Two men, two women in some kind of partnership cannot fulfill that obligation. They can't fully and rightfully display the glory of the gospel. That's what marriage is intended to do – to show this glorious picture, to give us a portrait of the gospel and of the relationship between Christ and the church.

My friends, this has been the historic position of Christian orthodoxy from the beginning. This has been the position that is revealed to us in the Jewish Scriptures of the Old Testament. This is in fact God's intent and plan. Do you realize that the global church has been an agreement on these two points for centuries? The Roman Catholic Church, the Protestant church, the Eastern Orthodox Church, the Russian church, the Coptic Christian church, the Syrian Orthodox Church, the charismatic and non-charismatic church, the Reformed Church, the Wesleyan Church, the African church, the Latin American church, the South American church, the European church, the Scandinavian church, the Asian church, the church of Antarctica (if there's a church there). They have all up until just recently affirmed two things. Marriage is between a man and a woman, and marriage is monogamous. Of all the things that these disparate denominations and churches have disagreed on, and there are many, it should not go unnoticed that the two things that historically for centuries they have all agreed on is that marriage is between a man and a woman and marriage is monogamous until now. Now, all of a sudden, all of our exegesis and all of our interpretation and all of our reading and studying of the Bible somehow all of a sudden within the last few decades we're all confused about what the Bible teaches.

The culture, on the other hand, what does it say? The culture on the other hand says some things that are very different. The culture I would suggest to you says there is no God. There is no creator. There is certainly no absolute authority to which we need to follow. However you say that, and I'm not suggesting that everybody is an atheist. They may be practical atheists but in general it is certainly true that the culture at large does not believe that there is a God who has given us absolute revelation about truth that we're to pattern our life after. They just don't live that way. They're content to think

that all of this just happened somehow, that there is no creator, there is no creation, and ultimately there is no one that we need to answer to. If the Bible is acknowledged at all, it is acknowledged as being irrelevant and largely outdated.

Listen to this. Four things you didn't know about God and same-sex marriage. You're going need to answer all four of these. You're going to need to do what Peter says: to be ready to give an answer of the hope that is within you. Because here's what you're going to hear from our culture about God when they talk about Him, and about the Bible when they reference it. Here they are. Number one. There are very few biblical verses that address homosexuality at all and most of those are not directed at homosexuality per se. That is a very common response to this matter that is before us in our current day. In fact, they go so far as to say that they have about seven passages. They find a way through interpretive gymnastics and turning the Bible into a pretzel to make those passages say something that they don't say at all or minimize what they do say. They suggest there are just a few verses that even talk about it. And when you're talking about it, they're really not talking about homosexual behavior. They're talking about perversions of that.

The second thing they say is Jesus never said one word about homosexuality. I mentioned that a few weeks ago and that is on face a truthful statement. Jesus didn't speak specifically about the issue of homosexuality. We can't go to a verse in the Gospels where it says Jesus said this about homosexuality and says it is wrong and it is sinful behavior. But what Jesus did do was this. When he was asked about marriage Jesus said it's between one man and one woman. He quoted the Old Testament Scriptures. He quoted His Bible. He said this is the standard that God has established. It doesn't give allowance for redefining and reinterpreting and redesigning what we want marriage to be. He goes right to the authoritative Scriptures of the Old Testament and says this is marriage. In addition to that, every time the writers of the New Testament speak, they're speaking the words of Jesus. That's what Jesus said to the apostles. He said I'm going to tell you. you're going to carry on the story. The things you're going to share and teach to the church are my very words. We can't drive a wedge between Jesus and Paul, or Jesus and Peter, or Jesus and James or John or any of the rest of them.

The third thing that they suggest is the Bible never mentions or condemns the concept we call same-sex marriage. Again, okay, so we can't turn to a verse that says that is wrong and sinful behavior. What we can do is turn to every time the Bible speaks about marriage in putting forward a positive description of what God intends marriage to be. It is always in the Old Testament and the New Testament defined again to be between a man and woman. That's enough. God has given us His definition.

Then the last thing they say, those who claim the biblical definition of marriage as a model for today ignore various marital arrangements in the Bible that would be illegal or condemned. The answer to that is no, we don't. Even in this series we talked about polygamy. Pointing to polygamy and saying, well, see, there it is. It's in the Bible. There are all kinds of marriage arrangements in the Bible. Yes, there are. And while God again did not see fit to say in one verse polygamy is sin, up against the standard that He gave to us in which He defined what marriage is, everything else falls short. As we said, every instance in which we read of polygamy we read of the downward cycle of sin and the impact on those individuals who were involved in it.

