

June 26, 2015

Dear Colleyville Family,

As you have no doubt heard by now, the United States Supreme Court today ruled to make homosexual marriage legal across our nation. Usually I don't comment on political events, but it seems that this situation rises to the level that warrants a pastoral response. I know that some of you are likely, like me, disappointed and potentially confused by today's ruling. In light of that reality, I offer a few thoughts as your pastor.

1) I want to clearly communicate that today's ruling by our nation's Supreme Court in no way affects our church's understanding of marriage. We will continue to hold and teach that marriage is a sacred, covenantally-bound, lifelong relationship between one man and one woman, and is the only context where the sexual relationship is blessed by God (forgive my technical language, but I want to be clear). We believe this is the case because we believe it is what the Bible teaches, and God's Word remains true and trustworthy, even as public opinion shifts and changes.

2) In many ways, today's court decision is not really revolutionary for our nation. The Supreme Court's decision is merely the last step on a trajectory that began long ago. Indeed, this is hardly the first time that the law of the United States has made licit behavior which the Bible prohibits. To name just a few examples, remember that when our country was founded, Chattel slavery was protected by our law. Adultery has been legal in the United States for quite some time. No-fault divorce laws were passed in the 1970s all across our nation. Abortion has been legal since 1973. The list goes on. It is just as true yesterday as well as 100 years ago as it is today: we continue to live as strangers and aliens on this earth, looking forward to our true homeland - the city that is built by God.

3) Our mission as a congregation remains the same as it was yesterday. We are still called to love our neighbors, regardless of their sexual orientation

or marital status. We are still called to preach the gospel. We are still called to gather and worship God each week and be fed at his table. We are still called to be a people of prayer and the Word, loving one another and those around us, and welcoming all those who put their trust in Jesus into our body. None of this changes.

So what shall we do response to this ruling? I want to pastorally counsel you in two ways.

First, a situation like this tempts us to focus much of our attention and energy on the world around us - to concern ourselves primarily with what others are doing or saying, whether other people are sinning or not sinning, whether others are responding in ways we think are appropriate or not appropriate. The technological age of the smartphone and social media only exacerbate this reality. I want to encourage all of us at Colleyville to resist this temptation by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Instead of primarily worrying about how others define marriage, let those of us who are married place our central focus on remaining faithful to our spouses in every way possible. Let us confess our own sins and repent, trusting in the forgiveness of Christ. Let each of us, married and unmarried, put our energy into loving God with all our heart, soul and mind and loving our neighbor as ourselves. In other words, let us focus on the matters we can actually influence and the things for which we actually have responsibility. On the last day, our Lord and Savior will not ask us to give an account for any decisions made by our nation's Supreme Court. He will, however, ask us to give an account for the details of our own lives.

Second, I want to simply encourage you with the words spoken by Jesus after his resurrection from the dead to the women who met him on the road to Jerusalem: "*Do not be afraid.*" I do not know what the future holds for the United States as a nation. Today's ruling certainly doesn't increase my optimism. Indeed, I have no assurances from the Scriptures of the political vitality and continued prosperity of our good, though flawed, nation.

However, we have a promise from the lips of Jesus himself, our Risen Lord who has even conquered death, that the church he would build will never fall, and even the gates of hell will not prevail against it. My friends, we are a part of that church that Jesus has built. We are those who have been redeemed by his precious blood and made vessels of the Holy Spirit. We are those whom Jesus has promised to raise from the dead on the last day and live with him eternally in the New Heavens and New Earth which he will make with his own hands. We are his, now and forever, and he will lose nothing that has been given to him. Let us not ever be afraid.

In the Hope of the Risen Christ,

Pastor Josh

P. S. If you ever want to talk with me about this topic or anything else, I'm always available.