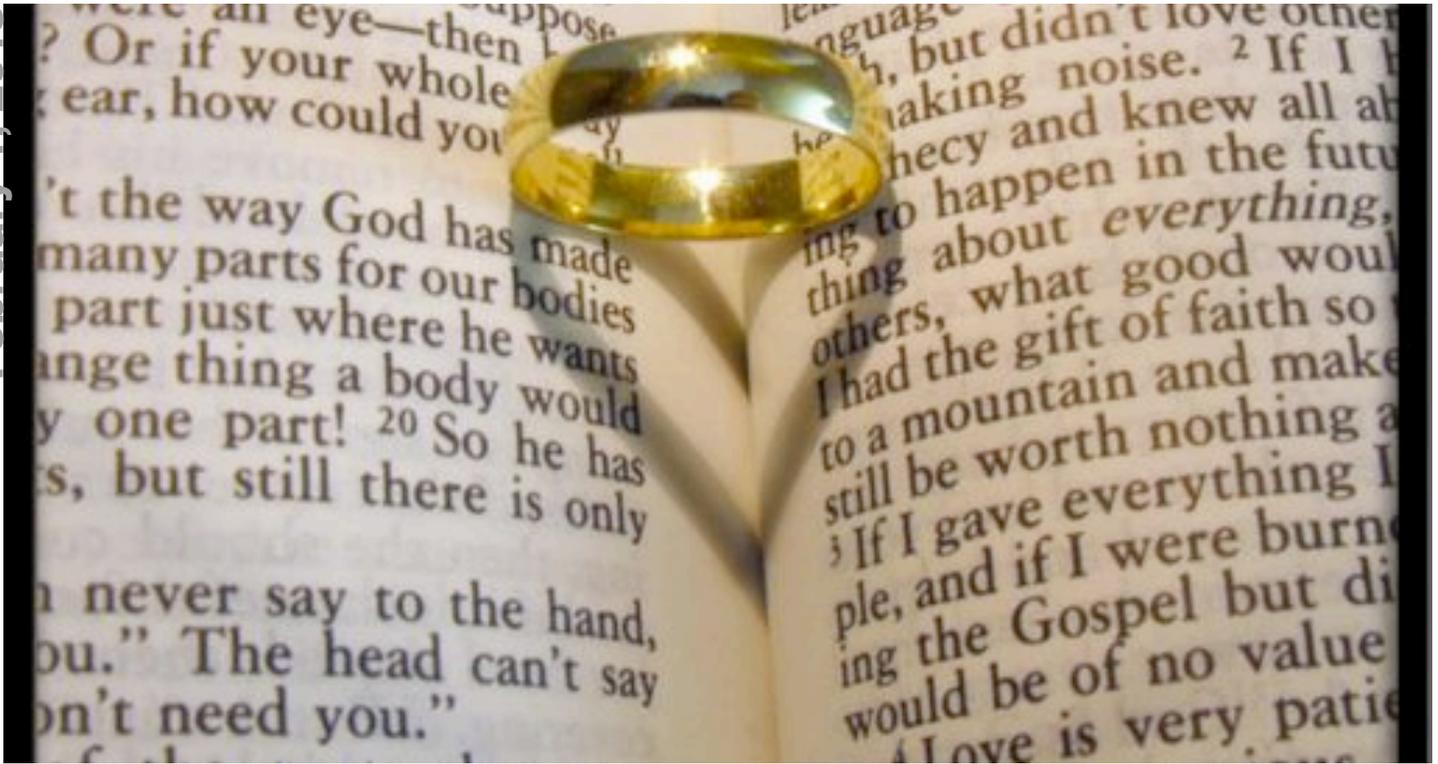


IMMANUEL MONTHLY

February 1, 2013



From Pastor's Desk Same-Sex Marriage: What's At Stake?

By Rev. Jason M. Braaten

“He who created them from the beginning made them male and female and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’” (Matthew 19:4–6).

