

Topic: Sanctity of Human Life

40

Psalm 40 (ESV)

I will not expound Psalm 40 today, but I will use it as a basis of a prayer which I will pray at the conclusion of the sermon. Today we once again step out of our series in the gospel of John in order to join with thousands of our Christian brothers and sisters all over this country in commemorating National Sanctity of Human Life Day. Sara Loy, executive director of DayBreak Pregnancy Resource Center, is with us today and she will come to speak to you after the sermon.

Ronald Reagan established this National Sanctity of Human Life Day through Presidential [Proclamation 5147](#) which he issued on January 13, 1984. The timing was chosen to coincide with the Sunday falling closest to January 22, which is the date the Supreme Court handed down its ruling on *Roe v. Wade*. The proclamation begins with these words,

The values and freedoms we cherish as Americans rest on our fundamental commitment to the sanctity of human life. The first of the "unalienable rights" affirmed by our Declaration of Independence is the right to life itself, a right the Declaration states has been endowed by our Creator on all human beings—whether young or old, weak or strong, healthy or handicapped.

The foundation of this day comes from the fact that life comes from God, who is our creator. We learn this truth from the first pages of Scripture. **All** life comes from God. God alone is the Giver of life¹; therefore God alone has the right to take life. In His word God has given strict commands that no man's life is not to be taken away by any other man (Gn 9:6; Ex 20:13). The taking of life is a right that belongs only to the One who first gave life.

And yet over time we have encroached upon God's right to give and take life. The age old temptation still calls to us—we *want to be like God*. So we have taken upon ourselves His mantle as judge and we have wrongly assumed for ourselves the right to decide who should live and who should die. We rob God of His right and authority over His creatures at both ends of the spectrum of life—at both its beginning and its end.

Robbing God of His right and authority over life is called murder, but murder is such a chilling word. It's hard to get comfortable with a word like 'murder.' And so we redefine it and call it by another name. At the beginning of life, we judge some of the youngest people as unworthy of life and we call this right **abortion**. At the end of life, we judge some older people unworthy of life and we call this right **euthanasia**.

Redefining words leads to cultural shift. And so we stand with our feet upon the sliding cultural tectonic plates as we drift from being a culture of life into a full embrace of a culture of death.

¹ 1 Sam 2:6; Dt 32:39.

Euthanasia

At the far end of the spectrum is euthanasia, which used to refer to the killing of those with apparently terminal diseases or those who were in extreme suffering but lately has come to include both the elderly and those deemed ‘unproductive’ or those considered to be an undue ‘burden’ upon society. Euthanasia is being embraced all around the globe.

The Canadian National Post [announced](#) last week that Quebec has plans to legalize euthanasia. It’s already legal in the Netherlands and in Belgium but only when the patient is able to clearly express a desire to die, is terminally ill, and is experiencing unbearable pain.

However, last Sunday’s edition of the London [Telegraph carried an article](#) about a unique case of so-called “euthanasia” involving twins. On 14 December 2012 the two 45-year-old twins were “euthanized,” though the paper got it right by using the correct verb, killed, since neither of the men were terminally ill or suffering unbearable pain.

Both men were deaf and they were told they were both going blind. Upon hearing of the impending blindness, they requested that they both be euthanized since, “they were unable to bear the thought of not being able to see each other again.” Here’s how the presiding doctor described their deaths.

“They were very happy. It was a relief to see the end of their suffering,” he said. They had a cup of coffee in the hall, it went well and a rich conversation. The the separation from their parents and brother was very serene and beautiful. At the last there was a little wave of their hands and then they were gone.”

We paint such a lovely face upon death.

This is not just happening in far away countries, it’s coming ever closer to home. It’s been legal in Oregon since 1997 when the “Death with Dignity Act” was passed. Again, note how pleasant and appealing that sounds. Since 1997, when that law was passed, 600 people have self-administered a lethal dosage of drugs which were prescribed by their doctors. And remember what just happened here in our state. The mandate for physician assisted suicide in MA was narrowly defeated in November (51 percent to 49 percent).

