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Transcribed Message

January 23, 2022

Message: The Issue That Won't Go Away

Genesis 1, Psalm 139

I read an article by a guy named Trevin Wax. Trevin is the vice president of Research and Development at North American Mission Board. He is an author/writer and often contributes to various blogs. He wrote an article recently entitled "Why Roe vs. Wade Might Not Make it to 50". This is year 49 and as you know the Supreme Court has already heard arguments back in December with regard to the possible overturning, or in some way impacting and affecting that law. He raises this question that Roe vs. Wade a year from now we may not be commemorating the 50th anniversary of Roe vs. Wade. We may be celebrating something else that is even more in keeping with what we are thinking of this morning in terms of the gift that God has given to us of life. But here we are on this morning still operating under this current law that does allow for abortions to be taking place all across our land, and understanding that if that law would be impacted or reversed that it would then simply go back to the states. Abortion would very likely continue in many parts of our country.

If you've been paying attention at all to the news in these last couple of days and weeks you've heard some startling stories along the way. For instance, the one that happened last week in New Mexico. You may have seen the video. It's a hard video to watch honestly of a 17-year-old teenage girl that pulled up her car next to a dumpster. She gets out, opens the back door, pulls out a black gym bag, walks over to the dumpster, throws it in, gets back in her car, drives away. Five hours later, some people having heard the cry of a baby, pull that gym bag out of the dumpster and the baby is, as far as I know, doing well and is in the hands of DHS of New Mexico. When she was interviewed by the police with regard to that incident, she kept referring to what was in the gym bag as "it". She didn't want to acknowledge that it was a living baby.

You may have also seen that the New Jersey governor, who was just reelected last fall by the narrowest of margins, this last week signed into law a new law that would

protect the citizens of New Jersey to be able to have an abortion right up to the moment of delivery. Of course, as it always happens in those situations, there was something of a celebration on the part of the people who were there to see that signing of that law into office. A law that literally allows for abortion right up to the moment of birth.

Then you may have seen it just even more recently, California governor Newsom submitted his budget for 2022. Within that budget, he is asking the Legislature to allocate \$20 million as a form of incentivizing California medical students who will promise to become abortion providers. The state of California will pay off either their student loans, or give them the tuition money as they continue in school right now.

All of those things continually point us to this issue that is before us and that I have said this is the issue that simply will not go away. I think part of the reason why this issue will not go away, for many of us I would hope, is because of the Christian conscience. The Christian conscience and the voice against abortion isn't going to end because in my understanding of the Word of God, this is the heart of God. This is the heart of God. This matter of life and justice flows out from the very heart of God. That is what the issue is before us.

When we do step into this particular topic on Sanctity of Human Life Sunday, I like to just stop whatever we're doing and just take this morning, and in addition to the parent-child dedication, just focus our thoughts on why it is that we take the position that we do. When I do that, I'm very mindful that I'm speaking to potentially four different groups of people. I just want to enumerate who those groups are and acknowledge this morning this challenge that is before us. I understand first of all that there a lot of people who like myself believe that abortion is morally wrong. That's probably the majority of us this morning. You'll find yourself no doubt agreeing with most, if not everything, that we talk about this morning as we look at this issue from the perspective of Scripture.

But I also realize that in a group like this, there may very well be those who believe it's a woman's choice and that this matter of abortion is something that she should decide and she should decide alone. If that's you, I want to say first of all I'm glad that you're here. You maybe didn't know we were going to talk about this this morning but I'm glad you're here. You're welcome here at Covenant, no matter what your position on this particular issue might be. I hope you'll hear me out. Whether I

persuade you and you change your mind or not, I hope that you'll hear me out and more importantly that you'll hear what I believe the Word of God has to say about this issue.

Thirdly, there can be a group that is undecided about this matter of abortion and maybe you're in that position to where you've kind of gone back and forth. You find yourself at times listening to the issues related to the pro-life side and you agree with that. Then somebody else comes along and give you their reasons for being on the pro-abortion side and you find yourself thinking that's got merit. Again, whatever that might be, I would hope that we would see from Scripture God's perspective on this.

Then the last group are those who have had an abortion. That fourth category that could include anybody in the first three categories. Within that category, we recognize that there are those among us who have experienced this particular issue in a very personal way. Again, I simply want to say to you that our heart this morning is not to speak words of condemnation. Our heart this morning is to speak with regard to the value of life, to see what it is that God says about this, and to extend the love and grace and forgiveness that God alone provides. All of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. We may not have all experienced an abortion, but all of us have failed, we have failed significantly, and we have failed in many ways. Our message to you this morning is that God's grace is sufficient and there is forgiveness for each and every one of us, no matter what.

Here's what I'd like to do in the moments before us. I'd like to just again visit why we must carry on in this battle for life. Why is it that we are committed to this? I want to just put before you four simple straightforward reasons that I hope will be an encouragement to us in understanding God's perspective on this matter of life. The first one is because Genesis begins with life. It begins with life and it shows us that life is valuable, that life is unique in the eyes of God. When you go to the very first book in the Bible and the very first chapter of the first book in verse 26 we read: "God said, 'Let us make man in our image and 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 of 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."

