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Series: Sanctity of Human Life Sunday
Message: Pro-Life in a Culture of Death

Transcribed Message
January 20, 2019
Psalm 139:14

In the *Washington Post* last fall, the question that was being fact-checked was which countries in the world allow abortions after 20 weeks? There were 198 countries that have over 1 million people that were a part of this article. Fifty-nine allow abortions without any restrictions. One hundred thirty-nine countries require some reason. Only 7 of the 59 allow elective abortions after 20 weeks. Those 7 countries are North Korea, China, the Netherlands, Singapore, Vietnam, Canada, and the United States. Just last week, Gov. Cuomo of New York in a joint press conference with Hillary Clinton made this statement: "Advancing the rights of women and girls is the unfinished business of the 21st Century." And the governor promised that he would sign no legislation in this upcoming session if they did not pass the reproductive health bill which allows for abortions into the third trimester. It was Augustine, the great theologian, who said people travel to wonder at the heights of mountains, at the huge waves of the sea, at the long courses of the rivers, at the vast compass of the ocean, at the circular motion of the stars, and they passed by themselves without so much as wondering. What Augustine is simply saying to us is there is the absolute miracle of human life of the human body and the amazing God who has created and sustains that life. It is a miracle that all of us need to be daily in wonder about.

So we step out of our series this morning on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and we look this morning on the sanctity of human life. Today is Sanctity of Human Life Sunday. We look at the fact that we as the people of God should be committed to life even though we find ourselves living increasingly in a culture of death. Our simple statement this morning is life is sacred because God creates and sustains it from conception to death. Each person having been created in the image and likeness of God is of great value and worth to God.

I want to begin by addressing what I think might very well be four different groups of people who might be here this morning. The first group would be those who believe that abortion is morally wrong. I would imagine that that is the majority opinion, the majority of people who are here this morning, that we see abortion as being morally wrong. You will no doubt find yourself agreeing with most everything I say this morning.

The second group could be those on the other side of that equation who believe it's a woman's choice, and it's her choice alone. I want to say first of all I'm glad you're here. You are welcome here and we're glad you're here. I don't know that anything you hear this morning will move you off of your position. I pray that it will. I trust that it will. But I would like for you to hear me out and hear what I believe is God's perspective on this important matter.

Then I think there could be those who are undecided, who just find themselves going back and forth between these two different positions as to whether it should be a woman's choice and a woman's right, or whether it is morally wrong. Again, I don't know that I will convince you one way or the other, but that would again be my desire and my prayer that you would see from the vantage point of the Word of God, how God values the life that He has created.

The last group that I want to speak to could be a part of any of those other groups. This last group is those who themselves have had an abortion. You have experienced firsthand what we're talking about this morning. I personally, and I believe corporately, want to extend to you the grace and the mercy and the kindness of God. God is a gracious God. God is a loving God. He is a forgiving God. Anybody who comes to Him with a heart of repentance is going to be welcomed by our God.

D.L. Moody made an amazing statement when he said: "The voice of sin is loud but the voice of forgiveness is louder still." I think that speaks to the issue before us this morning, wherever you might be on that spectrum of those things that I have mentioned. The reality is that in the 21st Century, in 2019 in America, we have a choice to be on two different paths. We can be on the path of life or we could be on the path of death.

Let's begin by looking at the path of life, and that is simply to say let's look at life from God's perspective very briefly. We can begin in the first book of the Bible, as we naturally should, because in Genesis chapter 1 where we have God creating and

bringing life into existence, we read in the 26th verse of the 1st chapter that God says: “Let Us make man in Our image and after Our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ So God created man in His Own image, in the image of God He created Him; male and female He created them.” When you read those verses, you’re immediately struck with the fact that God believes that life has value and life is unique. There is the value and uniqueness of life as God has created it. In the 26th verse, when God says let Us make man in Our image, never before had that been said in the creation account and yet five or six more times that very language is going to be used in the opening accounts of the book of Genesis. We are unique and valuable because we bear the stamp of the image and likeness of God. Every person, the Scriptures say, bears that image and that likeness. It is mankind. It is man. It is woman that bears that distinct privilege. We reflect God. We reflect His personality. We reflect His nature. We reflect His character because we have that image and likeness stamped upon us. Human life, being created by God, being sustained by God is something that He values and is very unique.