Euthanasia stands at the far end of the spectrum of life, while abortion stands at the other end.

Abortion

This Tuesday will be the 40th anniversary of the Supreme Court’s two decisions—*Roe v. Wade* and *Doe v. Bolton*—which legalized the killing of unborn children in this country. According to The Allen Guttmacher Institute, since those decisions were handed down January 22, 1973 through 2008 more than 50 million babies have been aborted. Current estimates are that on average more than 1.25 million abortions are performed in the United States annually. That means that today the total number of all abortions in U.S. since 1973 is close to 55 million.

There are many reasons to address this issue, but there are two particular passages of Scripture which convince me that I (i.e.we) cannot be silent about this issue.

The first is **Proverbs 6:16-17**. These verses tell us that among seven things that God hates are ***hands that shed innocent blood***. If there is any blood that qualifies as being ‘innocent blood,’ certainly it is the blood of pre-born children.

However, the passage that most terrifies me most is Proverbs 24:11-12.

Proverbs 24:11-12 (ESV)

11 Rescue those who are being taken away to death;
hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter.

12 If you say, “Behold, we did not know this,”
does not he who weighs the heart perceive it?
Does not he who keeps watch over your soul know it,
and will he not repay man according to his work?

When we stand before God one day to give an account of our lives and He asks the question, “Why were silent about the slaughtering of my children whom I created? Why did you say nothing to oppose a culture of death?” Answering, “Well, I had no direct knowledge of what was going on and I didn’t feel qualified to make such decisions,” will not be an acceptable answer. He who knows our deepest thoughts and motives is impossible to be lied to. He will not except excuses.

The daily slaughtering of the innocents is an issue about which we cannot and must not be silent. And in this country alone, 3,000 babies are killed every day. The like experiencing [the number of] 9-11 every day. The entire nation rightly raged against the pointless murdering of 20 precious children in Newtown, CT but Planned Parenthood murders one child every 94 seconds² of every day of every year this country is merely silent, we subsidize it to the tune of millions of dollars!!!

In a speech this past Wednesday President Obama said, “Our first task as a society, [is] keeping our children safe. This is how we will be judged.”³ He is exactly right, but we cannot be content to think of only one class of children—the born, while closing our eyes to another—the pre-born. Just because they are small does not mean they cannot be seen. Just because they are quiet does not mean we can ignore them. *Abortion is an issue about which we cannot and must not be silent.*

The magnitude of this issue is breathtaking. It is difficult to imagine 55 million babies being slaughtered over a 40 year period. The current population of the United States is about 311,00,000. That means that the total number of abortions since 1973 is equivalent to about 16.5% of the entire population of the US. Fifty-five million people are missing who, if not for legalized abortion-on-demand would otherwise be with us today. It’s hard to comprehend how many people 55 million is. Or another way to get your head around this number is to think of it as the killing all residents of all six⁴ New England states... *four times over!*

So, is talking about this really worth our time?
Can your voice really make a difference?
Is it insane to image *Roe v. Wade* being overturned?

² WORLD Magazine, January 26, 2013, p. 8.

³ “Remarks by the President and the Vice President on Gun Violence” Jan. 16, 2013 accessed 18 Jan. 2013 available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/01/16/remarks-president-and-vice-president-gun-violence>.

⁴ MA 6.6 million, ME 1.3 million, VT .6 million, NH 1.3 million, CT 3.5 million, RI 1 million = 13.4 million.

Is this worth the time?

When you choose to contemplate the brevity of life, it forces you to think about what is really and truly important. As I was preparing for the message on prayer that I delivered January 6, I came across the following passage a biography of George Müller. Müller wrote in his journal,

“I have served Satan much in my younger years, and I desire now with all my might to serve God during the remaining days of my earthly pilgrimage. I am forty-five years and three months old. Every day decreases the number of days that I have to stay on earth. I therefore desire with all my might to work. There are vast multitudes of orphans to be provided for.”⁵

By the time he died, at age 92, he had established 5 orphanages which looked after over 10,000 orphans and he had helped to establish several dozen schools which provided Christian education to over 120,000 children, many of whom were orphans. Müller knew his days were drawing quickly to a close and to what did his thoughts turn? They turned to helpless, defenseless children.