That little phrase “let us make man in our image and in our likeness” had never been said in the creation account in the opening chapter of the book of Genesis. That's the first time we're introduced to that little phrase. Let us make man in our image and in our likeness. That phrase, while this appears for the first time in verse 26, is then repeated six more times in these opening chapters as if God is wanting very much to underscore this truth to us. You and I. Male and female. Man and woman. That is the idea of mankind here. It is the generic word that we are made distinct from the rest of all of God's creation. There is something decidedly different when God created the man and the woman to reflect His image and His likeness. It is to reflect His very nature. It is to reflect His personality. It is to reflect in some regards His character. We as humans are given the uniqueness of intellect, emotion, and will. The very things that describe and define personality and awareness that God possesses. So that makes us distinct among all of God's creation. That makes us unique. That makes us special. that gives to us and places upon us every one of us special value.

It's not surprising that when you get to the second book of the Bible, in the book of Exodus, when God gives us the 10 Commandments, the very rules that God set forward to govern life, both in our relationship with Him in the first four, and then with each other in five through 10. It's not surprising with what we read in Genesis 1 about the uniqueness, the value, the preciousness of life that God has created in stamping His image and likeness on each of us that when we get to that statement in Exodus and the sixth commandment says you shall not take another person's life. You shall not murder. There is something uniquely valuable, something very precious, something special, and so it's wrong, God says, to take another life. In effect God says you're supposed to handle this with great care. Handle with care.

I remember many, many years ago when we were pastoring a church in Kansas and we had Olan Mills come in to do a church pictorial directory. There is always a fun time when Olan Mills would come to town and do a church pictorial directory. A couple months after we had taken our family pictures, in the mail comes a package that said handle with care. We opened it up and there were pictures of our children and family. How appropriate that that's exactly what God says. God says handle this life and these precious gifts with care. They're given to you as a unique and special gift. So, we began

by just simply acknowledging that this is what God has done. He has stamped His own image and likeness on each of us.

Secondly, we also want to continue in this battle because the psalmist teaches that God is knitting together in the womb a person. A person is literally being knit together within the womb. Psalm 139, a psalm I know you are familiar with. we read beginning in 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." This familiar statement underscores this matter of design and this matter of progress. That's what's pictured in those words. We are fearfully and wonderfully made.

Many of you remember back in 2020 Bonnie had that accident and ended up having surgery to deal with it. As I came into the room to have a conversation with the doctor, who was a wonderful Jewish man, we talked, as we had before, and he told me a little bit about his story and his background. He told me that he had to do a fairly extensive amount of work on Bonnie's leg. In fact, he made an incision from her knee down to her ankle. Then he pulled out his phone and asked if I wanted to see a picture of it. Well, of course I manned up right away and said sure, I do. When I woke up, I asked him... Almost! I thought that for a minute. I'm thinking to myself as I'm looking at this why are you showing this to me. When I saw it, and it was very dramatic, I asked him now that you've done your work, do you have a picture of it all being closed up? He said no, he doesn't close up wounds like this. He lets them heal from the inside out. I said to him, "You know what the psalmist says, don't you?" And he said, actually no, I don't. I said it says that we're fearfully and wonderfully made and what you're describing to me in the healing of my wife's leg is this miracle of regeneration and the Lord's oversight of literally all of the cells of our body knitting back together her leg in a way that you can't even explain. Then I went and bought Dr. Brandt's book *Fearfully and Wonderfully Made*. I signed it and gave it to him, and hopefully he's read it and learned more about the wonder and mystery of this body that he operates on every day.

But that's what the psalmist is saying to us here. This miracle of the human body of life itself. He says that we are formed and knit. In that very picture, there's growth. This is not something haphazard. This is something that doesn't just automatically

happen. This is God doing a divine work that takes great skill. There's a knitting together.

This language is all through Scripture by the way. In Isaiah 49 verse 1: "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." Verse 5: "And now the Lord says, He who formed me from the womb to be His servant to bring Jacob back to Him and that Israel might be gathered to Him." He is talking there about God overseeing all that is happening, even in this growth process, this very early process. The language of the Bible is so vivid in these descriptions, so picturesque. It is speaking to us of God's work. Psalm 139 verse 15 talks about the frame. What is the frame? It is our skeletal body, the growing of the bones. Intricately woven. There's an embroidery process taking place. Verse 16 – our unformed substance. That little embryo is so tiny. God has His eyes on every part of that process. He sees it. He oversees it.

To add to that, notice thirdly because in the Bible the unborn are always referred to in personal terms. The unborn are always referred to in personal terms. In this 139th Psalm that is before us, there are 24 verses in this Psalm. There are 50 personal pronouns in Psalm 139. That's the extent to which the Holy Spirit is going to impress upon us that this life that is being developed and growing within that mother's womb is something that God again uniquely oversees.

