

God's Pronouns

July 21, 2019

A couple of years after my first class with Dr. Lukens, just as I was starting to budge away from the “religion” I had received from my family and move into my personal, integrated faith, I visited a magnificent book store where I bought a boon entitled “God is Green.” I’ll be honest, at the time, I bought the book because I thought the title was absurd. Of course, the premise was that God cares intimately about the environment, but I think of it as we celebrate PRIDE this weekend, soggy and rainy as it was. “God is Green” comes to mind on PRIDE weekend, because GOD is not just green, God is ROYGBIV! God is Sparkly. God is Plaid – not the “Icky, why would anyone wear that” plaid, rather, “Wow! That’s really sharp” plaid.

Friends, God is Queer!

As a trans friend of mine posted last night,

“Not queer like “gay.”

Queer like escaping definition.

Queer like some sort of fluidity and limitlessness at once.

Queer like a freedom too strange to be conquered.

Queer like the fearlessness to imagine what love can look like and pursue it.”

You’ve all probably heard the passage that Barbara read from Genesis today. The telling of the 6th day of creation is probably not new to many of you. But there are two words that trip most people up in it. Some wonder if it’s a misprint. For generations, scholars have had no explanation for them: in Genesis 1:26 we read, “Then God said, ‘Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness...’”

“Let US make humankind in OUR image...” Friends, if you needed any more evidence that God is Queer, Genesis 1:26 gives us the first recorded expression of non-binary pronouns!

Just as so many of our LGBTQIA community have never felt right being boxed in to 21st century normative gender roles, so, too, with our creator. Queer friends, you’re in some pretty good company.

Over the years, you’ve probably heard that being Gay is a sin in the Bible, but I’ve just made a Biblical case for God being queer. Who is right, your beloved pastor who you know and trust, or the mean spirited folks who are trying to limit who God loves and who you can love? Since some may accuse me of putting up a straw argument there, let’s keep looking at the Bible for reinforcement.

You see, we all, even fundamentalists, choose how we are going to interpret the Bible. They claim to read at face value, but anyone with any degree of literary and sociological knowledge understands that is impossible. Everyone makes judgments, every society places value. There are 7 verses in the Bible that people most often cite when telling us

that homosexuality is a sin. Churches like ours argue that none of those passages speak of relationships of mutual love and respect and that all of them are about domination, power, control, and differentiating the followers of YAWEH from the pagan cults in the area that used virgins as part of their temple rituals.

THAT – sex that uses a young person, sex that is about abusing the other, that is not mutual, in which someone cannot give consent – THAT is indeed immoral. People establishing a loving household for the purpose of stability is not immoral, no matter what their genitalia.

So instead of looking at those 7 verses that really don't speak to our circumstances, I'll share the bulk of an article from Sojourner's magazine which highlights Biblical passages that are relevant to LGBTQ inclusion:

Acts 10:15 – “What God has made clean, you must not call profane.”

This verse comes from the passage in which Peter has declined to eat non-kosher food, and then in a dream is told not to hold so rigidly to those past notions. It is a hugely important verse in understanding that God's ways and intention of inclusivity is so much larger than our human laws.

Acts 8:26-40 “What is to prevent me from being baptized?”

This is the story of Phillip's encounter with an Ethiopian eunuch. “Eunuchs in Biblical times were othered and ostracized for their failure to adhere to sexual norms. Common cultural understanding of the time would have held that their status as eunuchs barred them from inclusion in God's community. And yet, this eunuch seeks to follow the path of Christ even as he continues to live out his sexual otherness, and he is welcomed and joyfully baptized into Christ's community. His question, ‘What is to prevent me from being baptized?’ underscored that his sexual status is not a barrier to inclusion in the eyes of God.”

Isaiah 56:3-5 “For thus says the LORD: To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant, I will give, in my house and within my walls, a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off.”

Once again, we hear of God's love and inclusion of one who society deems “sexually other.”

Isaiah 43:1 “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.”

Here, God doesn't say I have redeemed those in the sexual majority. God says, “I have redeemed YOU... YOU are mine.”

Galatians 3:23-29 “There is no longer Jew nor Greek, there is no longer slave nor free, there is no longer male nor female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.”

All of those former categories that were used to decide who was in and who was out are dissolved in Christ. We are now ALL insiders.

Matthew 22:37-40: “On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” Do you remember what those two commandments are? That’s right, the love of God and the love of neighbor. The overarching command of the following Jesus is to love. This is the true call of the faith. As you have heard me preach a zillion times, God doesn’t care WHO you love, God cares THAT you love.

Psalms 139: “For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.” Each of us is created wonderfully by God. This will be the basis of the prayer response we’ll sing in a little bit.

1 John 4:7-8: “Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.”

All love, by nature of being love, is a reflection of God. Therefore, any genuine love – gay, straight, queer, cis, comes from God and glorifies God.

Friends, I know this isn’t a numbers game, but since sometimes people may portray it to you as such, I will point out to you that I just gave you nine pro-inclusion verses as opposed to their 7 exclusionary texts.

In all seriousness, though, at the end of the day, since we all engage in interpretation, we have choices to make. We choose, either consciously or subconsciously, the lenses through which we interpret. Some will choose exclusion, some will choose tradition, some will choose fear. As for me and any house I serve, we will choose love. Amen.

* The second portion of the sermon quotes heavily from this article:

<https://sojo.net/articles/10-bible-passages-teach-christian-perspective-homosexuality>

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