

4 IS IT JUST ABOUT SEXUALITY?

PRAYER

The question can rightly be asked:

If it's just about sexuality, is it really worth leaving the denomination?

But I would have to say it's not just about sexuality.

It's about the good order of the church.

It's about clergy and bishops keeping the promises they made,
promises to teach the doctrines of the church and to maintain the order of the church.

It's about promises being broken,
and so trust being violated, our covenant broken.

As we saw last week, it's about the authority of scripture.

And even beneath that, it's about deeper and more foundational ideas about who God is.

Do live or run video: "Before You Pull That Thread" (32 minutes)

I'll take a moment to remind you of some examples from my sermon on Aug. 21 of doctrine and theology veering far from the historical faith.

When I was in seminary, my church history professor,
an ordained elder in the United Methodist Church,
told the class one day,

"The doctrine of the Trinity is outdated and
ought to be done away with."

Roger Wolsey, an ordained United Methodist pastor,
and the director of the Wesley Foundation
at the University of Colorado at Boulder, said,

"Friends, Jesus isn't God.
Jesus didn't die for our sins.
Jesus wasn't killed instead of us.
There isn't a hell
(other than ones that we create here on this earth).
Going to heaven after we die
isn't what the faith or salvation is about.
God didn't write the Bible.
There isn't going to be a 'rapture.'
Jesus' resurrection didn't have to be understood as
a physical one for it to be a real and meaningful one.
I do believe that Jesus was divine
(in the way that you and I are)...
I don't believe that he's literally God
(at least not what most people tend to
mean by that word).
And Christianity isn't the only way for
humans to experience salvation.

Rev. Eric Folkerth, when he was the senior pastor of Northaven UMC in Dallas, TX, said,
"God gave Jesus *to live* for our sins, not *die* for them."

Martin Thielen, retired UMC pastor

"The traditional theology of substitutionary atonement
that 'Jesus died for our sins'
needs to be jettisoned in the modern era.
It's theologically offensive to think

God required a bloody sacrifice of his Son
in order to forgive humanity.

That's divine child abuse, not divine justice or love."

And, lest you think these people have gotten away with the things they said
because they were not well-known public figures...

Bishop Joseph Sprague, now retired, said in a public address,

"The myth of the virgin birth was not intended as historical fact...

Resurrection, including that of Jesus,

does not include bodily resuscitation.

God does not work this way....

I must dissent from Christocentric exclusives which hold that

Jesus is the only way to God's gift of salvation....

The concept of blood sacrifice is superstition at best

and an idolatrous allegiance to a non-Jesus

methodology of God-human relationship at worst."

Bishop Karen Oliveto, of the Yellowstone Conference, a married lesbian,
said in a sermon,

"Too many folks want to box Jesus in,

carve him in stone, create an idol out of him....

[He was], was as human as you and me.

Like you and me, he didn't have his life figured out.

He was still growing, maturing,

putting the pieces together about who he was

and what he was supposed to do.

We might think of him as the Rock of Ages,

but he was more like a hunk of clay,

forming and reforming himself in relation to God."

All but one of our 13 UM seminaries are uniformly progressive.

When I was in seminary, I did not have a single professor who was evangelical.

I never once had a reading assignment from an evangelical scholar.

I didn't know there WERE evangelical scholars.

One of the big issues was that we were encouraged to use gender inclusive language
in our speaking and our papers.

We were discouraged from referring to God as Father or King.

The Holy Trinity should not be referred to as Father, Son and Holy Spirit,

but Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer.

Which removes all references to the personhood and relationships of the Trinity,

and instead reduces Father, Son and Spirit to functions.

And it's a false equivalency,

since Father, Son and Spirit are *all together* in the acts of

creation, redemption and sustaining of the creation.

But the theological issue was not as important to them

as the contemporary social issue.

Orthodox theology was sacrificed to inclusive language.

And that same sacrifice of theology to gender inclusive language continues.

Today the KINGdom of God is to be referred to as the KIN-dom of God.

King is clearly masculine,

and also too powerful and dominating.

KIN-dom, however, changes the focus,

so the key is not our vertical relationship with God,

but our horizontal relationships with each other, our "kin."

Today the gender neutral thing is pressed harder,

so that seminary students are graded down