

WHAT ABOUT ABORTION?

Bald Eagles are an endangered species in the United States. Destroying a single egg from an eagle nest is a fine of \$5000 and one year in jail. In Florida, if you go to the beach and take a Sea Turtle egg from a nest you can be fined \$20,000 and put in prison for a year. In Arizona even the Iguana is considered an endangered species and there is a \$500 fine for destroying an Iguana egg. Why? Because what is growing within those eggs is protected and is considered to be valuable and therefore worth saving. So why is that unborn babies in the womb do not deserve the same protection?

The United States have been in many costly wars. There were 25,000 people who died in the Revolutionary war. Another 600,000 died in the American Civil War. About 50,000 died in the First World War and about 400,000 died in the Second World War. There were about 50,000 who died in the Korean War and 55,000 who died in the War with Vietnam. If you add all these as well as the many other conflicts it comes to about 1.3 Million people in all wars, from 1775 to present. That may seem like a lot of people. To put this into perspective, since January 22, 1973 when the Supreme Court legalized abortion on demand there have been over 60 million abortions in America. More unborn lives have been snuffed out than 45 times the number of all Americans lost in all wars.

Let me start by saying today that there are very few messages that I have ever preached that have burdened me more than this one. I started writing this message back in June, and it has been eating away at me ever since. I recognize that this is the first sermon I have ever preached on abortion. I have mentioned it in passing in past messages, but never really addressed the topic in detail. I apologize for that.

I think that one of the reasons that people do not preach about abortion today is that it has become such a political issue. I will talk about that in a minute, but I want to first examine what the bible has to say about it.

1. What the Scriptures Say

A major league baseball player hit the ball far out in left field. Bases were loaded. The one who was on 2nd base made it all the way to home plate and he collided with the catcher. Immediately, the one team yelled, "He's safe, he's safe, he's safe." The other team yelled, "He's out, he's out, he's out". Upon looking at both teams the umpire calmly announced, "He ain't nothing until I call him!" The issue is not how you or I feel about the sanctity of life, but about how God feels. It's not how you and I call it, but it's how God calls it. So what does God say about abortion?

The bible is clear that all of us are created in the image of God and therefore have value and worth. The big question that most people ask is whether life begins at conception or whether life begins at birth. When a baby is still in the womb, is it just a blob of tissue or is it a person? The overwhelming support of scripture is that unborn babies are people. That life begins at conception. You became the person that you are today not when you were born, but when you were conceived.

Psalms 139:13-16 For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. 14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. 15 My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, 16 your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

This passage is clear, God created us and ordained a life for us before we were even born. Notice the language. It says my frame, I was made, I was woven together, my body. Not some blob of tissue. You became the person you are today before you were born. You existed as a person prior to birth.

It is interesting that this scripture says that God KNIT ME TOGETHER in my mothers womb. I read about Dr. David Menton who served at Mayo Clinic and then as a professor of anatomy at Washington School of Medicine. He was explaining Histology (the microscopic study tissue). When you look at tissue under a microscope, you can see that it is woven. Our skin is made up of collagen fibers that are very tough. They are stronger than steel for the same cross-sectional diameter but less elastic than steel. So how come they are stretchy? It is because of the way they are woven together. You weave one way, it is firm. You weave another way, and it is elastic. It is amazing the complexity at the microscopic level.

God created us in His image, which means we are special. Life is precious. It is sacred. The bible says that, because life is sacred, that murder is wrong.

Man is a unique creation, the object of God's loving care in both creation and redemption. The reason the Bible forbids the taking of human life, except judicially, is that it is the life of a human being with a divine likeness -- John R. W. Stott

Genesis 9:6 Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man.

So again, the question is 'when does life begin?' If it is wrong to take a human life after birth, is it also wrong to take a human life before birth? Again, the bible is very clear;

Exodus 21:22-25 If men who are fighting hit a pregnant woman and she gives birth prematurely but there is no serious injury, the offender must be fined whatever the woman's husband demands and the court allows. 23 But if there is serious injury, you are to take life for life, 24 eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, 25 burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise.

We often quote 'eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth,' but fail to understand that the first time this is mentioned in the bible is in the context of abortion, the killing of an unborn child. The bible clearly says here that an unborn child is a person, that injury to an unborn child is the same thing as injury to any other person. Killing an unborn child is clearly in the eyes of God murder.

