

Sermon for Life Sunday

Text: Psalm 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.



Theme: Life Is God's gift to Us

This week marks the 40th anniversary of the *Roe vs Wade* Supreme Court decision that made abortion a fundamental right under the United States Constitution. This has been one of the most contentious decisions in the history of our country. In 2011 alone Planned Parenthood claims to have performed 333,000 abortions in our country. (PP Annual Report) That is half of the city of Milwaukee.

It is no coincidence that since 1973 respect for life has fallen dramatically in our country. There are shootings almost every day in our city. We have had horrific shootings in schools and at a movie theater in our country, and the Sikh temple and a spa in our area. No nation on this earth is obsessed with weapons as we are. In the last several weeks gun sales have risen astronomically. In addition there are now states that allow the deliberate ending of a life rather than letting nature take its course.

It makes you wonder whether anyone really looks at life as a gift of God anymore?.

I. What is the Christian response to the lack of respect for life in our society?

We are clear that the deliberate taking of a human life is wrong. In the New Testament era abortion was widely practiced by the people in the Roman empire, except in one place. It was a capital crime in Israel. While the Romans even allowed people to expose unwanted children to death or kill infants they didn't want after they were born, the Jews looked at all life as a precious gift of God, and forbid all of these practices. The early Christians continued with this view of life. Every early Christian teacher and council condemned these practices as wrong and made them illegal when possible.

Since 1973 the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod has consistently held that God forbids us to take the life of another person, and this most certainly includes abortion. (*What About* series) In convention after convention our synod has reemphasized this position. This week, thousands of Lutherans will take part in the Life March in Washington. We are sponsoring a Life Conference, and before our people take part in the march, they attend a special Life Service.

Even other faiths agree with us on this point. A few months ago when a Dutch abortion ship was blocked from entering a port in the African Muslim nation of Morocco. There were hundreds of protestors against the ship. One person commented **"We are here because we cannot accept these values, the values of massacre, It is not part of our tradition to kill the unborn."**

With regard to other life issues, I heard it best described by a doctor of one of our members recently when there was concern that a procedure would hasten death. He said, **"I am a Christian. I would never do anything to accelerate the death of one of my patients."** Christians have always been clear that it is wrong to take a human life at any stage: whether the person is still in the womb, a child, an adult, or even frail or suffering from a disability.

We also share the Gospel with those who have fallen into the temptation to take a life. Even Christians have fallen into the temptation to choose death over life. We want people to know that there is forgiveness in Christ.

There is a good example of this by one of our pastors in Milwaukee. A number of years ago before I came

to Milwaukee, several of our LCMS pastors took part in weekly protests against the Planned Parenthood Clinic when it was on Brown Deer Road. The road divided those who protested for and against the clinic. Among the supporters of the clinic was a woman who was always there. She was rather obnoxious and freely shouted a lot of obscenities at those who were protesting the clinic, including our pastors. One Saturday Pastor Elmer Scheck of St. Peter-Immanuel decided that he needed to talk with that woman. The other pastors tried to talk him out of it, but he was determined. He crossed the road. She got into his face and shouted that she already had at least 5 abortions and would gladly double that amount. He looked her in the face and said that there is no reason to bear your guilt. Our Savior gave His life to take away that sin too, "He desperately wants to forgive you." She turned and walked away, and they never saw her again. Pastor Scheck's message is the message that we share with anyone who has taken the life of another. Our Lord gave His innocent life to take away that sin too. He wants you to receive His forgiveness and rejoice in it. Whenever our hearts condemn us, our Lord invited us to confess our sin, and receive His full and free forgiveness in Christ.

II. Why is human life so precious?

It is God who created it. When God created Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, He did so with a lot of care. He formed the man from the dust of the ground. He formed the woman from a rib of the man. He breathed the breath of life into the nostrils of the man. He gave the man both a body and a soul. Our text tells us that God formed each one of us in the womb. None of us were accidents. It is God who gave us life in the beginning, and who sustains our lives as long as we live on this earth. He is the author and the giver of life. Your life and the life of every person from the womb to the tomb is a gift of God.

God valued us so much that He redeemed our lives. It was sin that brought death into the world. It has also shortened our lives on earth and made them bitter and fleeting. That is why God's gift of life in Christ is such a special gift. The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Jesus willingly gave His innocent life, to redeem our lives from sin and death. God gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will have eternal life. Faith in Him washes away our sins and gives us a rebirth as the children of God. As Christ rose from the dead, so we rise in baptism to a new life, and on the last day He will raise our bodies to live with Him eternally. Our Savior conquered death. Through faith in Him we have the gift that God meant for us in the beginning, eternal life in His glory.

Life and death are never our choice. Life is a gift of God. Death is a consequence of our sin. May God always give us an appreciation of the life that He gave to all people, and may He especially give us faith in Him for the forgiveness of sins, that we may receive His gift of eternal life.

Amen.

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