A few days after reading this, I came across a letter written by Fiodor Dostoevsky which he wrote to his brother the day after his sentence of execution had been commuted. In the final paragraph of the letter, he wrote,

“Remember then what I have told you: plan out your life, do not waste it... think of your children.”⁶

It is striking to me that both Müller and Dostoevsky, when contemplating the end of their lives, had children on their minds.

Can Your Voice Make a Difference?

You may be thinking, “I’m just one person. What can one person do against the massive machinery of the multibillion dollar abortion industry? Can one voice really make a difference?”

Saint Telemachus⁷

In 404 A.D. there lived an Asiatic monk named Telemachus who spent his quiet days fulfilling his monastic vows through study, prayer, and gardening. He was responsible for raising vegetables for his cloister community of brothers. One day while praying he sensed the Lord leading him to leave his monastic home and visit Rome, but he wasn’t sure why. It was Christmas time and the journey would be long and cold and hard.

He had never been to Rome, which was the capital of world. It was the largest, busiest, and most populous and wealthy city in the world. He was quite nervous about such a pilgrimage, but he was absolutely convinced that the Lord was leading him to do this. So he obediently followed, taking with him only what he could carry on his back.

After the long journey, he finally arrived in Rome. It happen that he arrived just after the Roman army had returned from winning a significant victory over the Goths. The masses of people were

⁵ Basil Miller, *George Muller: Man of Faith and Miracles* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1972), 71.

⁶ M. Lincoln Schuster ed. *The Worlds Greatest Letters* (Old Saybrook, Simon & Schuster: 1940), 304.

⁷ See Charles Colson, *Loving God* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan: 1996), ?. See also *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs* (1563) available at <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/foxe/martyrs/files/fox103.htm> accessed 19 Jan 2013.

heading into the Coliseum for some celebration, he thought. Still not knowing what he was to do, yet constantly praying for the Lord to show him why he was there, he followed the crowds into the Coliseum.

He then saw something he had never seen in his life, and struggled to comprehend exactly what was happening. On the floor of the arena he witnessed two massively armed men together approach the emperor and with one voice shout, "Hail, Caesar, we who are about to die, salute you!" The two men then turned upon one another and engaged in mortal combat.

Telemachus could not believe what he was seeing, neither would he endure it. He could not watch, neither could he leave and forget, as though it never happened. He made his way to the perimeter wall and began shouting, "In the name of Christ, stop!" Of course, his voice was not heard over the shouting of the crowd.

So he leaped over the wall over onto the sand and ran out to the gladiators. He took one by the arm and said, "In the name of Christ, stop!" The man knocked him down with a shove from his shield. Again, lying the dirt, he shouted, "In the name of Christ, stop!" The gladiators tried to ignore him and went back again to fighting.

Undaunted, Telemachus got to his feet and threw himself between the two gladiators, while pleading, "In the name of Christ, stop!" Frustrated, one of the gladiators, slashed Telemachus across his chest and stomach with his sword. Telemachus crumpled. As his life blood drained from him and stained the sandy arena floor red, he looked at both gladiators and once again weakly said, "In the name of Christ, stop!" He then died.

The crowd fell silent as they witnessed the death of this holy man. The gladiators paused. Then something amazing happened. Someone on the top tier quietly got up and walked out. Then another followed, and then another. Soon the entire coliseum quietly emptied. That was the last time Romans gathered to be entertained by watching men murder each other.

One voice made a difference. One voice can *still* make a difference.

What would England be like today had William Wilberforce chosen to be silent regarding the issue of slavery? What would the United States look like today had Martin Luther King, Jr. chosen to remain silent regarding the issue of segregation?

