

"Why We Must be Pro-Life"

Genesis 9: 1-6

Website Version

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Text: (NIV) ¹ Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth. ² The fear and dread of you will fall upon all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air, upon every creature that moves along the ground, and upon all the fish of the sea; they are given into your hands. ³ Everything that lives and moves will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything. ⁴ "But you must not eat meat that has its lifeblood still in it. ⁵ And for your lifeblood I will surely demand an accounting. I will demand an accounting from every animal. And from each man, too, I will demand an accounting for the life of his fellow man. ⁶ "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man.

This portion of the Word of God tells us that **"in the image of God has God made man."** As much as we may love our animals and birds and all living things, the Bible says that only one living thing with an animated lifespan is made to be like God Himself in some sense. Only man...humanity...mankind male and female are living beings with something of the same nature as God Himself. And the life of that image-bearer is to be guarded when innocent not just because it seems like common sense to all of us...but because God demands it! A powerful thought indeed. But first, let us pray.

To begin a heavy sermon on a lite note today, I'll share with you an amusing moment from my distant past as a Dad. Some of you will remember that Donna and I always disciplined our sons when they were little by requiring them to write an essay about their behavior and their need to change it at times. I can say without question that all four of them are fine writers, one even earning his living in DC as a political writer. But I recall a day when one of our guys was really quite disrespectful and I was totally offended. I looked at him and said "I am your Dad you know! I am a human being besides! And all human beings deserve respect. So, go and look up what it means to be a human being and write me an essay on why all human beings should be respected." So, here's this probably eight year old guy looking all puzzled sitting with a dictionary. He looked up the words "Human being" and came back with this very tender and thoughtful offering:

"A human being is a homo-sapien. My Dad is a homo-sapien. Therefore, I will respect him from now on!"

It had never occurred to me that the basis for human respect was our status as homo-sapiens, in Latin a "rational man." But was a good try for a third grader!

Turning serious this morning...we must more and more wonder if the culture we are living in even cares about the inherent respect that should be given a human being. Because of ultra sound technology, virtually everyone knows that an unborn child is a human being. We've all seen the photos of babies only a few weeks old in the womb sucking their thumbs and quickly looking more and more like the rest of us. We've all heard the facts that well before the end of the first trimester the child has a heartbeat and brain waves. It's entirely obvious that the unborn child is simply that. An unborn...child. Yet, we have made it legal to treat that child as sub human. How can that be? Why is that?

Let me say before proceeding that there is an issue for the pulpit at this point. Here is what I mean. Many modern preachers follow a formula that says sermons should be "actionable." In other words, don't bother preaching on something that your listeners can't do anything about. Preach on the need to forgive your neighbor. A Christian sitting in the pew might say "Yeah...I need to work on that." But preaching about abortion only leads to despair. The average Christian already finds the idea of abortion abhorrent and probably already votes for pro-life candidates. So, why bother since they can't do much about it anyway? Well...I think that is nonsense because God calls us to love the truth and hate sin. Before we can act on behalf of righteousness we must understand what is happening. And as Christians we can always volunteer at the crisis pregnancy center and we can always find ways to help the cause. More importantly we can always lean into the power of prayer to change things. I've often wondered what God might do if a hundred million Christians were to pray several times day that America would lead the world in repentance for the sin of abortion. In short, truth in the mind and soul of the born-again believer is always "actionable."

In January 1984, I became an Associate Pastor at the Goodwill Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Montgomery, New York. It was a great privilege for Donna and for me to move with our little guys back to the church where we were saved some years before. At that time, people were wondering if the theme for the year would be "1984" based on George Orwell's 1949 novel. Orwell predicted a very different society including technological advances and an oppressive political state in which people were controlled by a central government that dictated how they must live.

Many of the things foreseen by Orwell have not happened even these many years later. But I see great evidence for one thing that was in the book. It was called "Doublethink." Not "Doubletalk" which is a word we all use but "Doublethink." In the world of "Doublethink" a citizen will be able to hold together two totally contradictory ideas and live peacefully with the internal dissonance that would cause. Let me illustrate. For example, if a person believed the government should provide funding for health care for all citizens then that person would not vote for a candidate opposed to that

position. That would simply be inconsistent and no one really contradicts their own values internally. Or a simpler example. A passionate Tiger fan would not go to opening day this April against the Royals and cheer for the Royals! That would be "Doublethink." But what if the society gradually became re-programmed by a tidal wave of contradictions so that "Doublethink" was not only possible but probable? I believe that is what has happened in our society. People think and act in ways that are internally contradictory.

This was perfectly illustrated in the events of Tucson a couple of weeks ago. Everyone was shocked and hurt by the horrors of those shootings and killings. No one cared whether the Congresswoman was a Democrat or a Republican or the others who were killed were whatever. We were all just appalled and sickened at the wicked and sinful attacks carried out. President Obama gave a very fine speech at the service that was helpful and warned people not to cast about for blame but to embrace civility. It was a good message. But think about something. What was the most poignant element in that whole event? We were troubled by a hard-working and sharp Congresswoman being shot and we all prayed for her. But what was even more poignant? The death of others? Yes! But mostly the death of a beautiful nine year old child who was at the rally innocently with her family. Why did that so tear at our hearts? Because a nine year old child is totally vulnerable and defenseless. A helpless child!

