

Faith in Action: Public Life and Politics
Immanuel Lutheran Church, Seymour Indiana
Pastor Blumenberg
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Overview: This class will seek to apply God's Word to current issues and make good decisions that can influence what takes place in public life, rather than merely reacting to events and trends. Today we look at changing definitions of gender.

1. Changing Attitudes Toward Gender Identity and Sexuality

Recent Supreme Court ruling:

On June 15, in a 6-3 decision, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that Title VII's prohibition of employment discrimination on the basis of "race, color, religion, sex, or national origin" — part of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 — also applies to discrimination on the basis of "sexual orientation" and "gender identity." Justice Kavanaugh dissented, asserting that the Court went beyond its proper role of interpreting the law and rewrote the law by changing a definition to include meanings the U.S. Congress rejected.

The Rev. Dr. Gregory Seltz, executive director of the Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty (LCRL), called the ruling "outrageous" in its relegation of "Christian citizens to second-class status in their own country." "[The church] is always accused of imposing our view on people, and it's exactly the opposite," Seltz said, adding that "the fundamental truths of biological differences ... have just been made illegal" if they are held to, by an organization, as the single correct view. This may open the door to men's access to women's dressing rooms and sports leagues and female students and women escaping from domestic violence being forced to share dorm rooms and living quarters with men.

Background: Conflict in Scientific community: biology/genetics vs. psychology

"The psychiatric field has been changing its views about gender identity and sexual preference. Until more recently, gender identity confusion and homosexual behavior were seen as "disorders" that should be treated clinically instead of choices that are equally valid. Viewing sexual identity from a perspective of ordered or disordered implies a moral judgment, with "good" versus "bad" implied. Such moral reflection has been progressively excluded from the fields of psychology and psychiatry in recent decades. The elimination of homosexuality from the list of psychiatric disorders on December 15, 1973 is a relevant example. That elimination was grounded primarily in the conviction that it was a moral value judgment to declare homosexuality a psychiatric disorder that should be treated. The continuing debate regarding homosexual conduct in the United States is in large measure a debate between a biblical and traditionally Christian understanding of the moral quality of homosexual behavior and the understanding, adopted by an increasing percentage of those in the psychiatric community since 1973, that homosexuality is either a natural condition or a valid lifestyle alternative. The underlying question is whether there is space for moral judgment in determining human behavior that requires psychiatric or psychological therapeutic care. The trajectory is that such dysphoria should not be viewed in any way that involves moral judgment."

2. The Biblical View of Gender and Sexuality

Read Genesis 1:26-28 (2)

Genesis 2:18-24 (3)

Matthew 19:4-6 (1047)

Ephesians 5:22-33 (1245)

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (1214)

Is God's design for human gender binary? If so, why?

If God so designed humans, how do we explain the confusion today?

How does the Bible address the expression of sexuality outside of God's design?

Read Gen 19:4-11 (17)

Leviticus 18:22 (123)

Leviticus 20:13 (126)

Romans 1:24-27 (1195)

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 (1214)

1 Timothy 1:9-11 (1262)

What is the real sin behind the Bible's condemnation of such behavior?

"A biblical approach to sexual morality, therefore, is not simply grounded in specific Bible passages alone. It is grounded, first, in the truth of our nature as created beings ("natural law") as that is understood in Scripture. From this standpoint, the Christian understanding of confused sexual identity is clear. Because Christianity takes our created bodies seriously, it is compelled to view it as a disorder of creation if a man or woman feels discomfort with his or her body and desires either to dress and act in the manner of the opposite sex or to "change" his or her sex by means of hormones or surgery. Ultimately, such feelings or actions are fruitless violations of our nature. Such surgery, for example, will not change the individual's chromosomal makeup, but will only mutilate the body God has given."

3. **Risky Choices: Engage in the conversation or complain from the sidelines?**

Speaking risks hearing blanket condemnations of any who disagree for any reason:

"Homophobia, bigotry, judgmental, anti-science, hate-mongers."

What is the point of such condemnations?

How can they be overcome?

What are the risks of not speaking?

How should the church and families minister to those affected?

"Pastoral care for such a person struggling with sexual identity does not begin with debates about what is or is not moral. Certainly, the Christian pastor is called to help an individual struggling with sexual identity to understand the biblical view of human sexuality and to distinguish between his or her feelings and actions based on those feelings. The rightfully persistent idea of loving the sinner even as one discourages specific sins is vital here as it is in every situation of pastoral care and moral guidance."

For further reading: <https://blogs.lcms.org/2014/ctcr-releases-paper-on-gender-identity-disorder>

Next Week: Racism and justice: what does the Bible say?