So what does the New Testament have to say about this issue?

Luke 1:41-44 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. 42 In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! 43 But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 44 As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.

There are two things to consider here. The first is that Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit because God recognized that the baby that had just been conceived in Mary was already the person of Jesus. How do we know that the baby had just been conceived? Look at the timeline.

Luke 1:38-40 I am the Lord's servant, Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." Then the angel left her. 39 At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, 40 where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth.

The angel says in verse 35 that the Holy Spirit WILL come upon her. Future tense. It had not happened yet. As soon as the angel departed it says that Mary "got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country..." The town was about a day's walk away. Let's say that Mary had to get packed and spent a few days in preparation for the journey. That means that, at the most, maybe 5 days had passed. When she arrives God identifies the newly conceived baby as Jesus. Do you want to see a picture of what Jesus looked like that day? This is a picture of 5 days after conception, this phase of human development is called the blastocyst. This is identified as Jesus.

Secondly it says that the baby that was within Elizabeth jumped for joy. It says that the baby was 6 months old. That meant that the Holy Spirit not only touched the spirit of Elizabeth but also the spirit of the unborn child within her. As human beings we are both body and spirit. Clearly the spirit of John was already present. If an unborn child can be filled with the spirit, how can you argue that it is not a person? It says that the baby "leaped for joy." How can a random lump of tissue feel joy?

Together this confirms that life begins at conception. Our spirits arrive on earth the moment our bodies begin to exist, and that happens at the moment of conception.

When we lived on the Doulos there were a number of Koreans that were also serving on the ship. I asked one of them how old he was, and he asked me "do you mean my western age or do you mean my Korean age." I did not know there was a difference, but he explained that in Korea, when a baby is born they are already considered to be 1 year old. That is because they count the time in the womb as their first year of life.

The bible is clear that life begins at conception. This is the teaching of the bible. You were a person long before you were born, and the taking of any life, including the life of an unborn child, is murder.

2. What the Sceptics Argue

There are many reasons that people get abortions. I read one survey that listed all the reasons that people gave for having an abortion.

- 25% of women deciding to have an abortion want to postpone childbearing.
- 21% of women feel they cannot afford a baby.
- 14% of women have a relationship issue or their partner does not want a child.
- 12% of women feel they are too young (their parents or others object to the pregnancy)
- 11% of women feel a child will disrupt their education or career.
- 8% of women want no (more) children.
- 3% of women have an abortion due to a risk to fetal health.
- 2% of women have an abortion due to a risk to maternal health.
- 2% of women have an abortion because of rape

Within this list we see the many arguments that people use for trying to justify abortion.

The first thing that many people argue is that ‘It is my body, and I can do whatever I want with it.’ First, that is just not true. You cannot just do whatever you want with your body. There are many laws saying what you can and cannot do with your body. You cannot use your body to drive a motor vehicle in a reckless way. You cannot use your body to steal what does not belong to you. You cannot use your body to hurt another person. If a person were to say, “It is my body, and I will use it to rape whomever I want” you would say that is crazy. You cannot use your body to hurt or violate another person against their will. You cannot just do whatever you want with your body.

But more to the point, it is not your body. The child may be inside your body, but it is not part of your body. The baby is genetically different from you. It has a different heartbeat, different finger prints. It is a separate living person and may even have a different blood type. It is interesting that people who argue that the baby is part of their body before birth do not use the same argument after it is born. It is exactly the same person. The only difference is location.

So is something your body simply because it is inside you? Yes, the baby is connected to you, but just because something is connected or dependant on you does not give you the right to kill it. Newborn babies are dependant on us as well. Can a mother kill a baby while it is nursing from her, simply because it needs her and is connected to her? Of course not. What about people who require temporary life support to live? Does the fact that they must be connected to something to survive mean they are less than human? No. It is not your body.

The second thing that many people argue is that abortion is necessary because they are just not ready for children. They feel they are not mentally, emotionally or financially ready for that kind of responsibility. Just because you are not ready for a child does not mean you can kill it. That is not an excuse. Say you have a one month old and you are struggling with depression or struggling to make ends meet. Does that mean you can just kill the child because it is an inconvenience? Of course not.

