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**Transcribed Message**

**January 21, 2024**

**Message: When Abortion is Illegal and Unthinkable**

**Micah 6:8**

It was on June of 2022 that the Supreme Court handed down that momentous decision that overturned Casey and once again returned the matter of life and death to become a state-by-state issue. Justice Alito, when he wrote the majority opinion, this is what he said: “The Constitution does not confer a right to abortion. Roe and Casey are overruled and the authority to regulate abortion is returned to the people and their elected representatives.” We might have hoped that at that point all of this would take care of itself and we would no longer be a nation in which abortion was available and accessible right up until the moment of birth. But we know that's not the case. We know that this battle goes on. It just goes on in a different way and on a different front and as thankful as we are for what happened for the overturning of that decision, we understand that we're still engaged in this battle. We understand that we still have much that we need to do. And so, we want to look this morning at once again this matter of abortion. We want to make it our heart's cry and our prayer that it not only be illegal but that it actually become unthinkable. As we do that, this is what we want to see this morning. We want to see that to build a world where all are welcome, including and especially the unborn, requires not only justice but compassion, healing, and above all a commitment to truth. All of these are found in the gospel.

I ask you this morning just to reflect with me for a few minutes on where are we now this 18 months later. Where are we in this battle? What is happening in our country at this point? The first thing we acknowledge, and the reason I said what I said at the beginning is this is fundamentally not a political issue. There are obviously political ramifications but in my heart of hearts I'm convinced that this is a theological issue. This is a doctrinal issue. This is a biblical issue. This is a spiritual issue. But having said that, we acknowledge that 18 months later we still have a White House that is committed basically to abortion on demand up until the moment of birth. We have over 200

members of the House of Representatives that are committed to that same, and we have a majority in the Senate that are committed to that. I didn't choose that wording lightly when I said that they are strongly committed to abortion because every time something like that is said, there is immediate pushback. There is a desire to say no. That's not it. That's an overstatement. That's not true. And yet here's the fundamental issue. If you say to somebody who pushes back against that reality that these members of Congress and members of this administration are strongly committed to abortion, you just simply say to them if you're not committed that strongly to abortion (when in fact they are willing to allow an abortion to take place right up before the moment of birth), and you say to them well if you're not strongly committed let's find a compromise. Find some common ground upon which we can restrict abortion. And you know what you get by way of an answer? You get nothing because they don't want to restrict abortion. Even though they don't want to say that they're willing to abort the baby right before the moment of birth, the reality is that's what they're willing to do. That's what we need to acknowledge. That's what we need to understand. That's what we need to realize.

I read just this last Friday that VP Kamala Harris is going to launch a nationwide reproductive freedoms tour beginning tomorrow in Wisconsin marking the 51<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the Roe v. Wade decision. She described those who oppose abortion in a statement as being extremists (that would be me and probably you) who wage a full-scale attack against hard-won, hard-fought freedoms. On Tuesday Harris and President Biden are scheduled to headline a rally in Virginia criticizing GOP efforts to protect the lives of the unborn. The Biden campaign team manager Julie Chavez Rodriguez stated a vote for Joe Biden and Kamala Harris is a vote to restore Roe. Well, that simply acknowledges the reality of what's happening on the political front in the life of our country.

Here is the second thing. The second thing is the undeniable truth of the Bible is that God is pro-life. the undeniable truth of the Bible is that God is pro-life. As a Christ follower, those passages and you know 10 or 15 or 20 others ought to be ones that you're familiar with that you're comfortable to just turn to those and say yes, this is what the Bible teaches about this. In Genesis when God says in the first chapter and verse 27 that he has created us in his image and likeness: In the image of God he created

them male and female he created them. And you go little bit further into Genesis of the 25<sup>th</sup> chapter and there it describes the struggle that's taking place in the womb between these twin boys that are about to be born. It speaks of them as children in the womb. They have not yet been born. You just look through the rest of those, many of them talking about the work of God in creating a child in the womb of the mother. We know the beauty of Psalm 139. We've reflected on that many times in the past. It just talks about the intricacy and the embroidering and the handiwork that God is involved in. there is that passage in Isaiah. Listen to what Isaiah says in that 45<sup>th</sup> chapter beginning in verse 9:

“Woe to him who strives with him who formed him,  
a pot among earthen pots!

