

Hope Christian Church
D. Todd Cravens
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Sermon Series: *Series Name*



What You Do To the Least of These, You Do To Me

Sanctity of Human Life Sunday

Matthew 25:31-46 (ESV)

³¹"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. ³²Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. ³⁴ Then the King will say to those on his

right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' ³⁷Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? ³⁸ And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? ³⁹And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' ⁴⁰And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

⁴¹"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴² For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' ⁴⁴Then they also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?' ⁴⁵ Then he will answer them, saying, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' ⁴⁶ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

Those who grow up after a particularly tragic event seem never to experience the lasting effect of the event when compared with those who lived through it. Significant tragedy seems to imprint itself upon the soul of those who experience it in a way that does not happen with those who are born after the event.

Those who live through a calamity are propelled into action when those events involve injustice and evil intent. Those who are born after such events happen, often fail to experience the same level of motivation and conviction to act as do those who live through them first hand.

Perhaps the most significant tragedy of my parent's generation was the assassination of John F. Kennedy on November 22, 1963. One beloved man, the president of this nation lost his life that day.



Many others of you will remember the Space Shuttle Challenger disaster on January 28, 1986. Seven men and women lost their lives 73 seconds after take off on that day.



Or many of you would argue that the events that unfolded on September 11, 2001 is the most significant tragedy through which you've lived. In the attack on the World Trade Center, 2,996 persons died that day. But among teens and young adults living today, I suspect each of those events are vague notions that have little, if any, lasting effect on their lives.



Perhaps the most significant tragedy of our teens today is the Boston Marathon bombing on April 15, 2013. On that day, 6 people died and 280 people were injured. All of these tragedies move us and leave an impression upon our souls as they should.



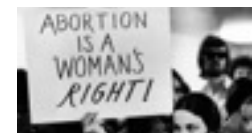
Yet there is a tragedy of incomparable magnitude which happens every day in this country which does not move us as it should or impress us as it should. We are in danger of an entire generation growing up unformed of the true nature of this disaster. I fear that if the next generation does not feel the weight of this tragedy and is not moved by the grim reality of this calamity, then an even greater calamity will befall us as a nation. If the young people among us are not moved to fight for truth and justice, then this great evil may never be abolished in our lifetime.

What tragedy am I talking about? I'm talking about abortion.

Two days ago was the 43rd anniversary of Roe v. Wade. January 22, 1973 was the date the United States Supreme Court legalized what is euphemistically referred to as abortion. Since that date, 43 years ago, 58,586,246 babies have been murdered in the womb. I use the word murder because that's what it is. Murder is the intentional taking of a human life. Abortion is the intentional taking of a human life. In this country, since 1973 there have been 58,586,246 pre-born humans whose lives have been taken. That means there are over 3,300 lives of little humans that are taken every day. This the tragedy of which I speak.

58,586,246 is a staggering number. That number is roughly equivalent to the total population of all six New England states, New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. Imagine waking up tomorrow morning and discovering that all people in those eleven states had been murdered. Imagine the effect of such news. Would there be an impression made upon your soul? Most certainly there would be. Mostly certainly we would be moved to act in response to such news.

This news ought to move us as a nation to act. But doesn't. Why? Why don't we act? Some of us don't know what to do. Some of us don't think abortion is wrong. In fact, we have been taught that abortion is a right.



Abortion is not a right, it is a grievous wrong.

If you're here today and you've had an abortion, or you once advised your girlfriend to get an abortion, please know that the forgiveness that we proclaimed at the beginning of this service was intentional and not accidental or merely liturgical. The words, "*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*" (1 Jn 1:9), are intended for you. Please hear this message of forgiveness and cleansing, not the voice of condemnation.

God is not faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us from *some* of our sins and *some* of our unrighteousness. He is faithful and just to forgive us from *all* our sins and cleanse us from *all* our unrighteousness. Believe this. This is amazing, life-change truth. Receive his forgiveness. Rest in his acceptance. Walk in his love for you. Come in faith to Jesus and let all the sins of the past be completely washed away. Rest in the truth that if you come to God through Jesus, you are adopted into his family. Paul reminds the new believers in Thessalonica, that they are "loved by God" and "he has chosen you."¹ All that I say today is not intended to punish the sinners who are present, but to motivate the sinners who are present in order to change our future. I pray for a future where abortion is abolished. And one day it will be abolished.

In the passage that Andrew just read, Jesus teaches that one day in the future he will judge all people from all nations.

Matthew 25:31-32 (ESV)

³¹"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. ³²Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

His judgment will be based upon how each person has treated, in Jesus' words, **the least of these**. To the righteous who will inherit the kingdom of heaven, he says,

Matthew 25:40 (ESV)

⁴⁰And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

To the unrighteous who do not inherit the kingdom, he says,

Matthew 25:45 (ESV)

⁴⁵ Then he will answer them, saying, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.'

¹ 1 Thes 1:4; 2 Thes 2:13.

In context, the “least of these my brothers & sisters” refers to the disciples of Jesus, both male & female, (Greek, *adelphos*, “my brothers and sisters” v.40)² who are in need, who cannot provide for themselves, are weak, and helpless. However, Jesus makes a connection between little children and his disciples.