No one really starts out ready for children. Parenting is something you learn by doing. It requires trust. Interesting that so many people seem ready for the responsibility of making a child but not ready for the responsibility for raising one. Making kids is easy, raising them is tough. If you are old enough to make the choice to have sex, you are old enough to bear the consequences of having sex. You are free to choose but you are not free from the consequences of your choices.

A third thing that people argue is that abortion is necessary because the child is unwanted by the mother or her partner or her parents. Does this mean that we should kill everyone in our society who is unwanted? How about people that are handicapped and are a burden and are unwanted? Hitler killed millions of Jews because they were unwanted, does that justify his actions?

It is unwanted because it is inconvenient, and that is the real issue. The vast majority of abortions happen simply because people do not want to live with the consequences of their decisions. They see abortion as a convenient way to deal with a problem.

What they do not understand is that abortion does not make the problem go away. It simply pushes the problem deep down. Yes, the baby may be gone, but their decision to kill it remains. There are women who believe with all their hearts that unborn children are not really people, that the baby is just a clump of cells and that there is no problem removing and destroying it.

It is interesting that 84% of abortion-minded women who received an ultrasound at a pregnancy resource center did not end up having an abortion. Why? They saw the truth. They saw their baby.

For women who have had an abortion, most live the rest of their lives struggling with guilt. Why? Because God has given us a conscience. Because God has hardwired truth into us. No matter how much you try to convince yourself you are doing what is right, no matter how fallen we become, there is still the truth of God's image within us. Sin is always sin, whether we choose to recognize it or not.

The Royal College of Psychiatrists in Britain, looking at several recent studies, have confirmed that having an abortion can lead to mental illness in women. Depression, regret, irreconcilable grief and mental anguish are four possible mental health risks associated with abortion. Women who have abortions are 65% more likely to experience clinical depression than those who carry their pregnancies to term finds an Ohio State Univ. survey.

So what about rape? What about when the woman did not choose whether to have the baby because she was sexually assaulted. OK, we can talk about that. But let's be clear, you do not set policy based on the less than 2%. That does not justify the vast majority (98%) who use abortion simply for convenience. With the introduction of the new morning after pill, this will increasingly be the case.

What about cases where an abortion is necessary because the life of the mother is in danger? This is extremely rare. C. Everett Koop, M.D., formerly the Surgeon General of the United States, stated that during his 35-plus years of practicing medicine, "Never once did a case come across my practice where abortion was necessary to save a mother's life."

What about when the baby is sick or deformed? I know that this is a difficult question. I can tell you about friends of ours from Leamington. They found out early in a pregnancy that the baby was not developing naturally. The baby was growing without a brain. The doctor recommended an abortion. The couple prayed about it, and they decided to have the baby anyways. When it was born, the brain had not developed. The baby lived for a few hours. They had the opportunity to hold it and pray with it. They said their hellos, and their goodbyes, and then the baby died.

What if they had aborted that baby? They would have always asked the question 'what if.' Maybe the doctors were mistaken? They would not have had the opportunity to hold that baby in their arms. They would not have had the chance to look into his face. Instead of a sweet but painful farewell, they would have been left only with the question, 'what if...'

3. What the Saints Should be Doing

For me the issue of abortion is not a political issue, it is a truth issue. However, abortion is a political issue because it has been made a political issue. Clear lines have been drawn over this issue. It used to be that in every political party there were moderates, there were those who leaned right and left in the same party and there was freedom to disagree on some issues. Overall, the party had it's own agenda, but there was room for individual belief. Not so today. Things have become completely polarized.

Back in 2015 it was decided that you could not be a part of the Liberal party of Canada without believing and agreeing with abortion. You could disagree on a variety of other political issues, but you have to be pro-abortion. Former NDP leader Thomas Mulcair said his entire caucus supports abortion. "No NDP MP will ever vote against a woman's right to choose," Mulcair declared. "For us, it's a fundamental question of principle."

Last year we were rejected from Summer Student funding because we would not sign the attestation. People have asked what that attestation was really about. What it actually said. Well, here it is;

“Both the job and my organization’s core mandate respect individual human rights in Canada, including the values underlying *the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* as well as other rights. These include reproductive rights and the right to be free from discrimination on the basis of sex, religion, race, national or ethnic origin, colour, mental or physical disability or sexual orientation, or gender identity or expression.”

