

Who Counts as One of Us?

An argument against elective abortion

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Sermon Summary

Introduction

A sermon on abortion is inherently "heavy" simply because the issue is indeed heavy and serious. But it's not just serious to us - it's serious in the heart of God. So, all the more, we should endeavor to know what the heart of the Father is on the matter - not sweeping the issue to the side because of its heaviness.

In Mt. 5:13-14, Jesus told us that we are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Therefore, if we are not active as that salt and we are not active as that light, there is no salt and there is no light in the world. We're it. Micah 6:8 says *"He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?"* God requires us to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly. James tells us that if we believe in God, then we will act according to our belief. If we don't act accordingly, it's because we don't believe. Our actions in any area of life will follow our belief. *"But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?"* (James 2:20) Martin Luther King, Jr. said "anger at injustice is the political expression of love." Addressing injustice is one of the things the Lord requires of us.

Unborn children are in fact persons. Silence in regard to their destruction is inexcusable. Prov. 24:11-12 (ESV) says *"Rescue those who are being taken away to death; hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter. 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?"* Dietrich Bonhoeffer said "Silence in the face of evil is itself evil: God will not hold us guiltless. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act." Titus 2:14, says Christ "gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works." God's purified people should be zealous for good works - which would certainly include loving our unborn neighbor. A church that will not fight against injustice and stand for righteousness is not a

church - or at least certainly not the church of Jesus Christ because He has called us to those exact things!

Recently we learned that Planned Parenthood is selling the body parts of the unborn - abortion is a business. The atrocity of abortion is incomprehensible and almost unspeakable. But it is for these reasons that we must lend our ears and our minds to the reality of what is going on in our country, understand the issue, and know the heart of God on the matter so we can be both a preserving and clarifying agent (salt and light) for this world. There is no fence on the issue of abortion - only the absolute, moral line that God Himself has drawn.

GK Chesterton said "truth is stranger than fiction because we've made fiction to suit ourselves." The news of the past few weeks has illustrated the truth of Chesterton's claim quite painfully. We have seen videos of high-level Planned Parenthood executives and doctors haggling over the parts of aborted children like they were parting out a junked car for cash. That barbaric and scandalous story was oddly eclipsed by another - our major news networks found the story of a lion poached in Zimbabwe by an American dentist much more disturbing and newsworthy than the systematic destruction of unborn children. Apparently the killing of a lion is an international outrage, but the butchery and sale of children's organs is a "yawner" for most Americans. If the lion was taken illegally, there should be justice there, but WHERE IS THE OUTRAGE - even within the body of Christ - over the killing of pre-born children and the selling of their tiny body parts for profit?

Where is the Church?

Legalized Abortion is the defining moral issue of our time - a moral monstrosity that dwarfs every other social and moral issue of our time. The womb, designed by God to be a safe place for children to grow, has become the most dangerous place in America. Governments are established, ostensibly, for the protection of the weak and the vulnerable, yet in America the pre-born (the most vulnerable and defenseless among us) have absolutely no rights that even their own mothers are bound by law to respect - including the right to life. This stripping of their rights, which has been inshrined in our laws by Roe v. Wade has transformed the womb into a blood-drenched battlefield - pitting mothers against their own children and resulting in the legal destruction (on average) of 2,900 children per day in America. Abortion is a practice that is not only killing the unborn but also leaving scores of young mothers and fathers emotionally undone and plagued with guilt and regret.

This is a difficult subject to address and for many a source of personal pain and hurt. But, love and compassion for both Christ and people compels us to speak both clearly and boldly on this subject, for if we allow our tongues to be tied, more babies will die and more mothers will be hurt. If you or someone you know has had an abortion, there is *no* sin so great that God's grace is not greater still! Isaiah 53:5 says *"But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him."* The sacrifice of Christ paid for the sin of abortion just like every other sin. Receive forgiveness in Him.

God is a God of compassion and a God of justice. Psalms 116:5 says *"Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; yes, our God is merciful."* Isa 30:18 tells us *"... the Lord is a God of justice."* As God's hands and feet on the earth, we too are to be people of compassion - and lovers of justice! Colossians 3:12 (ESV) says "Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience ..." Isaiah 1:17 tells us "Learn to do good; seek justice, rebuke the oppressor; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow." Again, Micah 6:8 says "He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?"