"Doublethink" made it possible to feel terrible about the little nine year old girl. Yet...even as the President spoke and the nation grieved over this child lost to a madman's bullet...all across America at that moment unborn children even more innocent and vulnerable were being put to death legally and methodically in the womb...and no one was calling for any memorial services. It's probable that within an hour's drive of that location babies were being put to death in the womb at the same time the nine year old was being grieved. And it is absolutely likely that many people who were grieving for the little girl were fine with abortion down the road at that moment! That's "Doublethink." They are able to say "An innocent nine year old girl has an absolute right to live but it's totally acceptable to destroy life in the womb." What is the difference? Where you are located? Your life is precious if it is outside of the womb? This kind of thinking is insane friends! God is telling us as Christians that we must be pro-life!

In Philadelphia this week, a monster of a human being named Kermit Gosnell was charged with multiple murders because his abortion clinic is loaded with body parts from dead unborn children. His own staff admits he killed many after they were born. He has shelves filled with tiny hands and feet. The man is a sadist but his clinic was inspected repeatedly by the state and nothing was done. Pro-choice politicians enabled him to stay in business and even local hospital officials who tended to some of the women he butchered did nothing. Many of those same people spoke out against the Tucson shootings as the result of poor gun control and right wing politics!

"Doublethink!" Add in wicked hypocrisy. Brothers and sisters...you know why America is doomed unless it repents? Not because of climate change and not because of the deficits and not because of gays in the military. All of those things are the symptoms of a decadent culture. If God has scheduled the Day of Judgment for tomorrow, many of the prominent people in our culture will be cast into outer darkness forever because they have aided in the deaths of fifty million unborn children! And that's not just a problem in Philadelphia.

"Doublethink." Here's a perfect example. The University of Michigan Hospitals are considered among the best in America. But I find it amazing that on a given morning the pre-natal surgical unit at the Mott Children's Hospital can perform a delicate surgery on a child with a deformity in the sixth month in the womb...while across the building in the obstetrics unit another team is cutting away the life of a perfectly healthy six month old child also in the womb. Why does the one child deserve all that can be done to save his or her life but the other is treated like waste? Because some adult made a decision as to who will live and who should die. And because we have become masters of "Doublethink." What is the difference? You're life is precious in the womb if you are wanted?

The results of "Doublethink" are often hidden under the surface of a society. In 1982, I chaired a committee at Gordon-Conwell Seminary in Massachusetts that arranged for speakers to present their views on ethical issues. We were very blessed to have among others a physician named Dr. Mildred Jefferson. Dr. Jefferson was a black American and a graduate of the Harvard Medical School. She was a surgeon at the Boston University Medical Center and she was passionately against abortion. And...Dr. Jefferson who recently passed away at age 84 gave us a prophecy. She said that abortion would be used in the years ahead to wipe out whole races of people especially members of her own black race. Why? Because drugs [prostaglandin] were coming along that would make ending a pregnancy a private affair. Someday there would be many, many more abortions that were recorded statistically especially among the poor classes.

Now we have in leadership even a President who is a man of color who needs our prayers. Dr. Jefferson would be profoundly stunned at his pro-choice views. She might refer all of us to a black Pastor in California named Walter Hoy who has written about "Black Genocide." Pastor Hoy says "My people are Dying." This from a civil rights leader right after we celebrate the life of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Allow me to quote from an article by Charles Colson published a few days ago drawing on Pastor Hoy's work. Mr. Colson writes:

"Since 1973...over 14.5 million black babies have been killed by abortion. Every single day, 1,200 black babies are put to death in abortion facilities, making abortion the leading cause of death among African Americans! Nearly half of all black babies conceived die in abortion chambers today. This means that a black child is safer on the streets of the worst neighborhoods in American than in his mother's womb.

Hoy notes that between 1882 and 1968, 3,446 blacks were lynched by the Ku Klux Klan. Today, abortion kills more black Americans in less than three days than the Klan killed in 86 years! Think of it.

American blacks make up twelve percent of the U.S. population, yet thirty-seven percent of all abortions are performed on black women. This is because eugenic-minded pro-abortion forces target American blacks by putting abortion clinics in black neighborhoods, according to Hoy.

He's also turned his rhetorical guns on America's first black president. Quoting Elvita King, niece of Dr. King, he says that "those of us who care about the civil rights of all Americans-born and unborn--oppose Obamacare because we oppose the expansion of the most racist industry in America--the abortion industry."

This leads to another reason why we must be pro-life. Those who cringe when this pulpit touches on the political will just have to understand that being prophetic will inevitably touch on political topics...with care but it will happen. When Obamacare was being passed Congress insisted that there be no provisions for "end of life counseling." They correctly saw the possibilities of some in the medical communities politely reminding people that resources are limited and others are ailing...so why don't they simply accept death at their older age. What was fascinating is that on January first of this year, the administration enacting legislation paying for end of life counseling but reversed it only three days later as they saw the immediate outcry. Count on it friends, we are moving towards a materialistic and utilitarian society in which the right to life will be weighed against the realities of budgets and other priorities.