Secondly, we go to the book of Exodus, the second book of the Bible. In the second book of the Bible in the 20th chapter and in the 13th verse, the 6th of the 10 Commandments, God makes the declaration you shall not murder. There is a statement there about life in terms of the negative, that it is to be preserved and it is to be protected. The taking of an innocent life is wrong because that life, as we just saw, is created in God's very image and likeness. It's precious to Him. Other Scriptures are going to take into account other circumstances: manslaughter, self-defense, accidental death, even war. They're going to be put into a different category. God says life is to be handled with care. Life is to be viewed as being something that is to be preserved and something that is to be protected.

The third book of the Bible is the book of Leviticus. The book of Leviticus is an entire book of how it is that God wants us to relate to Him as His people. We have an entire book in which God says you are so valuable to Me, you are so important to Me, I want to lay out before you how it is that you can have this relationship with Me. Having been created in the way that we were, God amazingly desires to have a personal

relationship with us. He gives us an entire book on the value of life and how it's to be preserved and protected and seen as something that is unique and something special.

I know what you're thinking. That's Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus. That's 3 out of 66. We've got 63 to go. Well, here's what we're going to do because we're going to cover them all. Point number four. The rest of Scripture. How about that? The rest of Scripture. What do you see in the rest of Scripture? You see a picture of God's sovereign activity, of His unique handiwork and God's watchful care over all that He has created. All the way through Scripture, we see indications of this. I want to read you some examples of that. Just listen and let the Word of God speak His truth into your life this morning.

Psalms 139 and verse 13: "For You formed my inward parts; You knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in Your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when yet as there was not one of them." What an amazing, amazing statement from the psalmist.

Isaiah chapter 44 and verse 24: "Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, who formed you from the womb; I am the Lord, who made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself." I knew you. I formed you in your mother womb. Isaiah 49:1 says: "Listen to me, O coastlands, and give attention, you peoples from afar. The Lord called me from the womb, from the body of my mother He named my name. He made my mouth like a sharp sword." Isaiah goes on to speak of God's handiwork. Jeremiah chapter 1 verse 5: "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you." before I formed you in the womb, I knew you. And before you were born, I consecrated you. I appointed you a prophet to the nations. God placed His call on Jeremiah's life. The path of life affirms that what God is doing in the life of that mother, in the womb of that mother, is that He is knitting together, He is intricately weaving these different parts and He is proclaiming to us that they have great value, that they are sacred, that they are known by God, that they are a gift from God. My friends, this has been the position of Orthodox Christianity for all of the centuries of time. It has been

the Judeo-Christian heritage from the very beginning and anyone who would argue against that simply needs to open the Scriptures and read the extra-Biblical writings that come to us out of even the 1st Century. There is declaration after declaration that what we have just said has been the position of Orthodox Christianity for all the centuries.

But there is another path. There is another path in the path of life and that path is simply to be called the path of death. When I think about the path of death, there are three descriptive words that come to mind. The first of those is that it is deceptive. The path of death is deceptive. It is deceptive on so many levels that we can't possibly look at all of them this morning.

The biggest proponent of this path is an organization that we all know well called Planned Parenthood. In my mind, the very name Planned Parenthood is a part of the deception. It is an organization that puts an end to life. It puts an end to a mother's role. It puts an end to a father's role. It puts an end to a baby's life. It is not planning parenthood at all. It is planning an end to parenthood. It's deceptive in how it describes the unborn. Most of the time, it's not wanting to be very descriptive or not wanting to be very informed in terms of what the public knows or learns. The description of the unborn and the mother's opportunity to see that life that is forming within her by means of a sonogram is something that is not allowed. It's not pursued. There is deception in terms of the promise that this is going to be quick and easy, to be no complications, to be no regrets. It's deceptive in terms of the fact that there's really no other choice. Pro-choice. Pro-freedom. Pro-health. All carry with it certain deception.