The attestation speaks of the core mandate of our church. What is our core mandate? It is the bible. As Christians it is the bible that directs us. It is God who calls the shots. Does the bible value rights for all people? Absolutely. All people are created equal by God and therefore have value and worth and deserve protection. We all agree with human rights, but what about these ‘other rights.’

The charter says that ALL PEOPLE have the right to life, liberty and the security of the person... All people. To agree with this attestation you would have to believe that unborn babies are not people. Basically, this attestation says that everyone in Canada has the right to live, except unborn babies. They are not protected. They have no value or worth. They are not people. They have ZERO rights.

I am not a very political person. I do not like talking about politics because it is a divisive issue. However, there comes a time when you have to stand for what is right. When a person votes, they generally choose the political party they vote for based on the platform of that party. There are lots of decisions that must be weighed, things like the economy, immigration and the environment.

In any war there are battles than can be avoided and battles which must be fought. Wisdom is knowing the difference between them. Generals know that there are some hills that are not important, but other hills which must be taken because they are vital if the war is going to be won. There are some hills not worth worrying about, and other hills that are worth dying on. I believe that unborn babies are precious innocent people created in the image of God with rights. It breaks my heart that, since 1974, an estimated 4 million babies have been killed in Canada. Just this year 100,000 babies will be murdered. For me personally, I believe that abortion is a hill worth dying on. I believe it is an important issue because I believe God sees it as an important issue.

Because I believe that this is a hill worth dying on, it directs my choices. It guides the decisions I make when I vote. It is not that things like whether Brampton gets a University or whether minimum wage increases are not important. It is just that they pale in comparison with this issue. Millions of children are dying. Whether you agree with me or not, it must direct your decisions as well.

If you have had an abortion, I want to say that today’s message is not about judgement. We have all blown it in many different ways. The church is a hospital for the sick, not a country club for the healthy. All of us have blown it. All of us have sinned. If you struggle with this or any other choice you have made in life, the good news is that there is healing and forgiveness through Jesus. We all like sheep have gone astray, none of us is worthy of grace but have received it through Christ despite what we have done.

I believe that the church in North America in the past has been guilty of putting a lot of pressure on young girls that get pregnant. They cannot face the idea of their friends or church finding out they are pregnant so that just adds to the pressure for them to kill their baby. I heard someone recently from the JFJ Hope Center say that one of the hardest things they have to deal with is when Christian parents come in pressuring their daughters to have an abortion because they do want to have to deal with the stigma of having a child who is an unwed mother. That is so wrong.

Sex outside of marriage is wrong. However, I acknowledge the courage of young women who, even though they have made a mistake, decide to bear the shame and keep their babies.

This should be something that we as a church should value and celebrate. While we do not celebrate the decision to create the baby, we do celebrate the courage and faith in deciding to keep the baby. If you are here today and you ever become pregnant, I want you to know that you are loved and that we as your family want to help you and support you.

If you have had an abortion, let me end with a story I heard at Urbana many years ago. Becky Pippert was speaking. She worked for InterVarsity. She told a story of a time when she was speaking and had given an altar call. A number of people came forward, including one young woman. She wanted to receive Christ but she just kept saying that there was no way that God could ever forgive her. She felt tremendous guilt about the fact that she had had an abortion a number of years before. She told Becky, "I really don't think God could ever love me. I realize that I have done wrong. I have broken God's command. I do not believe He could possibly forgive me for taking the life of my child."

Becky said the Lord gave her a word for that girl, but she hesitated. Finally, in obedience with God had told her she said, "you may think of yourself as a murderer, but I want to tell you that killing your child is not the worst thing that you have ever done. You are not simply guilty of killing your child, you are guilty of killing God's child. You were a murderer long before you ever had that abortion, and so am I. You see, both of us nailed Jesus Christ to the cross and killed him." Then she looked her in the eyes and said, "don't you think if God was willing to forgive you of killing His child, that He is also willing of forgiving you for killing your own?" Suddenly a wave of love and forgiveness came over that young woman and she gave her heart to Jesus.

All of us here are murderers, for it was our sin that sent Jesus to the cross. Whoever you are, whatever you have done, Jesus want to meet with you today.