

Is There Any HOPE for Me?

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These words from a fellow LCMS Lutheran remind us of a side of the same-sex attraction issue few of us are actively addressing:

I am gay but believe the only God approved place for sex is marriage between a man and a woman. For this reason, I have chosen celibacy. There are many like me in the Church. But we are afraid to come to our pastors. I think I speak for most of them when I say, "Unclear Law is not the problem."

At age 10, when kids called me "fag," "sissy" and "queer," it was not a traditional way of proclaiming Law and it was not done in a Christian manner. But it was still Law. ... In eighth grade, the kid who held his hand over my mouth and nose so I couldn't breathe while the rest of the class laughed as I turned purple was Law. The high school teacher that greeted me with "Hello, princess!" in

a falsetto when he thought no one was listening was Law. The "fag jokes" told by adult Christian men are Law. The Church's silence when other Christians celebrate the death of gays with obnoxious protests is Law.

Do you honestly believe our Church has been the least bit unclear or shy about the Law? I don't need clearer Law, more reasonable Law, stronger Law or nicer Law. It doesn't work to give the Law muscle or dress it up in bows and ribbons. No matter how you put it, whether in the mouth of a pastor speaking in love or in the mouths of others kids shouting in ridicule, the message of the Law has been clear. The Law condemns me as a sinner.

What I need is hope. Not hope that I will be straight — that's not going to happen — but hope that somewhere out there is someone who truly is a friend of sinners. Can you give me that hope?

Where to begin?

Let's start here: (1) **Jesus Christ is the friend of sinners par excellence.** He bore all the sins of the whole world in His own body, including yours, and He took them all away with Him into His death. Now if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, and that includes you. In Jesus, there is forgiveness for all your sin, sexual or otherwise.

(2) **When Jesus forgives, He frees.** Not only does He put away God's condemnation for your sin, but He also puts away sin's bondage. According to Scripture, every sinner is a sin addict; he craves his sins of choice. Yet every time he indulges that urge, he falls deeper and deeper into the vicious cycle of addiction: remorse and self-loathing. But Jesus breaks that cycle; He intervenes when our sins oppress us and says: "I will reverse that. I will be the sinner. You shall go free."

(3) **Jesus doesn't free you all at once.** That's the way it is with recovering sin addicts like us; our recovery is one day at a time. We need cleansing every day for as long as we live. As Jesus once claimed you as His very own in the waters of Baptism, so you return each day to that washing; whenever you confess your sins, He is faithful and just to forgive your sins and cleanse you from all unrighteousness.

(4) **You are not alone.** This salvation thing is not a do-it-yourself project. You can't save yourself, and you can't clean up your act on your own. Willpower just won't break the power of sin. Transformation and renewal is required, and this transformation and renewal is accomplished by the Holy Spirit within Christ's Church.

(5) **For you, this may be the most important thing: we need each other.** There's strength in numbers. As Scripture teaches, the Christian church is like the human body: When one member suffers, the rest of the body suffers. When one member is honored, the whole body rejoices. So we bear each other's burdens as Christians. We need to offer each other a listening ear and a compassionate heart, starting with me. I want to be your companion on your journey, because we're all in this together.

These five things are not abstract ideas, but glorious realities. The same Jesus who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried, descended into hell and on the third rose again from the dead, ascended into heaven and now sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty — this same Jesus gives Himself to you in His Word and Holy Sacrament. **He will not abandon you. And we won't either.**