Does the clay say to him who forms it, ‘What are you making?’  
or ‘Your work has no handles’?

Woe to him who says to a father, ‘What are you begetting?’  
or to a woman, ‘With what are you in labor?’”

Thus says the Lord,  
the Holy One of Israel, and the one who formed him:

“Ask me of things to come;

will you command me concerning my children and the work of my hands?”

Jeremiah says in the first chapter and verse 5 that he was formed in the womb of his mother, that God knew him before he was ever born. Then you get into the gospels and we have those stories about John the Baptist and Jesus in the encounters and those baby boys being formed in the wombs of their mother and one leaping for joy at the idea that he's in the presence of the Savior, being of course John the Baptist. I just emphasize what you already know. But I think we need to acknowledge that this is in fact the position of the Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation. God is strongly passionately pro-life and he makes that very clear in no uncertain terms.

Now here however is the sobering reality. The sobering reality point C. In every election where abortion has been the focus over the past 18 months, the pro-abortion position has prevailed. Seven elections since June 2022 in which the whole matter of abortion was the focal point of that election in some way and in every one of those

elections, the pro-abortion position prevailed even in states that are largely conservative. That's been the case. What do we conclude from that? I'm sure that there are people much smarter than I am that are thinking about this a lot and hopefully they are strategizing as to what it is that needs to be done. But you can just simply make some observations from what we know about these choices that people have made.

One, we know that the pro-abortion forces have brought in tens of millions of dollars to every one of these elections, overwhelming the pro-life message. They have just literally inundated in every case because they're getting large sums of money from foundations that are strongly pro-abortion. One of them is just a practical financial issue of the messaging. The other one is kind of the messaging as well. The reality is that they don't mind creating a spirit of fear. They don't mind lying about the pro-life position. They're very aggressive in their spending of money in their messaging. They're very aggressive in the message that they put forward. I think this is a place again where those of us who are pro-life need to be mindful not only of a strategy that will work to counter that, but also to be careful in what we do say. Occasionally every so often a legislator will put forward a bill that is going to criminalize abortion and seek to punish the woman who's involved. I personally think the doctor maybe, those that are involved in the medical part of it of course, but to put forward legislation that is going to bring legal action against the mother who finds herself in this very difficult place – I think those kinds of things are not helpful. But those are the messages that get put out there by those who are pushing this other position. So, we know that this is a challenge. We know that this is something that we are going to have to contend with. They have won every one of these elections and they promise that they're going to put abortion on as many elections as they can including and especially the one in 2024 in November. This is more of what is to come.

Then point D. Every time we address this, which is every year, every time we address this subject this is my desire. It's two-fold. First of all, it is just simply to point to the life-giving message of the gospel. To point to the life-giving message of the gospel. That is what we want to direct people to. More important than anything else that this person needs to hear that finds themselves in this circumstance is they need to hear the gospel. They need to hear the life-changing transformative message of the gospel. I

realize that every Sunday on the third Sunday in January when we have spoken to this issue over all of these years, I realize that there are those in the audience as there are this morning who have walked this path. Some of you have shared that openly. Some of you have not shared that with anyone. That's something that you have carried for all of your life. Some of you were a part of that process of seeing to it that that happened. often we know that the woman who is in this circumstance is being pressured and coerced and so I know that there are in many cases men who are sitting here and that's something that is a part of your past. I know that there are going to be those kinds of considerations and struggles in the lives of people going forward. But what we all want to understand, what we all want to realize is that if we are in one of those categories, the grace of God still comes to us. The mercy of God still meets us right where we are. God's forgiveness and his love and his grace is sufficient for every circumstance that any of us can ever face. There isn't any sin that God does not offer forgiveness for. At the cross it is all level. Whether you have had an abortion. Whether you've encouraged someone to have an abortion. Whether you have never even considered that. The reality is that as we stand together arm in arm shoulder to shoulder at the cross we're all standing on equal ground. There isn't anybody that is better than anybody else. There isn't anybody who is worse than somebody else. We're all there together. The grace of God, the mercy of God, and the love of God reaches out to us and meets us right where we are and God offers us his forgiveness.