In Genesis 25:22, it is talking about the birth of Jacob and Esau. Before they are born, Rebecca wonders in Genesis 25:22 about what's going on inside her. She's got twins in there and she makes the statement about the children struggling within her. She uses that word "children" struggling within her. They're still in her womb. They have yet to be born and she calls them children. But then later on, we have that same word in the Hebrew for children used of a child that is born. There is no distinction in the mind of God between those two. There's a child that's being formed and embroidered by the hand of God, and then when that child is born it's called by the same Hebrew word. You have the exact same thing in the New Testament and the Greek language.

In Luke 1:41, remember when Mary and Elizabeth get together. Mary comes into the room and Elizabeth is pregnant with John the Baptist. John the Baptist, when he hears the voice of Mary who will be the mother of his Savior, leaps in the womb of

Elizabeth. The word there for child is the exact same word that is used in Luke 1:41 to speak of Jesus when the wise men came to visit him as a child. All through Scripture, there is this consistent message that we literally have to work to miss because God goes out of His way to say to us that this matter of life and justice is something that He is so personally involved in and engaged in. Scriptures know nothing of referencing a child at any point in development as an “it” or thing or whatever else we might think of in our modern terminology.

Finally, we must carry on because science demonstrates that life begins at conception. The unborn looks like us. There is no mystery here. I think for all the posturing, for all the supposed uncertainty, for all the comments that those things are above one's pay grade, I just can't understand... no. That's all there is. I'm sorry to be so blunt, but all of that is just posturing. All of that is simply a denial of what we know of what science tells us every day. It is only going to tell us even more and more as technology advances and as we are able to literally have a window into the womb. We can see what it is that God is doing in the development of that child. The moment that egg and the sperm come together, I absolutely, confidently believe that a life is conceived in that moment. At that moment, there is a new strand of DNA that is beginning, that is unique and unlike any other strand of DNA on this earth. It is something that is marvelous. It is mysterious. It is wonderful. It is something that the Bible speaks to and I believe science supports fully as well. A DNA structure that is uniquely different from that of the mother and uniquely different from that of the father. We have a distinctive different human that is formed in that moment.

David said in Psalm 51 and verse 5: “In sin did my mother conceive me.” He doesn't mean that the sexual act was sinful but he is simply saying that from that moment of conception he was separated from God. I was in a place where I was going to need a Savior. But his statement speaks to the fact that he sees it happening at conception. Not in the first trimester. He didn't say in the second trimester my mother conceived me in sin. No, he didn't say that at all. He didn't say at some point of viability I received a sin nature. No, he said at the moment of conception. As technology continues to advance and expand, it will, I believe, only show us even more and more amazing things.

Because, my friends, the Christian conscience and the voice against abortion, I believe the Christian church is not going to let this go away. I believe we sense the call of God to continue in the stand for life. I trust that we will continue to pray to that end. This truly ultimately is an issue of life and of death.

So, what do we take away? We must never ever give up in this battle for life. That's what we take away. Whether we are here next year regrettably celebrating the 50th anniversary of Roe vs. Wade, or whether something has happened to change that and to allow certain legal exceptions or changes on the part of states, we will be here, Lord willing, again next year speaking about life and the value of life and the gift of life. But here's the other thing that we can never give up on.

Here's the other thing that we can never stop doing. We can never stop proclaiming a message of God's love, of His grace, of His forgiveness. I just don't think that other messages are nearly as effective and as nearly well received as a message that speaks to the very heart of each person with regard to their relationship ultimately with God. There many things that we can learn about this issue and I think all of those are of value. But when it comes to interacting with people who have made hard choices often earlier in their life, I think what they need to hear from us as the people of God is that we also have a message that we are never going to give up on that, we're never going to stop sharing. It is that message of God's grace, of God's forgiveness, of God's love, of His compassion. That's what should underscore ultimately all of our hearts towards all of these who are a part even of this industry. Our heart should break for the abortionist. Our hearts should break for the ones who are caught in this web of deceit. We know ultimately the only hope and healing comes from God and His gospel alone. I'm so glad for this statement that says the voice of sin is loud, but the voice of forgiveness is louder. So grateful for that. We have a message that doesn't exclude anybody or anything from God's grace, God's love, and God's forgiveness. There isn't anything that any of us could have ever done or will do that God in His grace cannot overcome.

Let's pray. Gracious Father, we are again reminded this morning of the value and the preciousness of life. Father, we are also reminded of the way that You have demonstrated that value in the sending of Your Son Jesus. You sent Your Son, Father,

into this broken and sin-filled world in which He was horribly mistreated, rejected of men, dying a terrible death on the cross so that today all of us who will simply acknowledge that we have sinned and fallen short of Your glory and Your standard of perfect righteousness, which is everybody in this room, that, Father, in acknowledging that and acknowledging that what Jesus did was enough to bring about the forgiveness of any sin or any number of sins that we have committed against You, that You have told us that You will forgive us and that You will save us and that You will redeem us. You will rescue us. Father God, we thank You for that. We pray that this gospel would go forth powerfully from this place through our lives, through our words. We pray right now for anybody that's listening who has not yet come to that point of realizing Jesus as their Savior, that by Your Holy Spirit right now You would open their eyes and give them understanding. Grant to them, Father, the gift of repentance. We pray in Jesus's name, amen.