

I am so thankful that Rev Daniels asked me to do this sermon. One of the readings is one I am very knowledgeable about. And the other was an easy reading but putting in words that people of varying ages is a bit difficult.

Would you pray with me please?

God may the words of my mouth and the thoughts in all our hearts be acceptable to you

I used a lot of theologians to do this sermon, but I also used MCC theologians and thinkers. Of the people joined Rev Elder Perry, many were pastors and theologians in their own right. Most were LGBTQ people and found a home here. They took their learning and dealt with the clobber passages in Scripture.

When I was in Seminary, I was someone coming into MCC young and I felt that our leadership had already answered those who want to keep us out. But can we read scriptures in a different way? Two groups helped me come up with this idea, the African American Community and the feminist community.

African Americans opened the Scriptures and helped them look for a change from Slavery and later abuse by the white community and finally with their move to equality. The African American community use their faith and their readings of scriptures to help them in their lives to this day.

Feminists use scriptures to talk to women looking for their place in the body of Christ. They looked at women like Miriam and Mary and Martha and Priscia from Romans. Women have found begun to find a place within Modern Christianity where there were no leadership roles, except of course Nuns.

I surmised from these that we had a way to look at Scriptures with LGBTQ eyes. Not only can we answer those who want to keep us out of the body of Christ, and hidden in society, we can find our own place within the body of Christ.

Our first text was from Paul's first letter to Timothy. Now this is an interesting letter. First Timothy was a 2<sup>nd</sup> generation letter. Issues that make it second generation and not letters written by Paul are: One, instead of talking about faith in Christ, this letter talks about faith in the church.

Two, instead of dealing with the church in the midst of Jews and Greco-Roman pagans, the letters deal with people who were people who fighting with those within the church who had a different understanding of faith and salvation and evil. Third, Paul dealt with women as important to the leadership of the church. When Paul started his preaching about Christ, he first went to women. First Jewish women and 2<sup>nd</sup> Greco Roman Women. In fact, the reason many Greco Roman women came in to the church was because women had leadership in the church, something that most women did not have in their own communities. Finally, these letters deal with the formation of leadership within the church. Some of the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation letters were 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus and much of 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians and Colossians.

First Timothy is centered on living in a correct manner and in a wrong way. There are two terms that the writer deals with that in most translations is homosexuals or Sodomites; They are Malakoi and Arsenakotoi.

Malakoi means soft. As is soft clothing the behaviors of the Rich. For the rich were considered soft because they had money and didn't have to deal with issues that regular people dealt with. Soft is also about the types of clothing each group had. The poor or working class had their clothing in more rough fabrics and the rich has softer fabrics. It uses this difference in clothing to talk about their lives. The 2<sup>nd</sup> term's best translation I can use in this company is Giglio (Man Layers), someone one is acts in a manner of a man. Now this mostly meant those who were doing things ritually with women and transgendered. Or those who use themselves as males in the secular community.

One of the main reasons these two terms are combined into Homosexual or Sodomite is that they used soft and Giglio together to talk about gay men. After all who were the soft were gay men. And who those who were gigolos were obviously also gay men. The author used to show the differences between those who are faithful and those who are a part of the enemy, but the church took it in different ways.

The writer is dealing with a new problem in the church. This was a problem that the church would deal with for over two centuries. The group was the Gnostics. They were people who believed that humanity and existence was evil. They took the idea of original sin and took it to the extreme. Original sin believes that Adam and Eve sinned, and we are facing a world where we have fallen and need salvation. The Gnostics push that belief to its logical extreme where everything is evil because of the first sin. I think they took an idea and pushed it so far out that it became heresy.

To the Gnostics it means that salvation is not just given to us by Christ but that we need ***special hidden knowledge*** to receive it. These people were broken down into Ascetics and the Licentious. Both groups of Gnostics started with the understanding that creation and humanity are evil. One group believed that you had to give up all pleasure and joy and that included relations. This became later the orders of Brothers and Sisters in the Roman Church. The other group basically believed that nothing we could do could help us, so they were amoral. The author of Timothy was dealing with the amoral group and was writing against them. This reading is trying to show that these people are the other. They are against the church and you know that because they live amoral lives giving into their baser instincts.