I think the second thing that I always want to make clear is we still have to speak the truth. We still have to speak the truth, don't we? We hold on to the truth because if we don't speak to this issue, we know the message of our culture will overwhelm us. That is the reality. If as a believer and as a follower of Christ it makes you uncomfortable for us to take a Sunday like this once a year, I offer no apology because if we don't equip each other and if we don't acknowledge even in the presence of our young people and our children that are a little bit older that this is the reality of the world that they live in, this is a part of the fallen world that they live in, if we seek to pretend that this isn't there, that they're not going to hear about it, we're just kidding ourselves. We have to have these hard conversations. We have to step into these difficult conversations. We have to acknowledge and hold on to the truth that our God is a pro-

life God. He loves life. He has sanctified it. It's precious to him. All of it in whatever situation we may find ourselves. There is a culture of life and there is a culture of death. I think we want to choose the culture of life.

Let's look for the rest of our time at how can we move closer 18 months after Roe was overturned. How can we make abortion unthinkable? I want to share seven things with you, hopefully some very practical things that will just encourage us in that regard. The first one is we must see this as a justice issue. We must see this as a justice issue. It's the most basic of all of human rights. I love Micah 6:8 – "You know, O man, what it is that God requires of you: that you do justice, you love kindness, and you walk humbly with your God." That verse just nails it for me. You do justice. You love kindness. and you walk in humility. That's what God has called us to. This is truly a justice issue. There isn't anything that is more basic in terms of the matter of justice than the devaluing of life.

Coach Jim Harbaugh, whose team Michigan just won the national championship a week or so ago, stood on Friday's March for Life in that near blizzard and he stood before that group of people and that's exactly what he said. He said this is the most basic of all of human rights. If we don't have this human right, we don't have any other rights that are significant and that matter because this is the most basic of all. He also said this is great football weather as the snow fell among all of them.

I can't think of any position that occupies a higher moral ground than the position of pro-life. I can't think of anything that demands more of us in terms of this matter of justice than this matter of life. At the March for Life, their theme this year was "With Every Woman for Every Child". With every woman for every child. What does it look like to be a proponent of justice in this regard? Let me offer some very practical things.

How about working on legislation at the state level that would allow more maternal leave especially for single moms. I don't know if this kind of thing can be crafted or if that would be discriminatory, but making maternity leave available to these moms that would benefit from that. How about something as practical as child tax credits for those in the at risk area? What about something as simple and straightforward as the minimum wage? Do you know in Oklahoma that a single mom can be making \$7.25 an hour. \$7.25. You try to take care of a child. Think about what it

means to add another mouth to your table. I know there are a lot of issues around all of those things, but those are the kinds of things that we can't simply turn our back to and say that's not going to work. We have to step in to all of the conversations.

I just read this week that the Health and Human Services on the federal level is seeking to cut temporary assistance for needy family funding to pro-life groups. There is a measure called temporary assistance for needy families and it goes to different agencies and they're trying specifically to cut it out so that pro-life clinics cannot access the funds. That's just evil. Let's just say what it is. It is wrong and it's evil and it shouldn't be happening. Those are the kind of practical measures. Listen to this. 50% of women who are seeking an abortion are below the poverty level. Another 25% are barely over it. We know a young single mom who worked hard to get off of government assistance and she made it. She got a job that just barely put her over the requirement for government assistance. She no longer was receiving government assistance. She shared that her life now is filled with more financial pressure because she is just constantly on the razor edge of financial collapse and catastrophe if anything happens in her life. She literally is finding other ways to get means to help take care of her family. Those are just the hard realities of life. 50% already have one child. You can see the kind of pressures they're under. This is a matter of justice. This is a matter of compassion. This is the answer of Micah 6:8. do justice. Love kindness. Walk humbly with your God.