What if Wilberforce would have simply resigned himself to the fact that slavery was simply the law of the land and never sought to overturn it? What if Martin Luther King Jr. had simply resigned himself to fact that segregation was the law of the land and never sought to overturn it?

Is it insane to imagine that *Roe v. Wade* could one day be overturned?

Was it insane to dream of an England free from slavery?

Was it insane to dream of a United States free from segregation?

It is insane to dream of America free from abortion?

In his letter from a Birmingham jail, Martin Luther King Jr. wrote,

Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.⁸

Abortion may seem like an issue far away and distant, but that's not true. You're probably sitting next to someone who has been touched either directly or indirectly by this issue. In some way or another we are all affected by abortion. And with this many ladies in the room, statistically probably about 30 of you women will have had an abortion. Abortion is not the unforgivable sin. Abortion is not a scarlet letter. Grace is available and forgiveness is possible.

A Prayer on the 40th Anniversary of Roe v. Wade

I have written a prayer based upon Psalm 40.

- [1] We wait patiently for You, LORD;
to incline to us and hear our cry.
- [2] To draw us up from this awful pit of bloodshed,
which we have dug for ourselves and fallen into our own trap,
we yearn for You to set our feet upon a rock,
and make our footsteps secure.
- [3] May You soon put a new song in our mouth,
a song of praise to our God.
So that many will see and fear,
and put their trust in the LORD.
- [4] Blessed is the person who makes
the LORD his trust,
who does not listen to the proud,
or to those who go astray after lie that the unborn are not persons!
- [5] You have multiplied, O LORD our God,
your wondrous deeds among us and
how you form a child in the womb is one of the most wonderful!
None can compare with you!
We will proclaim and tell the world
that all life comes from you.
- [6] You do not delight in empty religious ceremonies,
but you rejoice in people who take action based upon faith in you and truth!
Burnt offerings and sacrifices are meaningless,
when we leave your house and then do nothing to change the world for good.
- [7] When we have all died and are gone,
may it be written of us:
- [8] "They delighted to do your will, O God;
Your law was written within their hearts."

⁸ Available <http://www.stanford.edu/group/King/frequentdocs/birmingham.pdf> at accessed 19 Jan 2013.

[9] Let us tell the glad news of deliverance
in this great city of Boston;
Let us not restrain our lips, about the sorrow and wickedness of abortion, O LORD.

[10] Let us not hide your deliverance within our hearts;
but let us speak openly to hurting women of your faithfulness and your salvation;
Let us not conceal your steadfast love and forgiveness
from the young women who face pregnancy alone.

[11] As for you, O LORD, do not restrain
your mercy from us;
only your steadfast love and your faithfulness will
preserve us!

[12] For the evils of abortion and euthanasia surround us,
their instances are beyond number;
these iniquities have overtaken us,
and we cannot see clearly;
the number of these killings are more than the hairs of my head;
our hearts fail us.

[13] Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver us!
O LORD, make haste to help us!

[14] Let those be put to shame and disappointed altogether
who seek to snatch away life,
whether the life of the pre-born or the long-born,
let those be turned back and brought to dishonor
who delight to hurt the pre-born or the aged!

[15] Let them be appalled because of their shame
who say, "We are entitled to these choices!"

[16] But may all who seek you
rejoice and be glad in seeing you turn this terrible tide;
may those who love your salvation
say continually, "Great is the LORD!"

[17] As for us, we are poor and needy,
but the Lord takes thought for us.

You are our helper and our deliverer;
Help us embrace all life as a gift from You,
Deliver us from embracing a culture of death.

Turn the hearts of the fathers and mothers back to their children.
Turn the heart of this nation, to cherish the lives of children
and respect the lives of the elderly.

Do not delay, O our God! Come quickly and answer our prayer.

We cannot and must not be silent about these issues.

One voice, your voice, can make a difference.

What would we say with our voice? To those who would seek to end life, let us say, "In the name of Christ, stop!" May there not be another 40 years under *Roe v. Wade*.

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