Even the fact that Planned Parenthood regularly says that only 3% of their services involve abortion. Now you're going to hear that on many talking points publicly by people who bring this perspective and honestly deceive the vast number of Americans. To be able to say that 3% of their services involve abortion, here's what they do. If a woman comes to the clinic for the express purpose of getting an abortion, they count that as one service that they provide her. Anything else that happens in the course of that ending of that life is counted as an additional service. At the end of the day, they have many, many services that they have brought to that woman, but the main one is she came to receive an abortion.

Someone has illustrated it this way. That would be like going to a steakhouse. Call it Planned Parenthood Steakhouse. You go there on your birthday and you order a 32-ounce porterhouse steak, but the steakhouse tells you that at the end of the day only 3% of your meal was your steak. After all, you ordered a salad and vegetables. They take every one of those items. On your salad, you had not only lettuce, but croutons and red pepper and tomato and bacon and bleu cheese. By the end of your meal, you had 33 different things that they have given to you with your baked potato and your hot fudge sundae. So you walk out of there having eaten a 32-ounce porterhouse steak and 3% of your meal was a steak. That's the deception that they bring when they try to tell us that only 3% of their services are related to abortion.

I think a second word that I would use is disturbing. It's disturbing. In some respects, it is increasingly so. Just when you think we've seen everything. Most of you will remember a number of years ago when the videos came out of Planned Parenthood executives talking about selling body parts from aborted babies. Shocking videos where people were literally joking about this whole process. Most of us probably had no idea there was any even an industry called fetal tissue donation. Our then-President, powerful members of Congress, a supportive media all joined together. We learned that this was not a violation of the law. The very people who write these laws are lobbyists for these kinds of organizations and so they write these laws in such a way that is almost impossible for them to violate the laws. Instead of a moral outrage that should've swept across our nation, it became a moral whimper as these forces simply pushed back against the very things that we were seeing with our own eyes with great horror.

I read this week of the new movement called the DIY abortion. Do-it-yourself abortion. One of the proponents says this: "In my experience, women make this choice not because they have no other choices, but because it's what they actively and autonomously want to do." They're primarily doing this through drugs that induce that at-home abortion. \

Or more recently this disturbing account which has been going on for some time of abortion doula. A doula is someone who in the natural birth process comes alongside a woman to help her in the birth process. But there are actually abortion doulas. Here is an account from an abortion doula named Alex Ronan writing in a New York magazine.

The writer talks about “coming alongside of these women and providing them with emotional and physical support during their abortions. Ronan worries that the positive narratives about abortion, intended to protect abortion rights around the country, isolate and silence patients who struggle with their abortions, even if they know getting an abortion was the right choice. Ronan is just as absolutist in her fervent support of a woman's right to abortion as others are. The difference is that she thinks putting a positive spin on the procedure ignores the variety of responses she sees from women.” I won't read the responses that she writes about because they are so disturbing in her description as an abortion doula coming alongside of these ladies to help at this time.

Or perhaps you've heard of the video Internet series that is on YouTube entitled “Kids Meet”. Kids meet all kinds of different things and they're made into videos. Then there's this one. It is “Kids Meet Someone Who's had an Abortion”. A series on YouTube. Amelia Bonow, the founder of “Shout Your Abortion” tells kids in this video having an abortion is normal. It's like going to the dentist but having a bad dental visit. She goes on to say this in a tweet: “The ‘Kids Meet Someone who had an Abortion’ video now has been seen by over 1 million children. Huge thanks to the anti-choice mob for sharing widely and exposing tens of thousands of conservative women and children who've had abortions to the fresh seductive idea that they don't have to hate themselves.” I don't know anybody who wants a woman to hate herself because she had an abortion. Our heart for anyone in that circumstance is just the opposite. We want them to experience God's love and want them to know God's grace. We want them to realize God's compassion. But here her description is the seductive idea that they don't have to hate themselves. It's hard to process and to realize that filmmakers, video makers, authors, celebrities, professors, teachers, politicians are telling our young people, our children, even adults all manner of deceptive and disturbing things.