Two thousand years ago, Jesus of Nazareth based an argument about marriage on a single observation of the natural order: Humans are male and female. No particular religious conviction is necessary, though, to recognize what nature has clearly dictated: long-term unions of a man and a woman begin the families that form societies.

Marriage Is Not Defined But Described

Marriage is not invented by man, but is rooted in nature. It is a fixed feature of the natural order. Marriage is a natural (rooted in nature), long-term pairing between a man and a woman that is

protected, privileged, and celebrated by culture because of the unique and vital role it plays in civilization: As a group, as a rule, and by nature, marriage relationships produce the next generation.

This description has dictated the structure of every civilization from the beginning of time. Husband/wife marriage starts a family, and families are the building blocks of society. To change the definition of marriage then is also to change the definition of family, of what a parent is and what a child is. In other words, changing the definition of marriage from that which is rooted in nature to something else, also and necessarily changes the definition of what a parent is. So that, parentage is no longer defined by nature, by biology, but by something else.

Marriage Licenses Don't Create Marriages

Marriage comes before marriage licenses (before culture's formal recognition) and would still exist without them. Marriage as a legal institution simply "maps over" the natural institution already there from the beginning. Governments don't create marriages, so governments can't ultimately redefine them. They can only damage them by interfering with their course instead of cooperating with their natural purpose.

Same-sex marriage seeks to redefine something that it can't ultimately alter: the natural order and biology. Since this order is fundamental to civilization, tampering with it invites trouble, for anything that comprises family comprises culture.

Ultimately, same-sex marriage is an aggressive act of social engineering casting aside, by legal fiat, the natural and singular role that heterosexual unions perform in civilization. By equating same-sex unions with heterosexual unions, it changes culture at its core because it replaces what is rooted in nature, in biology, with something else. Same-sex marriage is not about civil rights. It's about validation and social approval. It's an attempt at social engineering using government muscle to strong-arm people into accommodating a lifestyle that is contrary to nature and, thus, socially destructive. The redefinition of marriage is a redefinition of parentage. The relationship between parent and child is no longer defined by biology but by the state. And that has far-reaching consequences for all of society.

Life in Two Kingdoms

As members of the Church, we live in two kingdoms: the left-hand kingdom of the state and government and the right-hand kingdom of the Church. The left-hand kingdom is governed by God through law and order, the laws of nature and of nature's God. The right-hand kingdom is governed by God through the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the forgiveness of sins. God rules in both kingdoms.

Thus, when speaking to the state in the public square, we argue for policy that is rooted in nature. Subversion of this natural order in society as destructive as it can be does not mean, however, that

all is lost. God rules in both kingdoms. He always seeks to bring back into order what we, as fallen creatures, have subverted. Chaos will not win the day.

On top of this, the Gospel of the forgiveness of sins in Word and Sacrament brings fallen man back into a rightly ordered relationship with nature and nature's God. So we don't despair. We don't give up hope. For Jesus is our hope, and where He rules nothing is lost and all is redeemed. So, we speak the truth in love. We bear witness to what is rooted in nature, while at the same time, rest on God's promises that He will never leave us or forsake us. For He rules all things. He does all things well. And He will bring it to completion in His time for our good.

From the President

Why Should the Average Lutheran Kid Go to Church?

By Rev. Matthew C. Harrison

(A Letter to My Two Teenage Boys)

Okay, guys. I've never told you that "you are the future of the Church." And I never will. The Bible says the Church is "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone" (Eph. 2:20). Jesus is the future of the Church. Jesus is "the same yesterday, today and forever" (Heb. 13:8). Jesus has a future, and so every person connected to Jesus has a future.

That's why, more than anything else, your mom and I want you connected with Jesus. That's why I baptized each of you. That's why we read all the Bible stories to you as toddlers. That's why we have a time of devotion when we can actually eat together. That's why we've prayed for you from day one. That's why we sent you to a Lutheran grade school. That's why we made sure you knew the catechism. That's why we always go to church. And that's why we are LCMS Lutherans. The LCMS is simply the best thing going because for orthodox Lutherans, it's all about Jesus--all about being connected to Jesus.

