

May 5th - What's going on with LGBTQIA+? a brief guide.  
Language, why are people gay etc? Gender, sexuality, identity

2 Samuel 1: 1 - 4, 11, 17-19, 23 - 25

## Sexuality

Last week we talked about the reasons we're looking at sexuality - because there is a gap between where the world is and where the church is, and that the church should engage with the world.

So this week we're looking at where the world is, next week we'll think about why the church is where it is, then we'll look at what the Bible says after Messy Church, and finally we'll talk about living with difference. Meanwhile there's Wednesday nights - and this week Robyn is coming.

So I want to talk about LGBTQIA+ today, *and I'm not the expert, you might know more than me or just different to me, but I think there's a lot of confusion and complication, so I'll try to clear some things up. And I'm not judging any of this to right or wrong, I'm just trying to get us educated!*

Human beings are complicated - the most complicated thing in the universe. We know a tiny amount about how we work or why we work the way we do. So - I'm not the expert.

Also, I've found that in writing this I've been wanting to find 'facts' - bits of info that will dazzle you into thinking I'm an expert - well if Simon knows that over 1500 species of animals have found to exhibit homosexual behaviour, then he must be right about what he says about trans. Do not be fooled. I only googled that fact, and I am most probably wrong about what I say about trans. Oh dear - we're all in the same boat, with no map and oars, and we're going to have to live with uncertainty, hold onto hope, faith and love, and know that God has given us in each other plentiful knowledge and experience and all we need.

Being gay is not new - do you remember our reading - David loved Johnathan more than he loved any woman. We know David had a lot of wives and a libido that led him to murder Bathsheba's husband - but yet he did not love any of those as much as he loved Jonathon! When you see David's grief and mourning it is at least as great as Achilles mourning his lover in the Iliad.

I have read the story of Saul's anger at David and Jonathan's relationship as political. Saul wants his son to succeed, but David is the more popular, giant killer, charismatic, Jonathon more stay at home guy! But you can also read it as Saul's homophobia.

Being gay is not new. It was illegal since the mid 16th century - so it was certainly around then!

Famous gay people include -

James 1, Alexander the Great, Hans Christian Andersen, Oscar Wilde, Tchaikovsky, Leonardo Da Vinci and Isaac Newton, Alan Turing and Abraham Lincoln

So why if its always been there and known about, was it illegal and so denied and punished?

Survival of the species

For most of human history, our survival has been slim at best.

Until 20,000 years ago the population of the planet was measured in thousands. Sometime around 10,000 years ago we made the million mark. Having children was pretty vital.

(I told you there'd be some random facts to make me sound clever)

And the survival of the species argument might be the reason that there are not, and never have been any laws against lesbianism. In fact, it didn't even exist. Is that the patriarchy or something else.

Being lesbian or gay is about sexuality - who we're generally attracted to.

Which is a funny thing when you think about it. You'd think you'd be attracted to a person, not a gender. I mean if I like women that doesn't mean I find all women sexually attractive! So my sexual attraction isn't really about their sex, or not entirely. Actually as people study sexuality more, its becoming understood that people can be aroused by all sorts of things - architecture, music, watching a wrestling match.. our bodies response is not - this is a male, I feel attracted.

Complicated humans again.

Sexuality - about who we're attracted to - is the first of those 3 letters - LGB - Lesbian, women who like women

Gay - men who like men - and that was a term of insult that many homosexuals didn't like, but its sort of been reclaimed now. Although in school calling someone gay or trans or whatever is still the insult of choice.

Bisexual - attracted to both. Seems mysterious to me! Can't you decide - well its not a choice!

And for information - many bisexuals are not trusted in the gay community. You might be in a happy partnership with me, but then you might decide you like the other gender more.

(Which unless I'm jealous of every man my wife talks to , again shows how we confuse being in a relationship with a person, and being love with the whole of that gender.)

I'm not saying any of this is right or wrong - I'm trying to shine a light and say - its not as clear or obvious as we often think it is.

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## **Gender**

Matthew 16:13-20

Who do people say that I am?

Jesus wanted to know how people saw him - a prophet, a hope, a threat.

Who do you say I am?

It was important to him to see how well his disciples understood him. - the Messiah, a saviour.

Yet they did not really know who he was. Their view of Messiah, was political, military. They could not understand that Messiah meant dying on a cross. And not for 200 years before people got their heads round who Jesus was as God and human.

Who do people say I am, Who do I think I am, who I really am.

This is all our experience - the 3 selves

You might have the experience of being called a farmers wife, or vicars wife

This is who the world says you are. Yet you might feel very differently about yourself. And God may see you truly as you are.

And those 3 selves rarely all line up, there's often dissonance between how others treat you and how you think you should be treated. But mostly we are ok, its just irritating or its been going on so long that we are used to it, or there are others, perhaps our loved ones, who see us more accurately as how we see ourselves.

But imagine if its deeper. If the dissonance between the way you are treated, and the way you feel is bigger? If you look in a mirror and what you see is telling you something different to what you feel? Perhaps about your body, or perhaps about the core of who you are.

That, I think, is the experience of a trans person. Someone who feels they are a different gender to the biological sex they were born in.

So notice there's sexuality - the LGB, and then there's gender - the T. Different, but connected things.

I can't tell you what's it like because its not me, I can't tell you if its there from birth, comes and goes, or what, but I can tell you that its a very real experience, a very distressing and disturbing experience. If you've got questions I invite you to come and talk to Robyn on Wednesday night.

So where are we with the scrabble of letters - LGB - which I grew up with,  
Now LGBT

So what's q - well, queer or questioning - some of these letters can stand for more than one thing! Queer might be more fluid, as I understand it, not fixed in either sexuality or gender or both.

Then there's I - which stands for Intersex - that's the medical term for someone born with male and female genitals - which is quite common - 1 in 10,000  
Less common than being born with an extra finger or toe, but more common than finding a pearl in an oyster - thanks google.

Its a serious condition though with long term repercussions, physically and psychologically - the parents usually have to choose which sex to make the baby, which is pretty stressful, and then the child may grow up knowing or not knowing,

or just feeling odd. It may not even be on their medical records. And like I say, more common than you think. I've met at least 2 people.

LGBTQI and A - asexual

That may mean they are not sexually attracted to anyone, or that they are non-binary, and don't identify with either gender.

This thing of how you see yourself, how you feel yourself to be, or .who I feel I am, or who I'd like you to treat me as - that's what behind the pronoun thing. Call me he, or she, or they. So many people say - call me 'they' because they find the whole gender thing too defining.

Finally + - a small but significant symbol. It could stand for allies, those who support LGBTQIA rights, but more often I think it stands for - all the other types and choices and ways of being human. This movement feels to me like an attempt to defy labelling and boxes - we're not all the same - it seems to say, I'm different, but I want to be included.

And I know that opens up lots of discussion and thinking. Good!

So let me go back to Jesus, at Caesarea Philippi, and that all important question about him - that particular Palestinian male, in 30 AD. His closest friends said he was the Messiah, the saviour, and he did not deny it.

So who is he? Is he who he claims to be? And who is he to you?

Christians may believe all sorts of things about politics, sexuality, or climate change, or even the bible, but the thing that defines us as Christians is who we think Jesus is, who he is to us, our relationship with him. Jesus being the son of god who God sent to die for our sins is THE thing that holds us all together. We will never agree about everything else, but the central core thing HAS to be - what we believe about Jesus. We may hold that some things are really important and others are minor, but still Jesus is Lord is our common ground, our base line. And everything else is secondary, and lesser. Really important as we discuss how we differ on things that we hold on to that.