

## How to think about the Supreme Court ruling and the future (John 14:1)

Preached by Pastor Phil Layton after 6/26/15 Supreme Court's redefinition of marriage in U.S. Gold Country Baptist Church ([www.goldcountrybaptist.org](http://www.goldcountrybaptist.org))

A survey conducted by Barna Research the weekend of 6/26-28 found 93% of evangelicals are troubled about the future of religious freedom after the recent Supreme Court decision declaring same-sex marriage a right similar to civil rights.<sup>1</sup> This weekend we come to church and the next text before us in our study through John says '*Let not your hearts be troubled. Trust in God...*' 9 days ago we heard the announcement: the U.S. Supreme Court redefined marriage to no longer be the union of a man and woman, and at the same time they rejected the will of voters in many States<sup>2</sup> and required all to recognize the will of 5 unelected judges instead. The reactions range from celebrate to hate. Some think 'so what?' Others think 'the sky is falling!' How should Christians respond? How will we? This message is for us whose authority is Christ and His Word which says '*Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me*' (Jn 14:1).

Those timeless words speak to our times and faith, for many hearts troubled at a variety of levels:

- this means trouble for Christianity on several different fronts, and that's not the alarmist opinion of a fringe fundamentalist backwoods Bible-thumping Baptist preacher in the mountains (or the foothills)
- the Solicitor General of the U.S. representing our government said, in the court case, this ruling 'is going to be an issue' (his words) for religious organizations whose policies limit marriage to 1 man and 1 woman<sup>3</sup>
- 4 of the 9 Supreme Court justices are very troubled in dissent, and they know something about laws of the land. The U.S. Chief Justice said of the 6/26 verdict 'Today's decision ...creates serious questions about religious liberty...spelled out in the Constitution ...The First Amendment...freedom to "exercise" religion. Ominously, that is not a word the majority uses ... [he then points out the decision by the 5 justices allows free speech to *teach* or *advocate* a religious view on marriage, but it doesn't address free *exercise* of that religious belief in the workplace or even in Christian organizations. He writes] Hard questions arise when people of faith exercise religion in ways that may be seen to conflict with the new right to same-sex marriage ... Indeed, the Solicitor General candidly acknowledged that the tax exemptions of some religious institutions would be in question if they opposed...'
- Supreme Court Justice Alito wrote separately: 'The decision will also have other important consequences. It will be used to vilify Americans who are unwilling to assent ... those who cling to old beliefs will be able to whisper their thoughts in the recesses of their homes, but if they repeat those views in public, they will risk being labeled as bigots and treated as such by governments, employers...'
- Justice Thomas said this verdict poses 'ruinous consequences for religious liberty' [that's the Supreme Court not some guys on FOX News]<sup>4</sup>
- the same weekend an article in TIME said it's time to remove tax-exempt statuses of all churches, many wouldn't make it financially after that and the author knows and means to close most non-profits<sup>5</sup>
- if they can't shut up faithful pastors or churches, many LGBT activists want to shut us down, using anti-discrimination's financial penalization for any who won't back down

- Christian business owners who don't want to celebrate same-sex weddings are in some cases already forced out of business by this, but the target of radical activists can now aim higher than florists or photographers. This agenda isn't satisfied to have their wedding cake and eat it too; they want to shut down those who don't want to be a part of the party. And the target has become larger now: Christian schools, organizations, institutions not in step. They can aim with new ammo given by the Solicitor General, and the political-correctness pistols are already loading if you have ears to hear

They've already shot down or shut down adoption agencies adopting only to moms and dads. People have lost jobs from a Mozilla CEO to an Atlanta fire chief, not for actual discrimination on the job, but for supporting biblical marriage outside it. This court decision isn't the end, it's the beginning. Do the words of Jesus still apply in troubled times like this? *Let not your hearts be troubled*, He says in Jn 14:1, *Trust in God*. But how do we keep trusting in God when:

- We're troubled about the next generation growing up in this world?
- I wonder what this means in the future for my kids, me as a pastor?
- What this will do for the church, not just ours, the church in the U.S.?
- What the future holds for ministries, and men and women we care about, and men and women caught up in this movement or confused by it, or confused by their own sexual identity and how we care for them.
- We need to recognize some have troubled hearts because they know and love people in this lifestyle and struggle to know how to relate to them and respond to this ruling, some in the lifestyle are troubled and conflicted in their hearts and need Christians showing them love
- How we act or speak can turn them away or we lovingly may turn some back
- Some of you are troubled about other things in your life unrelated to this; finances, the future, family situations, physical health concerns. This just adds to the instability and uncertainty of what the future is.
- Our hearts can be troubled by many things as we're not sure where it all is going, wondering about the future and worrying about it. Jesus said in Jn 14:1 to disciples who didn't know where He was going, or how it all was going to end, He said in the context of their instability and uncertainty about the future these words that apply to our times

Jesus said *let not your heart be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me*. Now isn't a time to run around like Chicken Little with his head cut off. It's not time to turn tail and run off. Now's the time to trust God and rise up. It's not the end of marriage as we know it. It may mean a change in Christianity as we know it, but not all for the bad. I believe God and believe Christ also has good in it for the church, clarifying false Christianity, purifying the true church, and magnifying the worth of Jesus above worldly popularity. It will break up some liberal groups, shake up conservatives, wake up the middle. It's not a goal of this text or this sermon to focus on same-sex marriage, my earlier message 'Gay Marriage and the Gospel' you can listen to for that<sup>6</sup>

Today's focus won't be sin of others, but us not sinning in response. Politics aren't my concern, the people of God are. My concern is for Christians who are more on Facebook than they are in God's Book. We need to listen more to Christ than conservative voices in the media who can actually make our hearts *more* troubled. John 14:1 is a distinctly Christian response: *Let not your hearts be troubled*. How are we to react to decisions undermining our very faith?

How are we to act in days like ours before a watching world? Jesus gives us 3 answers in our next text that spoke to 1st century troubles and speak to 21st century troubles as well

- 1. Let not your hearts be troubled**
- 2. Keep trusting in God**
- 3. Keep trusting in Christ and His gospel**

As we teach through the Bible passage-by-passage and verse-by-verse, each week or often someone tells me how timely that particular message was to a situation they were going through, usually that I didn't know about, but God did. The power of expository preaching is that in ways beyond what I could plan, seeking to faithfully teach each passage and apply it to our world often powerfully intersects with what's going on in our lives. Last week we ended chapter 13, this week the next verse could not be more timely for our times.

Jn 14:1: *Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me.*

One commentator translates it as 'Do not let your hearts be overcome with turmoil' or 'Don't allow yourself to be intimidated by the situation.'<sup>7</sup> The word for troubled can have the idea of being agitated, greatly disturbed, or stirred up like water, or shaken up like the disciples were when they saw Jesus walking on water during a storm, terrifying trouble gripped them until He said '*Take courage. It is I, fear not.*' We sang earlier that God 'plants His footsteps on the sea and rides upon the storm. You fearful saints, fresh courage take...' Jesus is sovereign over the storm and He is with us in it. John 14:27 says *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.* The words of Jesus have power to calm troubled seas and troubled hearts. James Boice considers the theme of this whole section (John 13-17) to be this: Peace in the Storm.

### **1. Let not your hearts be troubled**

And if you want to take notes, application for point #1 will be this: Let not your hearts be troubled. If you didn't get all that, just copy first part of v. 1. It isn't hard to see what this is saying but let's see their context then apply it

In the context of Jn 14 the original hearers had just heard an announcement that in some ways rocked their world more than anything we've heard: the news wasn't about the end of marriage as they knew it, it was the end of the Messiah's life. The announcement was that He would go, betrayed by one among them and even Peter the strongest representative would deny Him.