The Church has a profound responsibility to pay attention to young people. The Bible teaches that all over the place. Today, the Missouri Synod has just less than half the high-school-age young people that it had when I graduated from Sioux City, East High in 1980. Why? Mainly because we've just followed the national trend of European-descent Americans who are having fewer children.

In any case, as LCMS young people, you are a precious commodity, indeed! But don't let that go to your heads. The Bible teaches that young people are

very much prone to particular and serious sins. "Remember not the sins of my youth" (Ps. 25:7). And I hardly have to tell you what they are. Luther said the sins of youth tend to be sexual, while the sins of old age are greed. All sin condemns. "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). I've never pulled any punches in teaching you what the Bible says about sin. We deserve hell, pure and simple. "But the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 6:23). And so we've always spoken forgiveness at home to each other. We're sinners. We are forgiven sinners. And so we sinners forgive others who sin against us. We are Gospel people to those around us. Christianity is not about ethics. It's about Jesus.

The Sunday liturgy shows you why we go to church. Luther said we are beggars who stand before God with an empty sack. What happens in the liturgy? The pastor starts us off in the Name of the Triune God. God's there to do His stuff! Then in the confession of sins, "I, a poor miserable sinner . . ." we say, "Dear God, I've got an empty sack!" If you don't think you're a sinner, if you don't think your bag's empty, you'll never understand why we go to church. "In the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you all your sins," says the pastor. He drops a load of forgiveness, grace and



mercy into your bag. And you say, "Amen! Yup! It's in my bag!" Then the Scriptures are read, and more grace and Gospel and mercy is dropped in. Then the sermon is preached, and you are told that you are damned by the Law, but that Jesus comes only for sinners. Hooray! "I came not for the righteous but the unrighteous!" (Mark 2:17). And at the end of the sermon, you say (and don't leave this to the pastor), "Amen! Got 'er in the bag!" Then you kneel at the altar to receive the body and blood of Jesus. "Take and eat, Christ's body and blood for you, for the forgiveness of all your sins." And you say again, "Amen! It's in my bag!" This continues right through the Aaronic blessing: "The Lord bless you and keep you, make His face shine upon you, and give you peace." Amen! Amen! Amen! It's in the bag. I've got it tied up and hoisted on my shoulder as I head out of church.

Now, how shall I live with that big bag of forgiveness, grace and mercy? When my dad sins against me, what do I do? I open my bag and say, "Here, Dad, you misunderstood me and thought ill of me, but I forgive you 'cause I've been forgiven." Then that teacher at school drives you crazy, and you open your bag again. Then that awful bully harasses and embarrasses you, and when your

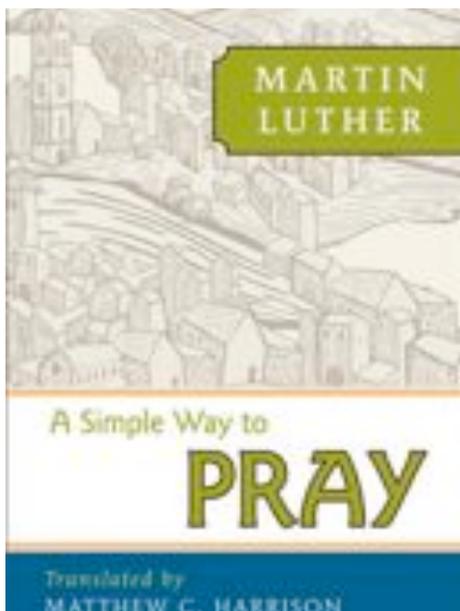
emotions calm, you open your bag of grace and pray, "Forgive him, Lord. He doesn't know what he's doing. And he's hurting inside big time." Then you run into a friend who's really in need because her home life is chaos, and you show her love and compassion like Jesus. In fact, the mercy of Jesus is the greatest compelling factor for you to live a meaningful life of service and love to others.