The next one. We must continue to teach the main thing – that a human life is at stake. This is the fundamental point. This is where you need to live your pro-life views out. Forget about all the arguments that you can get sidetracked with and all the other things that you can get pulled into. Just continue to come back to this simple logical syllogism that says it's wrong to intentionally take the life of a human being. If that is in fact true, then abortion is intentionally taking the life of a human being. That simply means that abortion is wrong. Now if you keep coming back to that in the face of everything that can be thrown to you and you simply press in in a kind and gracious manner to the person that you're having this conversation with – maybe a family member, maybe a coworker, maybe a friend, maybe a neighbor – and you just keep

coming back to I understand but can you help me with this question first. Is this a human life? And then work from there because that's the most important thing.

There are two questions that really help us in this process. One is we're grappling with this matter of what is truth. What is truth? is there such a thing as absolute truth? Is there such a thing that we can hold to that says this is morally absolutely right or wrong? We're fundamentally dealing with the question of truth. We're also dealing with the whole measure of human value, human worth. You see the pro-life position is the higher moral ground. We don't have to say that out of the spirit of pride. It is simply the case because we value human life, not because it's functional but because it's intrinsically valuable before God. When you consider the two positions – pro-life or pro-abortion – that's fundamentally what you're answering. At what point does human life have value? The only way that the pro-abortion position can answer that question is to say when that child is born and is viable. Up until then there's not a willingness to say that child has value and worth. We're saying from the moment of conception God is the designer of that child. That child has value and worth no matter their capacity to function or do things that we understand will come later in life. The pro-abortion position and the pro-life position are very different.

Thirdly, we must partner with agencies and clinics to be the hands and feet of Jesus. Clinics like Crossroads Clinic. They need to be things that we support and engage in and help with in every way that we can. They're literally on the front lines of this every day of the week. Even the days that they're not open there's still grappling with these issues. These are the things that we need to do. We need to be very mindful of how it is that we can help and partner with these kinds of agencies and truly be the hands and feet of Jesus. We are to be the ones who are caring for the unwanted and the vulnerable and the weak. It's not just something that we're supposed to do, it's who we are to be as Christ followers.

Next, we must support foster care and adoption. A very practical way as you've known over the many months that we've been engaged as a church, another way is with care portal. There were just a couple requests that came through for care portal this week and it just reminded me this is exactly what we need to be doing. One of them had to do with being a single mom and she was moving to an apartment to get away from a



bad situation and she needed everything. We get to jump in and help. We've all got homes that probably have more stuff in them than we will ever need or use. That is a very practical way that we as a church family can step in and be a part of meeting the needs in a very, very practical way for some of those that are in that circumstance.

Then, we must call out those who want intimacy without responsibility. We must call out those who want intimacy without responsibility. You know what I mean by that. I mean that abortion becomes the backstop for all kinds of behavioral choices that people do not want to deal with. The most recent example, and I'm not even going to mention his name even though it's been in the news a lot, but one of the rising NBA stars found himself in a very compromising position in terms of the public arena. He had, as many of these young athletes that come into fame and fortune suddenly finds himself with opportunities and choices that he is simply not prepared for. He got involved with a young lady. She ended up taking pictures of their text messages and put it out on social media. The basic idea was that she was pregnant with his baby. When he learned that he said to her, and I quote: "I can't do this. Get an abortion. LOL." I don't know why he said that. He went on to say, "You can't force a kid into this world." He continued to push promising money, and later sent a text message that said, "I will send you \$100,000 if you will take a video of you taking the after pregnancy abortion pill to abort the baby." In the midst of all of that she's saying to him I can't do this. I did this two years ago and I live with it every day of my life. That's what she said to him. He pushed back and said I don't care. You need to do it anyway. Evidently she finally upon receiving the hundred thousand dollars sent him a video of her taking the pill. He then told her that he didn't want to have any contact with her and if she needed anything to talk to his lawyer.