Now the second thing that the culture says is there is no unique role for men or women. There is no unique role for men or for women. There is nothing unique about masculinity. There's nothing unique about femininity. The idea of male leadership, of patriarchy is toxic. It's outdated. Or in the home. You're teaching about unique roles that God has given to men and to women and it is not relevant to our day. That was true of another time. Now it is true that there are things within our culture that we ascribe to masculinity that may not necessarily be true. There are things that we assign to femininity that are cultural. We understand that. Within different cultures, there are different expressions of these things. But the Bible is clear that God from Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 has given to men and women unique roles and places to serve Him and to fulfill His will in their lives.

A study was done in England a number of years ago by a group that had basically set out to prove that masculinity and femininity is simply a cultural construct. They believed that little boys do things that little boys do because that's what they learn in their culture. Little girls do things that they do because that's what they learn in their culture. In this particular test that they set up, they took all the little girls in this preschool



and they gave all these little girls trucks. They put them in a room and they observed them. Before too long, there they were. All of the trucks were lined up in a row and they had little blankets laying on them. When they came into the room to ask what they were doing, the little girls said sssssh, the trucks are sleeping. I can assure you if they had done that with little boys those dolls probably would not have survived. Those dolls would have been in MMA matches and they'd be throwing them around the room. Yes, there are cultural things that we learn in a given culture. But I firmly believe that God has given us directions with regard to unique roles that are to be a part of His plan and His purpose for men and women.

Thirdly, the culture says where there is love between two individuals, regardless of their sex, there can be marriage. To believe otherwise is bigoted. This is what we hear from the culture all the time. How can you oppose two people getting married who are in love? You know what the culture says? That love needs to be expressed sexually. For love to be validated it needs to be expressed sexually. For love to be validated it needs to be within marriage. They want God's definition of marriage to change and conform to their definition now because after all who would oppose two people who love each other and want to get married? How in the world is that hurting you? why do you care about that so much? What are you going to say to that? Doesn't God want people to be happy? Isn't that the gospel of the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Personal happiness. That literally is the gospel of our time. The gospel of our time is if it makes me happy then God wants me to enjoy that. God wants me to experience that because after all God wants me to be happy. I'm not happy in my marriage. I should get out of my marriage because I want to be happy and God wants me to be happy. We say it in the culture and unfortunately we say it in the church as well.

But the biblical gospel is something different. The biblical gospel is God is holy. The biblical gospel is that sin has ruined humanity and broken God's perfect design, that there are behaviors that God prohibits not because He doesn't want us to be happy, but in fact because He wants us to be happy. He wants us to enjoy and be fulfilled in the life that He has provided for us. We've already said all through this series that marriage needs to be understood that it is not about us. It's not about us. If we, within the context of married living, live day-to-day with the idea that this is all about us, then even our

marriages as Christians become distorted and less than what God intends. Marriage is a picture of the gospel. Marriage is set up to give glory to the gospel. That's why we can't change it. That's why you can't adjust it to what we want. That's why we can't redefine it. When we do so, we do so at great cost. O, that my head were a fountain of water's and my eyes were a river so that I could cry tears day and night for what's happening in our culture.

Let's move secondly and more quickly to the second broad category of human sexuality. Once again, we're confronted with two very different visions. The Bible says that God created them male and female. We've already read that in Genesis 1:26 and 27. God said, let us make man in our image, in our likeness. God proceeded to create two human beings – a man and a woman. From Genesis 1 onward, Scripture teaches that males and females are biological beings with immutable natures. What is a man? What is a woman? We would've never thought as recently as a year ago that was a hard question to ask anybody. We would've never thought that there was any controversy in asking what is a woman or what is a man. And yet now today, that is Ground Zero for all of this discussion that is going on about human sexuality in a culture that has lost its way. We might say it's lost its mind. Theology answers the question. Biology answers the question. Ontology answers the question. It is right there before us.

God created them different. Listen. God created them different at the deepest levels. He created them male and female. He created them different at the deepest levels. We're different in our chromosomal makeup. An X and Y and two XXs. We're different in our brains and the way God has designed them and constructed them. We're different in our body shape. We're different in our voices. We're different in our reproductive systems. When you read in Genesis 2:18 God saw that that man was alone and it wasn't good, and what does God say. I will make him a helper suitable for him. I will make him a helper who will be fit for him.