This happens all week long. Then comes Sunday morning, and you find yourself in church again confessing, "Dear God, I've got an empty sack."

Honestly, boys, I'm frightened for you. This world is an absolute mess. But I'm also confident. Jesus grabbed you at the font, and He won't let go. "No one can snatch them out of My hand" (John 10:28). I'm proud of how you've grown. I'm proud of how you've stood the test. I'm proud of how you've kindly witnessed to Jesus in your young lives. And I'm absolutely sure the Church has a future because Jesus has a future, and He's made you His very own for eternity. "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give you the crown of life" (Rev. 2:10).

Dad

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The Book of the Month A Simple Way to Pray

When asked by his barber and good friend, Peter Beskendorf, for some practical guidance on how to prepare oneself for prayer, Martin Luther responded by writing this brief treatise first published in 1535. *A Simple Way to Pray* is a fresh modern translation bringing us Luther's practical instruction, using Luther's I.T.C.P. (Instruction, Thanksgiving, Confession, Prayer) method of prayer.

This method anchors prayer in the catechism or other biblical texts, but allows the Holy Spirit to prompt thoughts via the Word, which may be chased more freely by the mind at prayer.

Facts and Figures; Dates and Times

Greeters List

3 Feb Jim Dyer – East
 Joan Vukelich – West
 10 Feb Laverl Byers – East
 Ruth Sims – West
 17 Feb Tim & Teri Pollock – East
 Harold & Irene Wattjes – West
 24 Feb Donna & Gunnar Campbell – East
 Jim Dyer – West

Coffee Committee

Feb Harold & Irene Wattjes
 Mar Laverl Byers

Altar Committee

3 Feb Judy Legg
 10 Feb Judy Legg
 13 Feb Lauren Braaten
 17 Feb Lauren Braaten
 24 Feb Lauren Braaten
 3 Mar Donna Campbell
 10 Mar Donna Campbell
 17 Mar Theresa Fields
 24 Mar Theresa Fields

Elder On Duty – Communion

3 Feb Steve Hilgendorf
 10 Feb Josh Whitson
 13 Feb Jack Appleby
 17 Feb Geof Danielson
 24 Feb Geof Danielson
 3 Mar Geof Danielson
 10 Mar Steve Hilgendorf
 17 Mar Josh Whitson
 24 Mar Josh Whitson

ATTENDANCE			OFFERINGS		
Date	Saturday	Sunday	General	Missions	Building
1/6	14	77	\$13,245.37	\$720.00	\$0.00
1/13	16	59	\$1,832.50	\$0.00	\$0.00
1/20	16	75	\$2,106.25	\$0.00	\$220.00
1/27	29	65	\$2,957.00	\$10.00	\$0.00
Subtotal	75	276	\$20,141.12	\$730.00	\$220.00
Total	351		\$20,141.12	\$730.00	\$220.00

