

Last week Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull told a radio interviewer he was confident the plebiscite to approve same sex marriage would succeed and he would vote for it. Whether or not he is right about the outcome of the plebiscite, his response highlights the growing acceptance of homosexual practice as a normal and healthy expression of human sexuality. To argue otherwise is seen as homophobic, unloving and bigoted. It is tempting to be silent rather than be seen by others in those terms. I am very conscious that to talk about homosexuality exposes the deeply personal and painful feelings experienced by those of us with family or friends struggling with same sex attraction or living a homosexual lifestyle. That pain is even more personal if any of us are struggling with same sex attraction. Because our sexuality is such a core part of our being, speaking against any aspect of our sexuality is often received as a personal attack; a rejection, even hatred, of the person. It is safer to withdraw and be silent, but, it is not Christian to do so. Christians respond to the new life Jesus has won for us by seeking to understand and obey God's will, bring glory to God in our lives and show Christlike love for the world. To do that we need to understand what the word of God says about every part of life including sexuality. We are in the presence of God this morning. May we know the reality of our heavenly Father's promise to gather us in his arms and carry us close to his heart. I trust that the eight points in today's message will reshape our understanding and pastoral response to human sexuality. **First**, the impact of humanity's rebellion against God means we are all broken sexually. Sexually addictive behaviour, addiction to pornography, sexual dysfunction, self-centred sexual behaviour, sexual immorality, homosexuality are examples of that brokenness. Greg Lake, a young Christian man recently spoke publicly of his struggle with same sex attraction. He said, *'my brokenness is no more or less broken than yours.'* That captures the biblical emphasis. The Bible's teaching on homosexuality ought to move us to repent of our own sexual brokenness. **Second**, regardless of one's sexuality each person is made in the image of God, equally valued by God. Tragically, this precious truth is ignored when homosexual people are vilified, physically attacked and marginalised. There is nothing Christian in that behaviour. May it never be a feature of the life and ministry of Northern Beaches Anglicans. **Third**, it is important to distinguish between same sex attraction and homosexual practice. Same sex attraction is one mark of our sexual brokenness. Christians are to resist the temptation to

act on that attraction. Homosexual practice, as with any form of sexual practice outside of marriage is contrary to God's design for human sexuality. **Fourth**, the Bible's teaching on homosexual practice is consistent throughout the Bible. It includes teaching from Jesus. Two New Testament passages reveal God's mind and add light to strongly held beliefs about homosexuality. Are people born homosexual? My understanding is this is not a settled question in any of the science disciplines. Objective conclusions at this point in time conclude there are a complex mix of biological and environmental factors involved. **Romans 1** provides the biblical perspective. All immoral behaviour is a direct consequence of humankind's rejection of the one true God. Worship of anyone or anything other than the living God results in the revelation of the wrath of God upon the world. God expresses his anger by not restraining immorality or shielding people from the destructiveness of sin. Three times in **Romans 1:18-32** Paul uses the phrase *'God gave them over'* The outcome of God giving us over to our sinful desires is behaviour listed in this passage including, but not limited to, greed, deceit, malice, gossip, murder, disobedience of parents, male and female homosexual practice. So in **v26-27** we read, *'Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error.'* Homosexual practice is immoral in God's eyes because it is unnatural, that is, contrary to the created order designed and put into effect by God. It is a distortion of the image of God in the world – maleness and femaleness. In his teaching, Jesus makes no provision for sexual activity outside of marriage. In **Matthew 19** the two options Jesus allows with regard to sexual activity is marriage or celibacy. **Fifth**, Christians are to fully love God and love their neighbour as themselves. Loving warnings about God's judgement are one aspect of loving your neighbour. Pointing out that any sexual immorality, including homosexual practice, is contrary to God's will and subject to his judgement is an act of love, not bigotry. **1 Corinthians 6:9-10** teaches that unrepentant homosexual practice, alongside other unrepentant practice, excludes people from God's kingdom. *'Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men nor thieves nor the greedy nor*

drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.' **Sixth**, the Bible holds out the powerful hope to everyone of transformation through Christian conversion. Listen to life giving words that follow the above words from 1 Corinthians. *'And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.'* Some in the Corinthian church engaged in homosexual activity before their conversion. Now they are washed clean, reconciled to God as forgiven people set free from the past. Maybe some still struggling with same sex attraction but in the power of the Holy Spirit they are resisting the temptation to act on their feelings contrary to God's word. Brothers and sisters, pray for the conversion of people who live a homosexual lifestyle. Provide prayerful support and accountability to fellow Christians struggling to resist same sex temptation. Seek that support and accountability for ourselves in our struggles to resist sexual temptation. **Seventh**, Christian identity transcends human sexuality. This is well summarised by Christian pastor, Vaughan Roberts who acknowledges a struggle with same sex attraction. He said, *'The gay movement appeals to those who experience same-sex attraction to 'come out' and publicly accept a homosexual identity. But the path to Christian maturity lies in recognising that our true identity is in Christ and that we are defined by our relationship to him, not by our sexuality.'* **Finally**, as a local church we are to be God's instrument in healing brokenness. A community where everyone is welcome to come as they are but where none of us is allowed to stay as we are. In the words of Anglican minister Barry McGrath, *'The future for the church in terms of sexuality is that we continue to be the open communities where anyone can come and hear God speak. Churches need to be places where people can repent and return to Christ. They need to be havens where people can be honest and find a fellowship which affirms our need of the Saviour. We are to be communities where we can name our struggles and weaknesses, without fear of the condescension of the pious. Churches are to be where love flourishes, and in our differences we still strive to love those who name Jesus as Lord and Saviour.'* May Northern Beaches Anglicans be a community where Christians lovingly speak the truth about our broken sexuality, and so live and pray that God will use us in the ministry of conversion and transformation.