Listen. The Hebrew word translated either fit or suitable is a very rare Hebrew word. It's a compound word, so it's two words that are brought together to form this unique word. Fit and suitable. God said Adam, you've seen all the animals. You've named all the animals. You've come to the right conclusion that there isn't anybody here that I have created, there's nothing in this created world at this point that is fit for you,

that is suitable for you. that word, that compound word, the first part of that word means similar. Similar. Interesting. Adam and Eve, the man and the woman are similar. Of course they are. We've rehearsed that repeatedly. They're similar in that they are made in the image of God. They're similar in that they have a shared dignity. They're similar in that they have a shared destiny. They're similar in so many of these significant ways, but here the second part of that compound word is at its root meaning dissimilar. Dissimilar. Different. They are not the same. they're similar. Of course they are, but they're dissimilar. They're different. In the beauty of God's handiwork Eve is like Adam. Adam is like Eve in some of these ways. But in a whole set of other ways they are unlike each other. Male is not like female. Female is not like male. Man is not like woman. Woman is not like man.

This is why Genesis is so big. This is why Genesis is so important. This is why the first 11 chapters of Genesis is the most significant battleground about biblical authority and revelation. Why? Because God is establishing in those opening chapters the foundation for everything else that He is going to say. That's why we go back to these places and say you can bring up anything you want, but let's go back to the beginning and see what God established in laying the foundation stones of our basic humanity. That's the sacred story that continues all the way through.

Secondly, the Bible says that transgenderism doesn't exist, that there is no dualism between body and self. Listen. What we're dealing with today is 21<sup>st</sup> century Gnosticism. Gnosticism was a false teaching of the 1<sup>st</sup> century. In the 1<sup>st</sup> century, something called Gnosticism was a false teaching that the church was grappling with. We sometimes think that we're dealing with something nobody's ever dealt with before. There is nothing new under the sun. the Gnosticism of the 1<sup>st</sup> century said the body is evil and the soul needs to get out of it. The soul, the mind, the immaterial part of man is good and the physical part of man is evil. That's dualism, my friends. That's what's happening today with transgenderism. It's a 1<sup>st</sup> century false teaching.

Dr. Paul McHugh who was the director of psychiatry at John Hopkins Hospital, a man that was highly respected in the field of psychiatry for decades. He wrote books, wrote peer-reviewed articles that appeared in medical journals all the time. Highly respected. The head of psychiatry at John Hopkins Hospital says this: "Transgenderism

is a psychological disorder. 70 to 80% of young people who are grappling with gender dysphoria come out of it without any change in their biological structure. They grow out of it," he says. This is his comment. "We would do so much better to concentrate on their minds than on their body parts." But my friends, we live in a culture that has lost its way, in a culture that has lost its mind. I read this week Boston Children's Hospital is the nation's first pediatric trans surgery center. Their motto is "where the world comes for answers". They are literally changing the physical bodies of children. They're proclaiming themselves as to be the forerunners.

You need to read Abigail Schreier's book *Irreversible Damage*. She's not really writing from a biblical perspective, but it is a book that will enlighten you like nothing else about what's going on. Your psychology is your feelings. Your feelings do not change your ontology. They do not change your being. They do not change who God created you to be. You are born either a man with an XY, or you're born as a woman with two XXs. That's it. That's all there is. It's not possible to mistake your biological sex. It's possible to mistake what your mind is thinking about your biological sex.

Thirdly, the Bible says there's human flourishing when we live according to our God-given design. That's where we flourish. We flourish when we follow God's design. A Christian worldview is informed by the Bible. The Bible says that God created them male and female. He created man in His image and likeness. Some things, someone flourishes only when it is doing what it is designed to do, what it is designed to be. Psalm 119 verse 45 says, "...and I shall walk in a wide place for I have sought your precepts." Get the picture? A wide place. A flourishing place. A place of blessing. Psalm 139. You have formed my inward parts. I am fearfully and wonderfully made. You are. You are what God has designed you to be.

Now we know that the culture is saying something very different than all of those things that I just said that the Bible says. What does the culture say? The culture says first of all male and female are not defined by anatomy. That's binary. Gender is fluid. It's non-binary. Gender is totally subjective. Gender is what we feel. I feel like I'm in the wrong body therefore I am in the wrong body. That is why we have all the pronouns that we do. Do you know that you can't find a modern dictionary that can keep up with all the pronouns? You just can't. they're adding them all the time.

Secondly, the culture says the concept of just two genders, male and female, is simply a faulty construct. I don't know how many states again are dealing with this. I'm thankful that I live in Oklahoma. But the Pennsylvania Department of Education ... this is right off of their webpage. I got a feeling that there's a whole bunch of states that have this exact same information. What you should know about gender diversity, right on their webpage. You need to know all of the different things. assigned gender, binary gender, birth sex, biological sex, transgender, gender queer, gender expression, gender presentation, gender identity. all the personal pronouns. You need to know all of that. Why? Because it helps maintain tolerance and an accepting environment for LGBTQ youth. According to the Trevor Project, an organization that advocates for the inclusion of LGBTQ individuals, one in three transgender youth report attempting suicide. One third report being a victim of sexual violence. More than half find themselves in periods of depression lasting two weeks and longer. We don't have any idea why, other than we're not affirming them strongly enough. O, that my head were a river of waters and my eyes a stream so that they could weep for my people day and night. We know why. We just don't want to say it.