February 2013 Church Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday																																																																																																															
<p>3</p> <p>9:00 AM Divine Service/Communion 10:30 AM Bible Study & Sunday School 11:30 AM - 1:30 PM Catechism Catechism Recitation Day</p>	<p>Jan 2013</p> <table border="1"> <tr><td>S</td><td>M</td><td>T</td><td>W</td><td>T</td><td>F</td><td>S</td></tr> <tr><td>4</td><td>7</td><td>8</td><td>9</td><td>10</td><td>11</td><td>12</td></tr> <tr><td>13</td><td>14</td><td>15</td><td>16</td><td>17</td><td>18</td><td>19</td></tr> <tr><td>20</td><td>21</td><td>22</td><td>23</td><td>24</td><td>25</td><td>26</td></tr> <tr><td>27</td><td>28</td><td>29</td><td>30</td><td>31</td><td></td><td></td></tr> </table> <p>7:30 AM Maths 8:00 AM Staff Meeting 6:00 PM Elders Meeting Carin Mumson Dian Czerniewska Mollie Kreyen</p>	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	4	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31			<p>Feb 2013</p> <table border="1"> <tr><td>S</td><td>M</td><td>T</td><td>W</td><td>T</td><td>F</td><td>S</td></tr> <tr><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td><td>8</td><td>9</td><td>10</td><td>11</td></tr> <tr><td>12</td><td>13</td><td>14</td><td>15</td><td>16</td><td>17</td><td>18</td></tr> <tr><td>19</td><td>20</td><td>21</td><td>22</td><td>23</td><td>24</td><td>25</td></tr> <tr><td>26</td><td>27</td><td>28</td><td>29</td><td>30</td><td></td><td></td></tr> </table> <p>7:30 AM Maths 8:00 AM Staff Meeting</p>	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30			<p>Mar 2013</p> <table border="1"> <tr><td>S</td><td>M</td><td>T</td><td>W</td><td>T</td><td>F</td><td>S</td></tr> <tr><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td></tr> <tr><td>8</td><td>9</td><td>10</td><td>11</td><td>12</td><td>13</td><td>14</td></tr> <tr><td>15</td><td>16</td><td>17</td><td>18</td><td>19</td><td>20</td><td>21</td></tr> <tr><td>22</td><td>23</td><td>24</td><td>25</td><td>26</td><td>27</td><td>28</td></tr> <tr><td>29</td><td>30</td><td>31</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> </table> <p>7:30 AM Maths Claudia Rubin Travis Rubin</p>	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31					<p>1</p> <p>Donna Campbell Pastor's Day Off</p>	<p>2</p> <p>5:30 PM Divine Service/Communion Matt Pangburn</p>
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<p>10</p> <p>9:00 AM Divine Service/Communion 10:30 AM Bible Study & Sunday School 11:00 AM - 1:30 PM Catechism Children's Service Day</p>	<p>7:30 AM Maths 5:00 PM Missions Meeting 8:00 AM Staff Meeting</p>	<p>7:30 AM Maths 8:00 AM Staff Meeting 11:00 AM Circuit Pastor's Conference</p>	<p>7:30 AM Maths Zachary Davidson Darrell Ford</p>	<p>7:30 AM Maths 8:00 AM Staff Meeting Jerome & Alice Johnson</p>	<p>8</p> <p>Alison Pangburn Pastor's Day Off</p>	<p>9</p> <p>5:30 PM Divine Service/Communion</p>																																																																																																															
<p>17</p> <p>Catechism Recitation Day</p>	<p>7:30 AM Maths 8:00 AM Staff Meeting 6:00 PM Education Meeting Alberta Dallas</p>	<p>7:30 AM Maths 8:00 AM Staff Meeting Laurel & Coburn Speers Mary Jane Jones</p>	<p>7:30 AM Maths Hayden Ely Mark Ashwell</p>	<p>7:30 AM Maths 8:00 AM Staff Meeting Jerome & Alice Johnson</p>	<p>15</p> <p>Darla Gardner Richard Sommer Tim Probst Pastor's Day Off</p>	<p>16</p> <p>5:30 PM Divine Service/Communion</p>																																																																																																															
<p>24</p> <p>9:00 AM Divine Service/Communion 10:30 AM Bible Study & Sunday School 11:30 AM - 1:30 PM Catechism 7:00 PM Youth Group Tim Brand Alexis Doble</p>	<p>7:30 AM Maths 8:00 AM Staff Meeting Sandra Rich Ronda Ponder</p>	<p>7:30 AM Maths 8:00 AM Staff Meeting 7:00 PM L.W.M.L. Gregory Nau</p>	<p>7:30 AM Maths T.A.M.A. Meeting Soreyer Vogel</p>	<p>7:30 AM Maths 8:00 AM Staff Meeting Bryce Rothrock Byron Joergens Leigh Ann Whitson</p>	<p>22</p> <p>Pastor's Day Off</p>	<p>23</p> <p>5:30 PM Divine Service/Communion Candy Crawford</p>																																																																																																															

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Immanuel's stained glass window in the Narthex.

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