

What Would Jesus Say About Adam and Steve?

✘ There's something about gays that bothers a lot of conservatives. They may deny it but that something is that they're gay. And we can thank the Bible for that.

I thought about this after the recent Supreme Court decisions on gay marriage, which, you may have noted, did not go over well with many conservatives.

Let's first acknowledge that reasonable people may disagree on gay marriage. So supporters of same sex marriage need to be careful not to throw the word "bigot" around too loosely. After all, if opponents of gay marriage are automatically bigots then President Obama was a bigot. Remember, he was against same sex marriage until he was for it. And the same goes for Bill Clinton who signed the Defense of Marriage Act into law – a law that effectively deemed the only marriage recognized by the federal government is between a man and a woman.

But let's get back to my conservative friends, many of whom say the real debate is not about gay marriage so much as it is about states' rights. They don't want to federal government deciding matters that should be left to the people in the states. I'm all for states' rights, but not in all cases. We didn't let the states of the Deep South decide if blacks should be able to vote. States can decide how much sales tax they can levy. They can't decide who can sit at the lunch counter and who can't based on skin color. Nothing is exactly the same as race in America, but to me, civil rights for gays is in the same ballpark as civil rights for blacks.

Another argument I've heard over and over again since the Supreme Court decisions is that gays should not be allowed to

marry because the main purpose of marriage is pro-creation. Frankly, I can't understand how anyone with a modicum of intelligence can make this argument. Have they thought about the heterosexual couples who are allowed to marry even though they don't want to have children? Have they thought about the young couples who are unable to have kids? How about older men and women who want to marry but can no longer have children? Should we also put all of them into a special group that is not allowed to marry?

Then there's the slippery slope argument. If we allow gay marriage, this argument goes, then we'll have to accept all sorts of other marriages. What if Lenny wants to marry a goat? All I can say is I'll worry about that later.

Perhaps conservatives should consider the conservative argument for same sex marriage. Yes, one exists. Aren't conservatives always telling us they favor commitment over random hook-ups? So let gays marry and be committed to each other. Conservatives tell us they like personal responsibility. So let gays marry and be responsible for each other, especially in times of need. Let's say a gay man is sick and the hospital costs are mounting. Who do conservatives want to pay the bill – the marriage partner or the federal government, which they usually despise?

But for most conservative opponents of gay marriage these arguments don't amount to much; they're all distractions. Because whether they acknowledge it or not, they're against gay marriage for just one reason: religion.

The Bible tells them that homosexuality is wrong and that's enough for the true believers. But no one is suggesting that the church perform, or in any way accept, gay marriage. Why not let the state recognize same-sex marriage and let the church do whatever it wants?

Or better yet, why not drastically change the way we all look

at marriage. Let the government acknowledge *only* civil unions, for gays *and* straight couples. And let the church or the synagogue or the mosque sanction only the kind of marriage they want. If a particular religion believes homosexuality is a sin, that religion should not sanction homosexual marriage. Pretty simple.

But religious conservatives will never accept this, because to them marriage is a holy sacrament and homosexuality is an abomination. The two can never co-exist. God, they believe, would never approve of any plan that puts gays and straights on the same legal footing.

There's a lot of good to be said about religion. People of faith do a lot of good things for poor people and others who need help. But I'm afraid religion can also make people closed-minded; it can keep them locked in their old ways as the world around them moves forward. It can make them forget that it was Jesus who aligned himself with those society shunned? It was Jesus who was on the side of the "outcast." I wonder how Jesus would feel about a marriage between Adam and Steve.

The polls show that more and more younger people are accepting gay marriage and also rejecting religion (for many reasons besides same-sex marriage). The Church knows this but won't compromise on its principles. Neither will the supporters of same-sex marriage.

On this issue, religious conservatives are on the wrong side of a very powerful force. They are on the wrong side of history. The French writer Victor Hugo said it best: "All the forces in the world are not so powerful as an idea whose time has come."