Thirdly, to not accept people as they are is unloving and bigoted. The question of course is who gets to define love. What is love? What does love look like? What does love do? Proverbs 15:32 says whoever ignores instruction despises himself, but he who listens to reproof gains intelligence. Is it unloving to leave someone in bondage? Is it unloving to say to somebody and to affirm something that we know isn't true? Is it loving to not warn people about an eternal judgment? Is it unloving, or is it loving to exercise church discipline? We know why people experience gender dysphoria. Genesis 3. Into God's perfect world, sin came and made a mess of everything. Sin is the disruptive force, the confusion that is all around us. We saw it in Romans 8. The whole of creation groans under the weight of sin. All of creation awaits Revelation 21.

What do we take away? What is the Christian's response to what's happening in our culture? I want to begin by suggesting that this is a time first of all for repentance for our own sin and for our own failings. I have said many times self-awareness is a wonderful gift. Self-awareness, being able to see ourselves as we need to see ourselves, is a blessing of God. To be aware of your sin, to be aware of your

shortcomings, to be aware of your failures, to be able to overcome our sense of self-righteousness. To be reminded that in Psalm 139 the psalmist says search me, O God, and try my heart. Search me, O God, and see if there's anything in me that You need to bring into the light. We begin with the spirit of humility.

The church has certainly failed at various points along the way. I am not one who blames everything on the church, but I think the church needs to look long and hard at itself and how we respond and how we relate and what our attitudes are. Remember in Revelation 3 the church at Laodicea. thought they had it all together. They felt that they were rich. In fact, they said we have need of nothing. Jesus is standing there and His commentary is that they are poor and wretched and blind and naked. My friend, I remind you, that's the church! Jesus is on the outside of the church. Jesus is longing for fellowship. I don't see that verse as a salvation verse. He said I want to have fellowship with you. this is Jesus writing to the churches of Revelation. And where is the Savior? He's outside! That calls for the church to have a spirit of humility, of brokenness, of asking God where is it that we need within our own community and within our own lives to measure ourselves against the word of God. We surely don't want Jesus to say of us that we're poor and wretched and blind and naked when He's provided all that we need.

Secondly, this is a time for compassion. This is a time for compassion. These are people who are made in the image of God. They're made in the image and likeness of God, people that God loves, for whom Jesus died. We live in a sin-ravaged world. There are going to be more broken people coming to us, us going to them, than we can imagine. It's happening all around us. We see it every day. I agree with the person who said: "We must not see the gay and transgender community as opponents to be defeated but broken sinners who need the life-giving message of Jesus."

Thirdly, this is a time for courage. This is the time for courage. Nick Katter says, "Today's uncontested nonsense becomes tomorrow's accepted wisdom." Today's uncontested nonsense becomes tomorrow's accepted wisdom. George Orwell, in what is his 1984 book that seemed so way out at one point, says in that novel: "In a world of universal deception, telling the truth is a revolutionary idea." We need to be truth tellers. We need to be truth seekers. We need to be ones who are bringing a truth that is based on the word of God.

My friends, I say to you what you already know but you will increasingly experience: this truth that we present is going to be a costly venture for many. There are going to be choices that you will be called on to make, there are costly choices to be a follower of Christ in this current generation and culture and time. It is going to be a costly discipleship, but we have to speak with courage and with wisdom.

Then finally, this is a time for being on mission. A time for being on mission, of speaking the truth in love, of representing Christ well. God has us here and He has us in this culture for this time, and to be the people of Issachar who understood the times in which we live. He's entrusted to us the ministry of reconciliation, which is to say He has given to us this glorious gospel. This gospel that says all of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. This gospel that says Jesus came to die on the cross for our sin to pay the penalty for our sin, and that what He asked us to do is to believe and have our sins forgiven and receive the gift of eternal life. He's entrusted that to us to take to this hurting, broken, dying world. That's our charge. That's our commission. That's our mission.

Let's pray. Father God, we are so very thankful for this gospel that has intersected our lives. Father, by your divine and gracious providence, you have brought this truth into our hearts. We are so thankful for that. We pray even this morning, father, if there is someone here, or someone that is listening or watching that does not know Jesus in a personal way that, Holy Spirit of God, you would open their eyes and give them understanding of what it means to have their sins forgiven and to have the gift of eternal life by grace and by grace alone. We thank you in Jesus name, amen.