Like the recent news we heard, it should *not* have been surprising to those who listened to what was being said leading to this, but it was saddening as everything they knew was about to change. Their hearts were troubled in different ways than ours may be, but this principle and passage applies to any troubled heart. We speak of Judeo-Christian values America has known for hundreds of years, and how unraveling of our long-cherished beliefs is troubling to us. But keep in mind the Judaic value of Messiah's government as a comfortable kingdom of peace was cherished belief in Israel longer, for hundreds more years this was a central belief in Israel, but an announcement in the upper room from their highest authority seems to have changed it all.

It was a biblically-based belief from their Law and Prophets: the Christ will reign in peace. Isaiah even pictured it in marriage terms of bride and groom, but now the disciples of the early church hear that perfect picture isn't to be, first He must go. This turned upside-down everything they hoped for their nation and families and instead of the comfortable kingdom they're hoping for, Christ tells them persecution is going to increase for them, Jn 15:19-21. He tells them there not to think they're greater than Jesus, if they persecuted Him, they'll persecute you (these verses will make more sense to us soon). Jn 16:2 promised some original hearers to be forced out of Jewish churches or synagogues.

16:33: *I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.*

When we're in tribulation--and all of us will be in the future in some way, if not for our faith, just the physical realities of the world include tribulation—when we're in tribulation, the way to not be troubled in heart is to take heart in the Lord who overcomes the world. The way to have peace in a troubling time is by trusting in God and trusting also in His Son, the Prince of Peace.

That takes us to **Point #2. Keep trusting in God (14:1b 'Believe in God')**

Ps 9:9 says *'The LORD is a refuge...a stronghold in times of trouble'* (NIV). Ps 46:1 says God is a mighty fortress and *'a very present help in trouble.'* To trust and obey we must trust and pray as David did for a troubled heart: *The troubles of my heart have multiplied; free me from my anguish (25:17)*

Jesus practiced what He preached here; when trouble arose within Him, He kept on trusting in God His Father. Look back at chapter 12, as Jesus thinks about the suffering to come: <sup>27</sup> *"Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. <sup>28</sup> Father, glorify your name."* That's the pattern Jesus practiced before He preaches to us in Jn 14:1 to stop being troubled inwardly, and to keep trusting in God the Father. It's by recognizing He sovereignly brought us to our hour of trouble for a purpose. It's by praying for His glory in it. It isn't begging for God to save us from the soul-troubling hour we've come to, it's praying to God the Father to glorify His name in us in this dark hour

**2 things to trust: God is sovereign over this, God has spoken about this**

In the context of chapter 13, it says all things are from the Father's hand (v. 3) who sovereignly decreed even the sin of Judas and Peter, even to the very moment the 3<sup>rd</sup> denial would be (right before the rooster crowed). Jesus was about to go before the Jewish supreme court that night and they would make a majority decision in violation of God's law about Jesus and what He said, but God the Father was sovereign over even their evil supreme court verdict

God wasn't surprised or shaken by June 26<sup>th</sup> so neither should our hearts be. He's not pacing, wringing His hands or calling emergency strategy sessions. The supreme court's word isn't the last word, God's Word says: *'the word of the king is supreme, and who may say to him, "What are you doing?"'* (Ecc 8:4). The King of heaven is the Supreme Judge and Authority and His Law is higher than man's. Not matter what 5 justices said we cannot accept or adhere to any legal, political or cultural redefinition of marriage as a church, nor will we conduct or endorse same-sex ceremonies.

6/26 doesn't change marriage in God's eyes any more than 1857 Dred-Scott ruling changed the status of African Americans in God's eyes, or any more than a 1973 Roe v. Wade ruling changed the status of unborn lives in God's eyes. God is the Creator of life in the womb and the color of skin and the covenant of marriage and man saying differently than his Creator-God can't change reality. Truth doesn't evolve. The Supreme Court invented a right to same-sex marriage not in the constitution much like the right to abortion and right to slavery in the past. The court has been wrong on blacks or babies in the womb but God's court is always right.