But you know what? We better not turn away. We better do as one Christian woman blogger wrote and she said in her blog don't turn away. If your children are of the age where they could be exposed to this video, you sit down with them and you watch the video with them. Explain to them why this isn't normal. Explain to them why this is disturbing. We dare not turn away to what's happening in our culture and in our society.

Then the last word would be defiant. It's defiant. It's deceptive. It's disturbing. It's defiant. It was many, many years ago now that Bill Clinton said he longed for an America in which abortions were safe, legal, and rare. Remember when his wife, running for the presidency just this last year, made the unfortunate statement that she later changed but she called abortion a tragic choice. There is a growing movement within the abortion community that has a totally different light of having abortions be safe and legal and rare. They want them to be common and want them to be celebrated.

In that article that I've made available by Abigail Favale, 'Confessions of a Feminist Heretic', she writes about the change that came into her life. She writes about becoming pregnant with their first son. She writes about how she went and got a sonogram early on and in that sonogram they detected something that required her to come back sooner than maybe most women would to get a follow-up sonogram. This is what she writes: "We were only 12 weeks in, just 10 weeks after conception. The last time I had seen him on that murky gray screen, he had been only a lima bean huddled inside a life-giving bubble, his heartbeat a tiny window that opened and opened and opened. He was a baby then, a minuscule human, but I had to stretch my imagination to see it. Here we were, just a few weeks later; I assumed he would be a bean still, only bigger. But no! he was still small enough that we could see his whole body at once on the screen. He was huddled no longer, but kicking and bucking around, the bubble of my womb his playpen. His head was round and perfect. His brain bloomed like cauliflower as he sucked his thumb and paddled his legs. I was shocked at how quickly he had become recognizably, indisputably human. Still within the first trimester."

She goes on to give an account of something that happened in Texas. You might remember Wendy Davis and she was a legislator and very openly pro-abortion. As all of that was unfolding there was this national debate going on about this whole matter of abortion. Abigail Favale was in her first pregnancy with her little son. She writes about this: "In the midst of the fray, a fellow writer I knew tweeted her chagrin at never having had an abortion, which prevented her from fully joining in the revelry. I read this tweet, just a string of offhand characters quickly lost in the flurry, and my enthusiasm chilled over." Remember this is a lady self-described as feminist, pro-choice. A change is

taking place. “I had been pro-choice for years, like any good feminist, but this lauding of abortion as some kind of jubilant rite of passage, a cause for celebration, was a sentiment that stopped me cold. My unborn son at 12 weeks, a thriving tiny human on parade –this image rushed into my mind, a courier bearing a message I did not want to hear, but could no longer ignore.”

Someone else who has the exact opposite view of life and abortion said this: “I believe that a fetus is in fact a human life. So what if abortion ends that life? And that doesn't make me one iota less solidly pro-choice. After all, all life is not equal.” That, my friends, is where we are not only going, but it's where we are today in this debate. Abigail's response to that viewpoint is stated this way: “Every dehumanizing ideology succumbs to the same temptation: to see the undesirable other as a non-person, and thus disposable. In this distorted light, the disposable of an unwanted person becomes not only morally permissible, but meritorious, a praiseworthy act. I have come to recognize that there is never a safe way to draw a dividing line between ‘human being’ and ‘person’. That line, even when drawn with the best of intentions and loftiest ideals, leads to gravest evil.” When I read that I couldn't help but think of Judges chapter 21 and verse 25 where it says “and everyone did what was right in their own eyes.”