Having said those things, we should be asking more specifically...how am I as a Christian to view these issues? Does the Word of God really speak to these matters with clarity? Of course it does. And it addresses the issue of "Doublethink" at the same time. In fact, "Doublethink" actually leaves a spiritually darkened person unable to think clearly and in a state of offense

against God. We find "Doublethink" condemned by the Prophet Isaiah when he says:

Isaiah 5:20-21 (NIV) ²⁰ Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. ²¹ Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight.

This confused thinking often surfaces even among Christians when the issue of right to life is discussed. Some people say "Well, if you're really pro-life then you must be against the death penalty." Now there are good reasons to be very careful with the death penalty because it is so final and many people have been executed wrongly. But the death penalty is actually a pro-life position if murder has been clearly established. The pro-life position is about justice. It does not argue that all people have a right to life no matter how they behave in a society. Because God is just, He actually demands the death penalty when genuine guilt is established. Consider today's text:

⁴"But you must not eat meat that has its lifeblood still in it.

God was speaking to Noah after the great flood. In a sense, God was starting the human race all over again and making clear what He required. Who cares about eating meat with the "lifeblood" still in it? God did and does. Here is what that's about. Both the Bible and medical science tell us that life is in the blood. Pagan religions then and now sometimes drink blood believing it has magical properties. We've all heard of strange rites of passage where hunters must eat the warm blood of an animal they have killed. As if they are transferring the life strength of the dead animal to themselves. Why would God prohibit this? Not just because it is gross. But because God gives the lifeblood to the conscious being. And even after the death of an animal there is still life in its blood. To eat the animal in any way while it was still alive was a supreme act of disrespect for life, even animal life. That is what animals do to each other as when a lion chases down a deer and eats it alive. But man is not to do that! Man is not an animal! Eating the lifeblood would be an extreme act of disrespect for life and thus for God who alone gives life. God goes on to say that human lifeblood is even more precious. We read:

⁵ And for your lifeblood I will surely demand an accounting. I will demand an accounting from every animal. And from each man, too, I will demand an accounting for the life of his fellow man.

Not long ago, we read of a lion in a zoo that was put to death after mauling and killing one of its handlers. There was protest suggesting that the animal was innocent and not really dangerous. But it was interesting that in our society typically animals that kill are put to death. Not just a deterrent but because we still feel they have lost their right to life if they kill a human. We sense that human life has a more exalted value.

Now, this text is saying that only God can call for the death of an "innocent" person. Let me be clear. None of us are innocent in the ultimate sense of the word. But if I am not guilty of a capital crime, you may not take my life. God may allow my life to be lost to an accident or disease or certainly old age. But God reserves for Himself the right to decide when innocent life may be taken.

But if I am guilty of a capital crime, God requires that the society, after establishing my guilt, take my life. Why? Because justice requires that I be held accountable. Why? Consider the reason God gives:

⁶ "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man.

What God is saying here is that man is made in the image of God and if another man takes his life when he is innocent then the image of God has been distained and held in contempt! In other words, God is telling Abram that in the society he was to set up, man would be required to punish other men who wasted the life of His image-bearers by ending their lives! God does not even give man a choice! If a man has so little respect for a being made in His Divine image as to kill it, that man must be held accountable.

But here is the larger point about why we must be pro-life. It is the peculiar and wickedly unique sin of man that he wants to be his own God and he wants to assume the prerogatives of God! Only God can take life that deserves to live. If man does it, that man has taken actions that God alone reserves for Himself.

Thus, no person who loves and knows God will naturally want to sin against Him that way. Taking innocent life is saying to God "I will be God!"

Nineteen years ago when I first began this work at Cornerstone, there was a popular clergyman in town. He'd been here awhile and was well-known and well-liked. I sat thru a couple of meetings with him and others and when I mentioned my desire to bring clergy together to protest abortion, he grew distant. It was then that I learned that he was actually looking into opening an abortion referral service in his church! He spoke passionately about feeding the poor and finding housing for the needy but he was fine with abortion. I found him repulsive. I didn't make many friends when I explained my absence from that group later. I simply said I cannot take anyone including clergy to be a Christian who promotes the death of the unborn. I'm far from sanctified and I struggle with sin. But I refuse to fall into spiritual religious "Doublethink."

When my little son struggled to define a human being he came up with "homo-sapien." That's technically correct. But we know something about human beings that can be said of no other created creature. They alone are embedded with the image...the spiritual sensitivity of God the Creator; they alone have eternal souls. But sinful man rejects God and would kill Him if he could. He hates Him because he knows that God has a rightful claim upon his worship and love but sinful and natural man wants to be his own God! Yes...sinful man would kill God if he could. **Actually...he did.** When God the Son came dwelt among us in the person of Jesus Christ...they killed him.

Please pray about all of the implications of God's insistence that human life be protected. And pray for America to repent of this sin. Because I am absolutely convinced that when we are Pro-Life we are pro-Jesus. And if we love Jesus we certainly must love the little people who helplessly live in the wombs of America...because he does.

Let us pray.