Daniel 7 says there is a higher court that will sit in judgment. 5 justices can form counsel, but Prov. 21:30 says '*no counsel can avail against the LORD.*' It's been well-said: 'No human court has the authority to redefine marriage, and the verdict...does not change the God ordained reality of marriage. God was not defeated in this ruling, and every marriage will be judged according to biblical grounds on the last day. Nothing will prevail against him'<sup>8</sup>

God already gave His judgment on what marriage is and doesn't appreciate efforts to annul it. He asks in Job 40:8: *Will you really annul my judgment?*

Ps 2 NKJV: '*... rulers take counsel together, Against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying, "Let us break Their bonds in pieces And cast away Their cords from us." ... [in other words throw off every restraint of God, every shackle of tradition binding us. Heaven's court responds]...you **judges of the earth.** [God tells judges to honor His Son] *Serve the LORD with fear ...with trembling...lest He be angry and you perish in the way, When His wrath is kindled...Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him.* (NAS *Take warning, O judges of the earth. Worship the Lord with reverence.*).*

God warns judges of the earth to fear, to revere Him, to tremble before Him, to trust Him. Judges and rulers must honor the Son, give Him homage, give affection, else He will give you His anger, His wrath, and you will perish. You can read Ps 2 later to see God is not shaken from His throne by events on earth but He does promise wrath on those who try to usurp it. Supreme Court Justice Scalia warned his fellow judges 'pride, we know, goes before a fall ... we move one step closer to being reminded of our impotence.'<sup>9</sup>

After 6000+ years of human marriage between man and woman as God invented and instituted it, to those who re-invent the institution of marriage, the words of Neh 6:8-9 apply '*No such things as you say have been done, for you are inventing them out of your own mind.*' *For they all wanted to frighten us ... But now, O God, strengthen my hands.*' Legal same-sex marriage is a 21<sup>st</sup> century invention and its inventors want to frighten the church but *God, strengthen our hands.* Neh 4:14 said in context of Israel's rebuilding: '*Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your...sons...daughters...wives, and your homes.*'

We trust God is sovereign over this as we sang, His 'never-failing skill  
fashions all His bright designs, And works His sovereign will ...  
O fearful saints, new courage take ... trust Him for His grace  
Behind a frowning providence, He hides a smiling face  
So God we trust in You, O God we trust in You  
When tears are great, And comforts few  
We hope in mercies ever new...'<sup>10</sup>

We trust God is sovereign in this and also **trust God has spoken about this**

In Gen 1 God made man in His own image, He created 1 male and 1 female and His first recorded words to them call them to *procreate*, to multiply and fill the earth with God's image that's passed on to children from every mom and dad since Adam and Eve. In Gen 2 God designed marriage to meet man in his need for someone different, suitable, to help and to complete the man. On both points, same-sex unions fail marriage's basic definition and design. Gen 2 defined it '*a man...joined to his wife, the two become one flesh.*' It's a covenant in the Hebrew terms for joining: 1 man, 1 woman, 1 flesh for life.

Jesus agreed and affirmed that understanding as what God joined together, and warned no man to put asunder (Mt 19). It should grieve us if marriage is put asunder, whether by divorce or by deciding to rip apart its meaning in God's Word, rewrite the institution and remove the Designer's instructions.

Gen 1-2 is clear and so is Gen 3 that sin corrupts man and woman and their desires to go outside the bounds of marriage as God intended it for our good (3:16). In the next chapter there's a man with 2 wives, Genesis has adultery, incest, homosexuality. Those aren't new sins, and all sexual sins that violate God's plan for marriage are serious; pornography today, emotional affairs. It says in Romans 1 homosexual relations are part of a process of God giving sinners over to what they want as cultures suppress the truth of God for a lie and exchange God's ways for man's and trade worshipping the Creator with the worship of creation or man's own creation. Immorality's root is idolatry.

