

Why the Supreme Court and Same-Sex Marriage Issue Matters for the Church

The Supreme Court announced last week that they are taking cases on whether same-sex marriage is a constitutional right. Effectively, this means that the highest court in the land will decide, this year, whether marriage, as defined for thousands of years, will exist in our country any longer. Here's what we should keep in mind:

First of all, this is not something we should shrug off. Marriage isn't merely a matter of personal import or private behavior. States recognize marriage for a reason, and that reason is that sexuality between a man and a woman can, and often does, result in children. The state has an interest in seeing to it that, wherever possible, every child has both a mother and a father.

The state doesn't create this reality. It merely recognizes it, and attempts to hold husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, accountable to their vows and to their responsibilities. In every aspect of the Sexual Revolution, from the divorce culture to cohabitation to casual sex to the abortion revolution, children have borne the burden.

If the Court finds a constitutional right to same-sex marriage, we will have a generation of confusion about what marriage is, and why it matters. Beyond that, we have already seen that the Sexual Revolution isn't content to move forward into bedrooms and dinner tables. The Sexual Revolution wants to silence dissent. The religious liberty concerns we are grappling with already will only accelerate.

We should pray that the Supreme Court does not take upon itself a power it doesn't have: to redefine an institution

that wasn't created by government in the first place. But we shouldn't wring our hands in fear, or clench our fists in outrage.

The worst-case scenario is that the Court hands down a Roe v. Wade style redefinition of marriage. Marriage in the minds of the public will change, but marriage as a creation reality won't change at all. Jesus has taught us that marriage is essentially male and female, and that such is grounded not in government fiat but in God's creation (Matt. 19:4; Mk. 10:6).

The Sexual Revolution, with or without the Supreme Court, cannot keep its promises. People will be disappointed, and, ultimately, in search of something more permanent, more ancient. We must be the people who can preserve the light to the old paths.

This will mean articulating a Christian vision of marriage. We will be forced to spell out things we could previously assume. That's not a new situation. The New Testament epistles had to do the same thing, for the people of God within a sexually-lost Roman Empire. In the past, we've assumed that most people aspire to the same sorts of marriages and families we aspire to. We can no longer assume that. We must spell out why marriage matters, in light of who we are as men and women and in light of the gospel mystery of Christ and his church (Eph. 5).

Moreover, we must embody a Christian vision of marriage and sexuality. This will mean churches that reclaim marriage from the ambient culture in the seriousness with which we perform weddings and in the accountability local churches expect from couples to keep their vows. The undisciplined churches of the past generation acted as though the culture could keep marriages together, with just some preaching and encouragement from us.

This led to the chaos we too often see in our own pews, with

marital abandonment, unbiblical divorce, and more. Outsourcing marital expectations to the culture will now mean that our marriages preach a different gospel, one that upends the cosmic mystery of Christ. We cannot afford to dispense with the gospel.

Marriage is resilient. God created it to be so. The Supreme Court could make a decision that hurts a lot of people. I pray not. But if they do, let's be a church that can carry the gospel to hurting people. Let's articulate and embody a Christian vision of marriage. If we're out of step with the culture, we should ask why we haven't been so all along.

The Supreme Court may or may not do its job. We must make sure, no matter what, that we do ours.

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