

Sanctity of Life Sunday 1/22/18

*Caution for Parents

*I want ask you to restrain clapping or booing- not to make anyone feel alienated.

*Pray

What does it mean to have a Biblical Worldview that transcends a radically politically polarized culture like ours? It means that a deep care for the poor, racial reconciliation, a love for the immigrant, a concern to care for God's creation- issues typically politicized as progressive and liberal- are embedded into our souls by God's Word. And it means that the sanctity and definition of marriage, the intrinsic value of all human life, including the unborn, elderly and disabled; biblical sexual ethics and financial stewardship- issues typically politicized as conservative- are equally embedded into our souls by God's Word. As one once put it- "As a church we must remain committed to advancing not the agenda of the donkey or the elephant, but only the agenda of the Lamb." This is one of the reasons I love that a message on racial reconciliation on in honor of MLK Jr. last Sunday is followed by Sanctity of Life Sunday.

I say all this because we are going to talk about what it means to be pro-life, which actually does not have it's base in politics for Christians but deep roots in biblical ethics, which in our current context (only for the past 40 years of history) has political implications. So I want to invite you to take off party hats today and listen. I'd love to sit down with you over coffee, my treat, and hear your thoughts.

What is a Christian definition of being Pro-Life?

In order to answer that we need to see what God's Word says. Let me give you three Biblical Truths that Shape what it means to be Pro-Life

1) God is the giver and author of every human life.

Psalms 139:13-16

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place.

When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

This is not just poetry, Scripture is communicating with us that God creates life, deeply cares about every human life. So marvel at life!

2) All humans are sacred and have inherent dignity because we are uniquely made in the image of God.

Genesis 1:26-27

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

Monkeys, horses, sea turtles, dogs and even cats are amazing creatures created by God and are valuable. We should care for God's creatures, not be cruel... however humans are not equal with the animal kingdom, we are exceedingly more valuable to God as Jesus said in Luke 11, because we are uniquely created in his image, we are rationale, moral, spiritual, relational beings. Every human life has inherent dignity because we are stamped with the image of God.

3) We are called to care and advocate for the weak, voiceless and defenseless.

Matthew 25:34-40

The sanctity of life is deeply rooted in the life of Jesus Christ who said, "Whatever you did for the least of these brothers of mine (the naked, poor, widow, orphan, sick), you did for me."

Proverbs 31:8-9

Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves; ensure justice for those being crushed. Yes, speak up for the poor and helpless, and see that they get justice.

As a Christian, being pro-life means advocating for the dignity and sanctity of human life at every stage, from the womb to the tomb.

- Pre-born children
- Foster, Adoption and Orphan Care
- People with Special Needs
- Human Trafficking Victims
- Racial Reconciliation
- Poverty and Death from Preventable Diseases
- Those who are Incarcerated
- Immigrants and Refugees
- Those at the End of Life

We wrongly think that the pro-life movement started after Roe Vs. Wade. The early church were champions of the pro-life movement. They advocated for the value of the unborn, they rescued infants left to die by the riverside, they care for the widows and elderly, they took in the immigrants and sojourners, they cared for the sick and diseased when no one else would touch them, they were champions of women who

had few rights at the time. They put the rest of the culture to shame. As pro-life Christians today, we are just carrying on an ancient Christian ethic.

With this said, I want to concentrate the rest of my message on the **dignity and the sanctity of pre-born children**. I am giving special attention on this subject this year for a few reasons.

1) Since the passing of Roe Vs. Wade in 1973, federally legalizing abortion for any reason, nearly 57 million pre-born children's lives have been terminated through legal abortion in America. For perspective, Nazis were responsible for killing an estimated 6 million Jewish. This pales in comparison to the quiet holocaust in America of unborn children. That is hard and intense to hear, but as Christians we are called according to Ephesians 5:11 to expose to light the deeds of darkness. I'm calling it was it is.

2) 91% of Spiritually active Christians want more information from their pastor about abortion and the beginning of life.

3) This is not an outside of the church issue, 60% of women obtaining abortions attend church and yet only 22% say they have heard religious leaders speak about abortion. Statistically both inside and outside of the church about 3 in 10 women will have an abortion by age 45.

Questions Surrounding Abortion

Much of the initial debate around abortion was around the question, "**When does human life begin?**" The rhetoric that was used in the 70's to dehumanize life in the womb was to say things like, "It's just a clump of cells and tissue." Would not call it a baby, but a "fetus" - which is interesting because the Latin word fetus just means little one, from the womb.

Biblically- when does life begin? While Scripture was obviously written before modern technology, the picture that it paints is that God creates life at conception.

Psalms 139:13-16

*For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb... When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, **your eyes saw my unformed body...***

David calls himself a "me" in the womb. David called his body unformed (early stage of development) he had personhood.

Scientifically

In 1973 abortion was legalized before any technology could really give us a clear look inside the womb. Since then there is really no debate scientifically- **life begin at conception**. Within 8 years of Roe Vs. Wade, The official senate report from the 1981 Senate Judiciary Subcommittee concluded- "*Physicians, biologists, and other scientists agree that conception marks the beginning of the life of a human being- a*

being that is alive and is a member of the human species. There is overwhelming agreement on this point in countless medical, biological and scientific writings."

Father of Modern Genetics- Dr. Jerome Lejeune *"To accept the fact that after fertilization has taken place a new human has come into being is no longer a matter of taste or opinion...it is plain experimental evidence. Each individual has a very neat beginning, at conception."*

Earliest stages- 4 weeks, heart is pumping it's own blood to it's own body. Over a million heartbeats. At 8 weeks- Babies suck their thumbs, respond to sound, dreaming, recoil from pain, there is a fingerprint.