Acts 7:41 says OT Israel '*made an idol in the form of a calf. They...held a celebration in honor of what their hands had made.*' America made an idol in the form of sexual expression and now that they've re-created marriage in their own image, they hold celebrations, as Rom 1:32 says, hearty approval. Proverbs 2 warns against those '*who leave the straight paths to walk in dark ways...and rejoice in the perverseness of evil*' (v. 13-14 NIV). Rejoicing in iniquity or unrighteousness is something love doesn't do, as 1 Cor 13:6 says

Christians must not hate, but neither can we celebrate sexual sin God hates. It's true other sins like pride and lying are also called abominations, but we don't want to make any sinful struggle a cause for celebration, like the White House did in color as Obama proclaimed 'victory for gay and lesbian couples...a victory for their children' and he called it an answer to prayers.<sup>11</sup>

Isa 5:20 says '*Woe to those who call evil good and good evil,*' it's reversing what God has called sin and rejoicing in it as good, and we who agree with God in Gen 1-2 on what's good in marriage, we are called evil now (bigots). Hab 1:4: '*the wicked surround the righteous; Therefore perverse judgment proceeds*' (NKJV). The righteous have been surrounded and outnumbered by the wicked, and that's why, the prophet says, perverse judgments proceed. Isaiah prophesied '*The earth is also defiled under its inhabitants, Because they have transgressed the laws, Changed the ordinance...*' (24:7 NKJV). Jesus said 2<sup>nd</sup> coming judgment is like when Lot left Sodom (Lk 17:28-33), and Jude also makes the connection: '*just as Sodom and Gomorrah...which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.*' (Jude 7 ESV)

## But there's 1 more application in Jn 14:1: **Trust in Christ and His Gospel**

*Believe in God, Jesus said, believe also in me.* We'll see this more next time but Christ wants us to trust Him by looking beyond this life (v. 2), trusting the gospel of v. 6 that Jesus is the way, truth, and life, not a right marriage view. Marriage is not the ultimate background, and our enemies aren't flesh and blood liberals, lawyers, or lesbians; our warfare and weapon is spiritual. Government can't save anyone but the gospel can and needs to be our focus

The gospel tells us we're all sinners, we're all born that way, for some our temptations and tendencies may differ than others, but the gospel proclaims a Christ who saves us and changes us and makes us more like Christ for all who want that and come on His terms (repentant faith) to live by His Word. Jesus loves immoral sinners like in Jn 8 but tells them '*go and sin no more.*' He gives a new identity in Christ, a new community we'll see future weeks.

What are we doing as a church community to prepare? As we trust God we can't trust the world and we need to be wise. Our bylaws and statement of faith for years has clarified we believe that marriage is only for one man and one woman, and we've also updated our facility use policy for weddings to clarify our campus is not open to the public but members can inquire about facility use consistent with our statement of faith. You can talk to our staff or deacons on more specific questions or implementation of recommendations by Christian legal groups. A Cripplegate blog post has a helpful summary for churches.<sup>12</sup>

The privileges American Christians enjoyed in the past are changing and we don't know what tomorrow holds, but we can trust the Savior who holds the future in His hand and says '*I am the same yesterday, today, and forever.*' It may be the world considers us on the wrong side of history, but our concern is having 'the right Man on our side, the Man of God's own choosing. You ask who that may be? Christ Jesus it is he. Lord Sabaoth his name, from age to age the same, and he must win the battle.'<sup>13</sup> 'When Augustine wrote *The City of God*, he was addressing Christians who equated the Roman Empire with Christianity, and were shaken with the fall of the Empire. He gave them the valuable reminder that the true citizenship of every Christian is not in an earthly country and we wait for the 'city of God' [place of Jn 14:2]<sup>14</sup>

### **How should we speak to our world about the Supreme Court decision?**

Kevin DeYoung writes: 'Here are ten commitments I hope Christians and churches will consider making in their heads and hearts, before God and before a watching world.'

1. We will preach through the Bible consecutively and expositionally that we might teach the whole counsel of God (even the unpopular parts) and to avoid riding hobby horses (even popular ones).
2. We will tell the truth about all sins, including homosexuality, but especially the sins most prevalent in our communities.
3. We will guard the truth of God's word, protect God's people from error, and confront the world when it tries to press us into its mold.