Addressing abortion and other injustices is not incidental to the Christian life. In fact, in the "Hall of Faith," we see that God's heroic ones administered justice: "And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets, who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, ..." (Heb. 11:32-33, NIV) Other translations render "administered justice" as "worked righteousness." Righteousness is always expressed in justice.

The Word of God is abundantly clear concerning our moral duty to the weak, the needy, and to orphans. So, we have to ask ourselves, why is there generally so little outrage - why so little compassion - expressed from church communities concerning abortion? Where is the justice for the little ones? Why do the commands to "rescue those who are being led away to slaughter," "open your mouth for the speechless," and "to expose the fruitless deeds of darkness" seem to apply to every other marginalized people group - except the people group (the unborn) that are most marginalized?

Pastor David Platt says "young evangelicals today are passionate about fighting for the rights of the poor and needy, for the orphan, and fighting the injustice of sex trafficking, but are strangely quiet on abortion. In this way, our selective social justice looks more like

selective social injustice." It seems that even in the church the boundaries of cultural engagement have largely been drawn not by the dictates of God's Word, but rather by the brute forces of political correctness.

"Who Counts as One of Us?"

"Who counts as one of us?" is the question that is at the heart of the abortion debate. It is the question that is almost never uttered, but it is the foundation of all discourse on the issue of abortion. Who should be protected by our laws? Who should be cherished or who should remain a candidate for the dumpster? We have a moral duty to mothers in crisis and their precious pre-born children. 1 Pe 3:15 says *"always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear."* We should be ready, willing, and able to give people good reasons to believe what it is that we believe so that we can persuade them.

Question 1: What are the pre-born? Proponents of abortion try to sweep this question to periphery of conversation. They want to instead lead conversation down a plurality on rabbit-trails: "What about rape? What about incest? What about over population? What about if a mom already has 4 kids and dad has run off on her and she has number 5 on the way?" Instead, focus your pro-life case on this simple yet profound question "what are the pre-born?" We have been fed an insidious lie in America for over four decades - namely that abortion is a "complex issue." But abortion is *not* a complex issue. An unplanned pregnancy is not simple - in fact it can be quite emotionally challenging for a young couple. BUT, psychological complexity does not equal moral complexity.

Gregory Koukl says "If the unborn are not human, no justification for elective abortion is necessary, but if the unborn are human, no justification for elective abortion is adequate." The science of embryology does in fact confirm that the unborn are fully human persons indeed. Science shows us that from the moment we were conceived in our mother's womb, we were distinct, living, and whole. Let's break that down:

- *Distinct* (From conception, you were in your mom and nourished by your mom, but you were not your mom; from conception you were genetically distinct from both of your parents and therefore not your mother's tissue - your very DNA differed from her's from the beginning. You have always been you.)

- *Living* (From your conception, you were alive and growing. The characteristics of all living things were perfectly expressed in you. You were metabolizing food, responding to stimuli, growing through cellular reproduction, etc. These are the things living organisms do and these are the things little girls and boys do at even the earliest stages of their development.)
- *Whole* (From your conception you were genetically complete, you were in the driver's seat of your own development in the context of your mother's support. Your body was not fully matured yet, but genetically speaking everything was present in you from conception).

The unborn, even at the earliest stage (a single-celled zygote) are full-fledged human beings. They are not a part of the mother. They are whole human beings capable of genetically directing their own growth and development. There is no such thing as a "fertilized egg;" the instant an ovum and sperm come together, they both die and new life is born! Language like "fertilized egg" or "mass of tissue" dehumanizes a little girl or boy - thereby making it easier for people to justify aborting them. Do not allow abortion to be an abstraction in your thinking or in your speech! It is the disembowelment and decapitation of little boys and girls.

Abortion is legal in the United States in all 3 trimesters. Stephanie Gray said "if we want to envision a world without abortion, we have to be willing to introduce the world to abortion." Abortion is almost unspeakably evil, but Paul tells us *"Walk as children of light ... finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them."* (Ephesians 5:8,10-11)

Question 2: What is it that makes us valuable in the first place as human beings? Are we valuable because of what we can do or because of the kind of thing that we are? What is the foundation of human equality and who decides? There are two world-views as it relates to this question:

- Pro-life View: The pro-life view says "God determines our value; we are valuable because we are created in the image of God." This is the inclusive and tolerant view; it says that every human being matters. This is the grounding for human equality and our founding fathers clearly understood it as they penned the Declaration of Independence, saying "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." This is the view Jesus taught in Matthew 10:31 *"you are of more value than many sparrows."*

- "Pro-Choice" View: The pro-choice view says "only certain human beings should be afforded personhood status or protection under the law" - and only if they meet some subjective standard, such as: "self-awareness," "heartbeat," "brain waves," "viability," or "ability to speak."

