

Rachel Maddow, We Don't Want to Kill the Gays

Rachel, you recently took strong exception to what has been referred to as a “kill the gays” rally, and I want to stand with you in renouncing this kind of rhetoric in the strongest possible terms, especially since this was a Christian-based rally.

To say this with absolutely clarity, it is not Christian in any shape, size, or form to provoke hatred towards gays or lesbians or, worse still, to suggest that they should be mistreated or, God forbid, executed.

It is true that there are some professing Christians who believe gays should be killed, but they are no different than the gay activists who hold up signs saying that Christians should be thrown to the lions: They are fanatics whose views do not represent the views of 99.9 percent of their communities. (I can say this when it comes to committed Christians; I hope you can say the same when it comes to gays and lesbians.)

It is also true that there are some Christian leaders who believe that Old Testament legal penalties should be enforced today, including putting homosexuals to death. But those same laws (and same leaders) call for adulterers, Sabbath-breakers, and persistently rebellious teenagers to be put to death, and you can be sure that only the tiniest minority of Christians is advocating for anything like this.

So, in order to give no place whatsoever to the dangerous rhetoric that you denounced, I feel it is important to shout from the rooftops what the vast majority of us know and understand: True followers of Jesus want to bring life, not destroy life. We want to help people, not hurt people, even if

we strongly differ with their beliefs, lifestyles or decisions.

And I, along with tens of millions of other followers of Jesus around America, denounce and renounce the views put forth at this conference by Pastor Kevin Swanson that the main reason we should not have the death penalty for homosexuals is because we need to give them time to repent.

As you might know, I am a strong and outspoken opponent of many gay activist goals, and my convictions are the direct result of my biblically based faith.

But that same faith teaches me to love my neighbor as myself (and that includes my gay neighbor), to protect the lives of all, and to recognize that each human being, however fallen and flawed (all of us are broken and fallen in more ways than one) is also created in the image of God.

That means that I can appreciate you as a gifted, fellow human being without celebrating your sexuality.

It also means that I can treat you with respect and kindness without believing that the union of two men or two women is a true marriage or that a child should be willfully deprived of a father or mother.

That means I can teach that bullying is bad without having to teach that gay is good and that can I advocate your equal protection under the law while believing that homosexual practice is sinful in God's sight.

So you might consider me an adversary, someone opposed to your freedom and equality, someone put on the watch lists of groups like the HRC and GLAAD and the SPLC (although I should tell you that their reasons for listing me would be utterly laughable if they weren't so misleading and even dangerous).

But the fact is that we are fellow citizens in this country,

free to advocate for our views and positions, free to seek to make new laws or uphold existing laws, free to vote and speak and agree or disagree—even to disagree deeply and intensely—without demonizing or dehumanizing each other in the process.

So, in light of the extreme rhetoric of that rally, I felt it was important to remind you of what's happening in the world that most of us live in. That rhetoric does not represent us in the least.

It's also important that you recognize that the presidential candidates who attended this rally (Bobby Jindal, Mike Huckabee and Ted Cruz) were there to identify with the cause of religious liberty, and they too would categorically reject some of the words spoken at the conference (as well as reject some of the positions advocated by at least one of the speakers outside of the conference).

I also feel confident that, had they known in advance what Kevin Swanson, the conference's chief organizer, planned to say, they would not have attended the rally.

Rachel, as a conservative moral leader, I've sat at behind the scenes meetings of groups like Focus on the Family or the Family Research Council, and I never heard one hostile word spoken about gays or lesbians, let alone a word calling for violence or execution. Perish the thought!

That's because those things violate the very spirit of our faith, and, as I stated earlier, it is that faith that informs us and guides us, a faith that clings tightly to the words and example of Jesus.

To give you a case in point, in 2012, a small group of gay protesters showed up at my home church on a Sunday morning.

We knew they were coming and greeted them with refreshments, inviting them to join us inside the building, but they left

after 15 minutes, saying we were too nice to deserve a protest.

The next day, the leader of the group called my radio show to apologize, saying that he and his group met the love of God at our church.

I forgave him, of course, but I also told him that I didn't feel he owed me an apology and that he was simply acting on his convictions.

The real question, I suggested, was how we could both hold to our very different beliefs and worldviews and yet be neighbors in the same city, a sentiment he agreed with. This led to us having dinner together to talk about these issues in greater depth, and the dinner was both cordial and fruitful.

So, to come full circle, yes, I do believe that homosexual practice is sinful and that, despite the Supreme Court's decision, the union of two men or two women is not marriage, based on which you might consider me to be primitive, bigoted, homophobic and hateful.

But I trust you understand that I do not wish you harm any more than you wish me harm, and both of us need to shout this out for the world to hear so that the extremists on all sides will be exposed.