4. We will call all people to faith in Christ as the only way to the Father and the only way to have eternal life.
5. We will tell all people about the good news of the gospel, that Jesus died in our place and rose again so that we might be set free from the curse of the law and be saved from the wrath of God.
6. We will treat all Christians as new creations in Christ, reminding each other that our true identity is not based on sexuality or self-expression but on our union with Christ.
7. We will extend God's forgiveness to all those who come in brokenhearted repentance, everyone from homosexual sinners to heterosexual sinners, from the proud to the greedy, from the people pleaser to the self-righteous.
8. We will ask for forgiveness when we are rude, thoughtless, or joke inappropriately about homosexuals.
9. We will strive to be a community that welcomes all those who hate their sin and struggle against it, even when that struggle involves failures and setbacks.
10. We will seek to love all in our midst, regardless of their particular vices or virtues, by preaching the Bible, recognizing evidences of God's grace, pointing out behaviors that dishonor the Lord, taking church membership seriously, exercising church discipline, announcing the free offer of the gospel, striving for holiness together, and exulting in Christ above all things.<sup>15</sup>

The Southern Seminary blog article 'the only decision that matters' reminds 'People are no more lost now than they have ever been, and Jesus is no less Lord now than He will ever be. We dare not cower in our churches as though God has lost anything. The only decision handed down that matters is that the gates of hell cannot prevail against His church!...the Lord Jesus will have the last say. Until then, I am doing all I can to make my marriage reflect the love of Christ for his church and to share the gospel of grace with everyone. No handwringing, no fear, no hatred, no bitterness. Just love of the Lord Jesus, of the truth, of my wife, of the Lord's church... and of ALL my neighbors. Though something in our culture has definitely changed, everything in the Word of God remained the same...It may seem like we've hit the bottom...we are about to discover there's a Rock down there.'<sup>16</sup>

A Gospel Coalition blog concludes best:<sup>17</sup> 'It's time we recognized we are no longer the "moral majority" and embrace our identity as the "mission[-minded] minority" ... to love our neighbors (even those with whom we respectfully disagree), and remember the good news that in God's law-court, all who repent and believe in Christ have the verdict of "justified" pronounced over them. And there's no court on earth that can overturn that'



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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.barna.org/barna-update/culture/723-christians-react-to-the-legalization-of-same-sex-marriage-9-key-findings#.VZhdeflVhBc>

<sup>2</sup> 3 of the 50 States legalized same-sex marriage by popular vote (though over 30 had by court or legislature, while 13 states had voted bans on same-sex marriages in their State) <http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/explainer-what-you-should-know-about-the-supreme-court-same-sex-marriage-ruling>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.albertmohler.com/2015/04/29/it-is-going-to-be-an-issue-supreme-court-argument-on-same-sex-marriage-puts-religious-liberty-in-the-crosshairs/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://erlc.com/article/the-supreme-court-and-religious-liberty-reason-for-concern>

<sup>5</sup> <http://time.com/3939143/news-the-time-to-end-tax-exemptions-for-religious-institutions/>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=91712159481>

<sup>7</sup> Gerald L. Borchert, *John 12–21*, The New American Commentary (B&H, 2002), p. 103.

<sup>8</sup> John MacArthur, email to Master’s Seminary alumni on 6/27/2015.

<sup>9</sup> <http://christiannews.net/2015/06/26/justice-scalia-issues-scathing-dissent-in-same-sex-marriage-ruling-pride-goeth-before-a-fall/>

<sup>10</sup> “God Moves,” Sovereign Grace update of hymn by William Cowper.

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2015/06/26/transcript-obamas-remarks-on-supreme-court-ruling-on-same-sex-marriage/>

<sup>12</sup> <http://thecripplegate.com/protecting-your-church-from-ssm-lawsuits/>

<sup>13</sup> Martin Luther, “A Mighty Fortress is Our God.”

<sup>14</sup> <http://creation.com/us-gay-marriage-scotus>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevindeyoung/2012/05/30/the-church-and-homosexuality-ten-commitments/>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.sbts.edu/blogs/2015/06/26/the-only-decision-that-matters/>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/trevinwax/2013/06/26/why-gay-marriage-is-good-and-bad-for-the-church/>