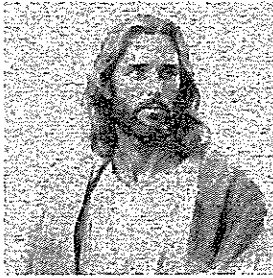


CELEBRATE:



One Body, Many Parts

CTK Believe Out Loud Education Series

Session 3: Scripture: "Traditional Moral Teaching"
and Contemporary Biblical Scholarship

Upon meeting David (not yet king) for the first time:

"The soul of Jonathan was bound to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul... Then Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul. Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that he was wearing, and gave it to David, and his armor, and even his sword and his bow and his belt."
(1 Samuel 18:1b,3-4)

King David's reaction to Jonathan's death, many years later:

"I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan;
greatly beloved were you to me;
your love to me was wonderful,
passing the love of women." (2 Sam 1:26)

- What is Scripture
 - Not strictly a history or recipe book
 - It is several authors' and communities' reflections, over thousands of years under the inspiration of the Spirit, on their relationship with and understanding of God
 - We get a glimpse of their lives and their world view, which is different in many respects for ours. But we can consider their perspective as we reflect on ours.
 - Question of Authority: the Church, Scripture, something else (what came first?)
 - One of four interrelated guides for spirituality and moral decision making: Scripture, Tradition (church teaching), reason, (and experience) (Hope 1.1) (Hope 2.2)
 - Interpretation
 - Literal
 - Historical-Critical context – theirs and ours
 - Thematic: love, justice, relationship, God is with us/"be not afraid"

Questions of theological understanding and moral decision-making

- Misuse of Scripture (e.g. rationalization of and support for slavery and racism)
- Proof texting (picking a portion of scripture and using it for justification of a belief that is not supported by that scripture within its broader context)

Specific passages that have not been understood correctly, and/or have been used to justify discrimination against LGBTQIA+ communities and individuals

- Genesis 1: *Be fruitful and multiply*: This common command to all non-sentient animals is nuanced for humankind. Were this a command for every human/couple, those who remain childless—not least Jesus and Paul—would defy God's command.

- Genesis 2: *Therefore, a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife:* It is sameness, not difference that makes Eve a suitable companion for Adam. Finding an intimate companion brings fulfillment outside of the family of birth and allows us to find wholeness and purpose in relationship.
- Genesis 19: *Sodom and Gomorrah:* The sin of Sodom and Gomorrah is ONLY referred to elsewhere in scripture as having been judged for inhospitality and unnatural desire for angelic flesh—not a sin of homosexual desire.
- Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13: *A man shall not lay with a man as with a woman:* The purity code of the Israelites set them apart from neighboring cultures. The code was an inseparable whole, with the prohibition against men lying with men as with women equal in weight to abstaining from pork, shellfish, wearing mixed fibers, sowing more than one crop in the same field, menstruating within the encampment, and nocturnal emissions. Our purity code is similarly culturally based. We still have one, but it does not include the same elements.
- Romans 1:18-32: *Filthy Gentile Practices:* Men being “consumed with passion” for each other rather than women is amongst other Gentile (Greek) practices that were against the Jewish purity code and seen as “dirty” by the Jewish Christians in the mixed community at Rome. Paul’s intent in the letter is to show both sides of the community that neither is the “better Christian,” and to instruct them on how to live as Christian Community. This section can ONLY be seen to be anti-LGB out of its context.
- 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 and 1 Timothy 1:9-10: *The list of “wrongdoers” who “will not inherit the Kingdom of God”:* “Malakoi” and “Arsenokoites”—traditionally translated to English as “homosexuals” or “sodomites,” have been mistranslated due to cultural bias. Properly translated from their common uses in the 1st century, these sexual transgressions yield “sexual exploiters” and “sexual decadents,” which could equally characterize both opposite-sex and same-sex sexual acts abused for the purpose of selfish desire and aimed at self gratification rather than mutually consensual relationships within committed relationships of love and devotion.

Reading scripture (written in Hebrew and Greek) not only requires translation, but also involves interpretation that brings our own cultural bias and baggage into our understandings of the ancient world and early church of the Old and New Testaments that were not part of their own cultural baggage. Cultural Anthropology, combined with prayer, discernment (over fifty years of it, as we discussed last week), and the faithful witness of the Spirit helps us to understand what the early church believed and meant by what has been translated over and over again (for 21 centuries) into our English Bible. For our contemporary debate over LGBTQIA2+ people, Acts 10-15, with the support of Acts 5:32, offers a compelling precedent: “We are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit.” In fact, as we discussed last week in the context of the Jerusalem Council, not all Gentile sexuality seen as countercultural to Jews (which included same-sex relationships as described in our first session) was prohibited at the Jerusalem council that welcomed them into the Christian family.

Study Questions:

- Does this presentation about scripture interpretation challenge your previous views about what the bible says about queer folks and our call to welcome them?
- How do you feel about the Episcopal Church’s return to holding scripture as the early church held it—as our sacred story rather than as inerrant historical/divine fact?
- Have you ever experienced someone using scripture, especially passages explored today, to justify hate, exclusion, racism, or homophobia? What was your reaction?

Additional Resources:

To Set Our Hope on Christ (See Appendix for full history of church process): <https://allsaints-pas.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/sethope.pdf>