The church has used this specific reading as a way of negating gay and lesbian people where its really dealing with the enemies of the church of the time the Gnostics.

The next reading is Isaiah. One thing about Prophets are important to understand was although they seem to be talking about the future they really are talking about the times they were written. Even apocalyptic writings really are talking about their times. They force us to see reality in new ways.

The reading in Isaiah is from Deutero Isaiah. It was written by a second-generation follower of Isaiah. It was written after Persians had beaten the Babylonians and allowed the Jewish leadership to come back to Israel. The Jewish leaders had to come back with some rules given to them by the Persian King. One rule was that the person who would lead the Jews would have to be a Eunuch. A eunuch could not give their ruling to their children and this allowed the Persians to keep control of conquered people. The eunuch the Jews were dealing with was Nehemiah.

You must understand that this gave the Jewish leadership real problems: They've believed for years about what it means to be a follower of God, to be a Jew. They also saw in their past those who were eunuchs were a part of fertility beliefs of the pagans. Although many communities had eunuchs as teachers and compilers of knowledge, the Israelites saw another aspect as eunuchs as substitutes for women in pagan rituals. Eunuchs were what is talked about in men lying with men in Leviticus, a writing of the Priestly traditions. But Eunuchs in this time were different. How could they make the change in their understanding?

What makes a person a Jew, a follower of Yahweh? The Samaritans were those left from the Northern Kingdom and were the leaders of Israel and Judah at the time of the movement back to Jerusalem of the Jewish leadership and they believed that Circumcision was the sign of you following God. the Jewish leadership had to find another way to being Jewish, they looked to the belief in the Sabbath as the symbol of being a Jew. It was the way they could allow a Eunuch to lead the people. This passage from Isaiah deals with this issue and opens the Jewish community to those who were not heteronormative.

It also opens the community to us. Jesus in Matthew said there are three types of Eunuch: Those born that way, those who are made that way and those who make themselves that way for the Dominion of God. We can see that God opens a way for us to be loved and a way for us to be greater than son and daughters. To be a part of God's community.

Opening the scriptures as LGBTQ people gives us a way to understand our place in Christ's community by reading Scriptures through "gay" eyes. We have means to deal with those clobber passages and see those stories that talk to our own lives. We need to understand the readings. Who wrote it and what was the was the issues that were important to the writer.

Not all of Paul's letters were written by Paul. Some of them were written later than Paul and were dealing with issues Paul would not have seen nor dealt with. They are still important, but you must take what they say in a more nuanced way. Pauline letters are trying to deal with issues the church faced over a length of time and sometimes those issues make sense today and sometimes do not. 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy is one of those letters that need to be understood in that manner. What is used as a clobber passage really has nothing to deal with us but with issues that they were facing with other groups who were a part of the church at that time. The Gnostics where a group that took the teachings of the church in strange and bizarre ways. The author of 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy uses ideas that would horrify early Christians to show that these people are not to be trusted. We are mistakenly thought of in medieval and modern Christianity to mean these people when we are nothing like them.

Isaiah is a rich prophetic work that took over a century to write and dealt with the realities of what it meant to be a faithful person in the midst of conflict. Our reading gives the greatest honor to the Eunuchs who lead the people. This opens up their understanding that not everything needs to be heteronormative but that there can be a place in the community those who are not. But also, the Prophetic works helps us to relook at reality in new and different ways.

Isaiah talks about opening up belief in what makes a follower of God. Isaiah opens us up to an understanding that there is a place in God's dominion for those who are new and those who are thought of us apart. It pushes us to see that God's love is open to more than what we expect, that our place is just as valid as those who are normally expected to be a part. I think our prophetic work today is the opening of conservative and mainline Christianity to include the LGBTQ community. It is the breaking forth of God in new ways and in new people that is our gift to Christianity. Our looking at the scriptures in new ways is what is helping mainline theologians and leaders to see us as a real and integral part of the body of Christ and has helped us to liberate our people in general society.