Vast majority of abortions that are performed happen by 8 weeks because the rationale is that earlier is somehow less human and later is somehow more human which is intellectually and scientifically buffoonery of grand proportions. Yet we've known this for decades, so there are other issues.

Does the Mother have the right to choose abortion?

Let me just show you one quote from a pro-choice advocate that I think gets at the heart of the issue.

Mary Elizabeth Williams, 2013- Article: *So what if abortion ends life.*

"Yet I know that throughout my own pregnancies, I never wavered for a moment in the belief that I was carrying a human life inside of me. I believe that's what a fetus is: a human life. And that doesn't make me one iota less solidly pro-choice."

(Her Rationale) *Here's the complicated reality in which we live: All life is not equal...a fetus can be a human life without having the same rights as the woman in whose body it resides. She's the boss. Her life and what is right for her circumstances and her health should automatically trump the rights of the non-autonomous entity inside her. Always."* I appreciate her honesty, showing her cards because this is the true reality of this position.

My property, I own this human, I can do what I wish, because this life does not have rights and is not equal to my life. Does that sound familiar?

John Piper

"On March 6, 1857, the Supreme Court, in Dred Scott vs. Stanford, rule that no act of Congress or territorial legislature could make laws banning slavery. The fundamental argument was that slaves are not free and equal persons but the property of their masters. The ruling is analogous to Roe Vs. Wade because today no state may make a law banning abortion to protect the unborn."

The argument is similar: basically because the unborn are at the sovereign disposal of their mothers and do not have personal standing in their own right... And today, 130 years later, we look back with amazing consensus and marvel at the blindness of our forefathers and fail to see it in ourselves."

The baby might be in the woman's body, her property you may say, but he or she is not the woman's body. The baby has his or her own DNA, own blood type, own personhood and own dreams.

What about the hard cases?

Pro-choice rhetoric often concentrates on the idea of protecting women and site the hard cases. **What about rape, incest or to save the life of the mother? Less than 1%**

Rape and incest are not biblical reasons to terminate a life God has created.

Virtually all abortions are pragmatic by nature- **Richard Rorty, "Truth is Doing what works for me and what my society let's me get away with."** Not "What is right."

Where do we go from here?

1) Embrace God's Unconditional Love and Forgiveness

We must stop here and remind us all about the power, forgiveness and grace of the Cross of Jesus. Because there are women here who have had abortions. There are men here who are implicit in a woman getting an abortion. There may be parents that pressured their daughters to have an abortion or some who have performed an abortion. It doesn't matter what you are guilty of if Christ has washed away your guilt. You have not committed an unpardonable sin. I stand here just as guilty because of my sin as you. No condemnation in Christ.

Resources - Surrendering the Secret- Patricia Layton
Rachel's Vineyard Retreat- March or April dates available
www.rachelsvineyard.org

A Door of Hope- Intro Carol Doherty

2) Be Compassionate and Gracious- Not to shake fist at darkness, calling it murder, doesn't fix the problem, we must bring light! We want to be a lighthouse! Community known for our love for women and their babies. single moms, embrace and do not condemn. Hold out the radical, forgiving, and healing power of the gospel. Celebrate the life created by God. Only 7% of church going women who have abortions talked to their church before making this decision.

Frederica Matthewes-Green- Feminist Perspective

I had presumed that most abortions are prompted by problems that are financial or practical in nature.

But to my surprise I found something very different. The core reason I heard was, "I had the abortion because someone I love told me to." Father, Mother, Boy...Again and again, I learned that women had abortions because they felt abandoned, they felt isolated and afraid. As one woman said, "I felt like everyone would support me if I had the abortion, but if I had the baby I'd be alone." When I asked, "Is there

anything anyone could have done?" I heard the same answer over and over again, "I needed a friend. I felt so alone. I felt like I didn't have a choice. If only one person had stood by me, even a stranger, I would have had that baby."

3) Pray- Repent of our indifference, confess our sin, intercede for women facing a difficult decision, for single moms, for the law of the land to be overturned.

4) Educate yourself and others- Focus on the Family, The Dignity and Sanctity of Every Human Life (Resource Guide). Teach others, your children, grandchildren, about a biblical vision of life, that all life is sacred and sexual purity because this is often where it starts.

5) Get Involved

Personally, I believe Roe vs. Wade will be overturned within a generation- I believe my kids' generation will do it. There are defining moments of history and we look back and we wish we could have been there. Where were my grandparents during Jim Crow laws? Why didn't they march with King? 40 years from now our grandchildren will think we are barbaric, wondering why we didn't do something?

Local and National Politics- Since last week I said spoke against something our President may have said, let me speak for something he's doing- He has been a champion of Pro-life issues, 1st President to Speak live at March for Life on Friday. But don't make this a partisan issue. Democrats- we need you on this. Call your reps, join the other side of the isle on this issue. This can't be a partisan issue, it must be a human issue.

Willing to sacrifice comfort. Volunteer and Give to Door of Hope, Diaper Drop. If we are advocating for life inside the womb we must advocate for life outside the womb. Foster care, adoption. Willing to sacrifice our comfort.

My story.

We need more Aunt Lou's. Churches teeming with adoptions and foster parents, sacrificial compassion for pregnant teenagers and single moms, bestowed dignity upon the disabled, and honor for the elderly will be culture-shaking churches.