That astonishing exchange isn't very surprising when you consider that's kind of the way our culture and our society looks at these things. It was also interesting as she went on to say I've been lied to, manipulated by someone who knows exactly what they're doing and takes no accountability for anything. This player made this statement: "I made comments in the heat of the moment that are not me and that are not aligned with what I believe and who I want to be as a man. All women should be supported and empowered to make their own decisions about their bodies and what is best for them." The coach of the team went on to say in an separate posting: "It's important to state that

this is not reflective of our organization, our values for sure and as a young man it's clear that his education and maturity continues to be a work in progress." All of that except that in June 2022 when the ruling came down from the Supreme Court the commissioner of the NBA Adam Silver came out with a long lengthy statement decrying the fact that the Supreme Court had rolled back the rights of women to be able to have an abortion. The NBA pushes and promotes Planned Parenthood. so it's not very surprising that this kind of behavior on the one hand is made to seem as if this isn't really who they are. But the reality is no, that is really what they want. They want that kind of availability because they do not want there to be responsibility in light of one's actions.

Point F. We must never underestimate the reality of the spiritual battle. This is a spiritual battle. Satan is a destroyer. He is a liar and deceiver from the beginning Jesus said. He goes about seeking whom he can kill and destroy and how he can steal from us in any way that he can. This is a spiritual battle. It's a theological issue. It's a doctrinal issue. It's a biblical issue. Yes, it has political ramifications but that is secondary. Paul says in 2 Corinthians that the God of this world has blinded the minds of those who do not believe lest they should see the glory of the gospel. That's our world. That's our culture. We need to realize that. We need to acknowledge that. That's why in the midst of what Micah said we do justice, but we love kindness because we understand the heart of man is blinded by the one who controls the details of this world. That's what Paul says in Ephesians 6. What does he say for us to do?

Lastly, we must pray. We must pray. When Paul goes through all the points of the spiritual battle in Ephesians 6, tells us all the different parts of the armor to put on because we are in a spiritual battle, then at the very end of it all he said yes, after you've done all that then you pray. And you pray. And you pray some more. That's the battle that we enter. When Jesus told us what it is that should guide our prayers in the central part of his prayer, we are to pray: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth just as it is being done perfectly in heaven. That's what we want to pray for. That's what we want to pray about. That's what we want to be committed to.

Right where we started. To build a world where all are welcome including and especially the unborn requires not only justice but compassion, healing, and above all a commitment to truth. These are all found in the Gospels. What do we take away? Let's do this. Let's keep lifting up the gospel. Let's keep loving the most vulnerable around us. Let's commit that we're never going to quit. We're never going to stop talking about the value and the sanctity of life. We're going to hold firmly to that which God has revealed to us in his word. We're going to be proclaimers of the gospel of grace. We have these conversations that we get to enter with people who see something very different than we are. We're going to love kindness all the while seeking to do justice, all the while bringing the gospel to those who we encounter.

I say to you this morning if you are here and there is something like this in your past or if you are here and this isn't in your past, but you've never experienced what it means to have your sins forgiven, you've never experienced what it means to be loved by the God who has created you and the world that you live in, he invites you into a relationship with him. Not on the basis of your works. Not on the basis of your efforts, but simply on the works of what Christ did for you. That great work on the cross in which he took all of our sin and paid the penalty by his own life. He asks us simply to believe. Believe that we've sinned and fallen short. Believe that what Jesus did was enough. When we do that, when we believe that our sins are forgiven then we receive the gift of eternal life. It doesn't get any better than that.

Let's pray. Father God, thank you for your grace. Thank you for your mercy. Thank you for your kindness. Thank you for blessing us with life. Thank you for blessing us as a church with each other. Thank you for these families – these children, these moms and dads. We are grateful that we can be a part of this family. I pray even now, Father, for those this morning that are hurting, maybe hurting specifically because of this issue that we've been discussing. Father God, would you meet them? Remind them there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. May they again look to you, to your grace, to your mercy, your love. We thank you in Jesus's name, amen.