How is it that you and I, who believe that life is sacred because God has created it, that He sustains it from conception to death, that He places great value on every person because they're made in the image and likeness of God, how do we respond in the light of these things? These are not new things, but these are things that we simply need to review as the people of God. I think when we think of that we must begin with prayer. We have to be praying. We are in a spiritual battle. We don't wrestle against flesh and blood. People on the other side of this issue are not our enemy. They are people who are deceived. They are people who are on a path that for the most part they don't even realize where is going to take us as a culture and society. We recognize that this is a spiritual issue so we pray for those who are caught up in the abortion industry. We pray for women who face this issue that they will have somebody come into their life who will give them another perspective, that they will make a different choice. We pray for our government. We pray for judges to stand strong. We pray for our politicians to

understand the reality of life being sacred and special and valuable to God. We pray ultimately for an awakening in our country, a spiritual awakening.

I think secondly we need to continue to teach a Biblical perspective. As we read our Bibles, it's amazing how many times we come across this teaching of the value of life even in the stories of the Bible that we might not normally think of it this way. They are all shouting to us of the value that God has given to each and every person. I know this is not an easy subject and yet it is vitally important that we recognize and understand that God is the one who has placed value on every human life.

Fundamentally this is a theological and spiritual issue. We need to be well-versed in what the Bible says about this. This is our calling as the people of God. Life is a gift from God. Children are to be viewed in that way. with all the struggles that come with that, yet the great joys that God intends for parents and families to experience together.

Thirdly, we need as a part of our calling not only to have a voice but we need to support the ministries and the efforts of those who are on the front lines valuing life in the way that they do. Right here in our own community, we have Gateway Express Testing. It's with great joy that I announce to you this morning that just on Tuesday night the elders voted to give \$5000 to Gateway to encourage them in the battle that they are in every day bringing these kinds of messages to people in our community. You may want to join with us in that effort and give personally to the ministry and support them out on the front lines of life.

Then fourth, adopt and care for foster children. This is something that we are increasingly becoming a part of in our own church. We saw testimony to it this morning. What a great thing it is to see these children brought into loving Christ-centered gospel teaching homes. That can be a part of how we impact our community as a church and as a family and supporting those who are involved in this and considering what God would have us do in this regard as well.

Then finally, we live out the gospel. we live out the glory of the gospel. We don't sit in judgment on somebody else for the decision that they have made, from the vantage point that somehow we're way better than they are, that we would never do that. In fact, we recognize that we are not any better than anybody else. But we realize that God by His love, grace, and compassion would have us reach out to everyone who

is around us. Jesus is the one who said He would give His life for ours. In an abortion, a mother says I'm going to give the life of my child for myself. Jesus is the one who says I will give My life so that you can have life. The voice of sin is loud but the voice of forgiveness is louder still.

Listen. As our vision, we speak of as a church wanting to know God, to know His Word, to know His perspective, of loving people. People who find themselves sometimes in extremely difficult life circumstances and choices. Many of these ladies who find themselves in this situation face tremendous economic and financial pressure. We need to find ways as the body of Christ to come alongside and help and support them as they face this difficult decision.

Ultimately we need to live out the gospel every day. That gospel that has come to us. That gospel that says all of us are on level ground at the cross. All of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, but God in His great and amazing mercy comes to us through His Son Jesus. Through His death on the cross, He has provided a way for us to have our sins forgiven and for us to be in a relationship with Him just as it has for everyone else.

Let's pray. Gracious Father, we thank You that You are the giver and sustainer of life. Thank You, Father, that all life is special and precious to You. Lord, we pray that on this particular day and as this anniversary is acknowledged this week, we pray that we would stand for life. We pray, Father, that the church of Jesus Christ would be bold and strong in its witness for life. We pray that we would do all the things that we can, Father, to love those who are in this difficult situation, support them, and help them as they seek to make a choice that literally life hangs in the balance. Father, as the people of God, we call out to You. We pray that You will strengthen us and enable us as only You can. In Jesus's name, amen.