Mark 9:36-37 (ESV)

³⁶ And he took a child and put him in the midst of them, and taking him in his arms, he said to them, ³⁷ “Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me.”

How we treat the weak, the insignificant, the helpless, and the defenseless is of great concern to our Lord Jesus. *What we do, in the name of Jesus, to “the least of these, his brothers and sisters” is what we do to Jesus. How we treat the most fragile of God’s creative work is directly related to how we treat him.*

And all life comes from the intentional, personal action of God.³

(Genesis 2:7 ESV)

⁷ then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.

God is personally active and involved in the creation of every human life. All human beings are created in the image of God.

(Genesis 1:27 ESV)

²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

All men and woman are created in the image of God. This why murder is forbidden by God.

(Genesis 9:6 ESV)

⁶ “Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image.”

To shed the blood of man is an attack upon God himself, since all people bear his image. God hates the shedding of innocent blood.

(Proverbs 6:16-17 ESV)

² Cf. Mk 3:32; Lk 8:20.

³ See also John 5:21, 26.

*¹⁶ There are six things that the Lord hates,
seven that are an abomination to him:
¹⁷ haughty eyes, a lying tongue,
and hands that shed innocent blood,*

Abortion is the shedding of innocent blood. God promises his judgment against those who do shed innocent blood.

(Psalms 106:37-38 ESV)

*³⁷ They sacrificed their sons
and their daughters to the demons;
³⁸ they poured out innocent blood,
the blood of their sons and daughters,
whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan,
and the land was polluted with blood.*

(Psalms 106:40-41 ESV)

*40 Then the anger of the Lord was kindled against his people,
and he abhorred his heritage;
41 he gave them into the hand of the nations,
so that those who hated them ruled over them*

The United States is polluted with the innocent blood of 58,586,246 tiny humans who have been murdered in this country. And yet if we amend our ways, and repent, and seek God's forgiveness, perhaps he will be gracious to us.

(Jeremiah 7:5-7 ESV)

⁵ "For if you truly amend your ways and your deeds, if you truly execute justice one with another, ⁶ if you do not oppress the sojourner, the fatherless, or the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own harm, ⁷ then I will let you dwell in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your fathers forever.

(Jeremiah 22:3-5 ESV)

3 Thus says the Lord: Do justice and righteousness, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor him who has been robbed. And do no wrong or violence to the resident alien, the fatherless, and the widow, nor shed innocent blood in this place. 4 For if you will indeed obey this word, then there shall enter the gates of this house kings who sit on the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they and their servants and their people. 5 But if you will not obey these words, I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that this house shall become a desolation.

We may be tempted to believe that abortion will never be abolished, but it only takes one courageous person to stand up against the insanity of sin.

Telemachus⁴

In the fifth century there was Asiatic monk named Telemachus who through much prayer sensed that God was leading him to go to Rome. Soon he obeyed the leading of the Lord and set out on the long journey.

He arrived in Rome during a festival and crowds of people were pouring into the coliseum. Not knowing exactly what he was to do or why God wanted him in Rome, he followed the masses into the arena. The gladiators were about to fight.

Telemachus had never seen anything like this and he was stunned by what was unfolding before him. As the two gladiators saluted the emperor, it took a moment for their words to sink in. They were to fight to the death? The crowds cheered. All of this was happening for the purpose of entertainment? Telemachus couldn't believe it.

The fight began. Telemachus realized he could not go away and ignore this. Neither could he be silent. He ran to the floor wall and shouted, "In the name of Christ, stop." His little voice made no difference amidst the roar of the crowds. So he leaped down onto the floor of the arena and tried to stand between the two gladiators, all the while shouting, "In the name of Christ, stop!"

He appeared quite comical to the crowds at first, seeing the tiny monk in his habit, scurrying here with his monk's habit flapping in the wind. But as he was getting in the way of the fight, soon the crowd cried out for his blood. Then one of the gladiators slashed him across his chest and stomach. He fell bleeding to the ground. For a moment everything stopped and the crowds grew quiet. One last time, Telemachus cried out, "In the name of Christ, stop."

In the silence, some people on the top tier of the coliseum began to walk out. Then a few more followed, and then more. Soon the entire coliseum had emptied. There were many in Rome who were not in favor of those games and the death of Telemachus crystallized the opposition. The emperor banned the games and that day was last day that men shed blood for the sake of entertainment in the stadium.

When the Supreme Court decided in favor of legalizing abortion in this country in 1973, they thought the issue would be settled and opposition would be silent. Making sin legal, does not make it right. The voice of opposition has not stopped and it will not stop because murdering unborn humans is unjust. As long as there are people of God in this country, there will be a voice crying out, "In the name of Christ, stop!"

⁴ This story is found in *Loving God* by Chuck Colson, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1983), 242-43.

If you want to get informed on the issue, check out the app Students for Life produced called Abolish Abortion. It's available if you have an iPhone, iPod, or an iPad.

It has a developmental timeline which shows the stages of fetal growth.

It also has a great apologetics section which helps you learn how to discuss the issues and defend a position in favor of life.



Women considering abortion need help. They need to know the love of God and they need to know there are people who will stand with them and walk with them through the difficulty. We want to be a part of the solution. This is why we partner with the Boston Center of Pregnancy Choices.

I have invited Chris Gleason to join us to tell us more about how we can get involved.