The so-called "pro-choice" views are internally conflicting - they have many different subjective standards of defining protectable personhood that any judge would cringe at interpreting (e.g., just how much "self-awareness" is enough to cause a person to be protected under the law?) The fact is, the pro-choice view is elitist and intolerant and it annihilates the foundation of human equality. The same worldview that allows for a "variable determination of personhood" was at the philosophical root of what occurred in Nazi Germany in the 1930's and 40's, and in America prior to the 1860's. Abortion is yet another form of bigotry.

The arguments that "pro-choice" proponents make generally try to identify 4 significant differences between the adult you are today and the person you were at your earliest stages of development. While these differences are significant, they are not *morally* significant such that we can argue that you should have been able to be killed at your earliest stages of development. Here they are in the form of the acronym "SLED."

- **S**ize (Namely that you are larger today than we were as an embryo. But why does size matter? Men are generally larger than women but we don't give them greater rights or greater value.)
- **L**evel of Development (For instance, your eyes are formed over time between weeks 4 and 16 of pregnancy. But if the ability to see was the determiner of the protections of personhood, then what about handicapped people?)
- **E**nvironment (We were in the womb and now we are out of the womb, but since when does a change of address determine who we are?)
- **D**egree of Dependency (The reality is we are all dependent on someone!)

Every time the "pro-choice" / performance-qualified view is chosen over the pro-life / endowment view, innocent human beings die - usually the minority, the weak, or the needy. For instance, the same arguments that are being used to kill children in the womb are now being used to justify killing infants, the handicapped, and the elderly. We are not "human doings" - we are human beings. We are valuable because we are created in the image of God.

Question 3: What is our duty before God and men? We can show scientifically that the unborn are distinct, living, and whole human beings. We can show philosophically that the unborn are no different than children who have been born - or adults. What then shall we do?

Many people accuse pro-life proponents of being "single issue" at every election cycle, but would the same people retro-actively accuse the abolitionists of the 1850's and 60's of being "single issue?" Slavery was the defining moral issue of their day, abortion is ours. It is easy to romanticize in our minds how we might have responded to slavery in the 1860's, but a better gauge of our willingness to confront injustice is how we respond to abortion today. Are we obligated to love only those people who are most convenient to love, or does the love of Jesus Christ compel us to love *all* people - regardless of the cost? When the churches of Nazi Germany hung swastikas from their pulpits and abandoned the plight of their Jewish friends and neighbors, they abandoned the gospel for Jesus who came to set captives free. *"Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me."* (Mt. 25:45)

Our duty to the pre-born is to love them as our unborn neighbors. We have a moral duty - even to perfect strangers - whether they are in the ditch or in the womb. (see Luke 10:25-37) Why, then is our outcry against the killing of 2900 children a day in our country so weak? Passivity and silence are not options for faithful Christians. Responding to abortion is a gospel issue that presents us with a gospel opportunity. When we speak to the most pressing moral issue of our time with clarity and boldness - redemptively - we are presented with an opportunity to share the grace of God.

Scriptures

“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.” Mt. 5:13-14

He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8)

But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? (James 2:20)

Rescue those who are being taken away to death; hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter. 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? (Prov. 24:11-12, ESV)

(Christ) gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works. (Titus 2:14)

But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him. (Isaiah 53:5)

Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; yes, our God is merciful. (Psalms 116:5)

... the Lord is a God of justice. (Isa 30:18)

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience ... "(Colossians 3:12, ESV)

Learn to do good; seek justice, rebuke the oppressor; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow. (Isaiah 1:17)

And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets, who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, ... (Heb. 11:32-33, NIV)

Open your mouth for the speechless, in the cause of all who are appointed to die. Open your mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy. (Prov. 31:8-9)

... always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear. (1 Pe 3:15)

Walk as children of light ... finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. (Ephesians 5:8,10-11)

Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. (Matthew 10:29-31)

"Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me." (Mt. 25:45)

“So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?” And he said, “He who showed mercy on him.” Then Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.” (Luke 10:25-37)

Points to Ponder . . .

- Jesus told us to be the salt & light of the world. In light of that, what role does the church have in “Rescue those who are unjustly sentenced to die; save them as they stagger to their death”(Prov. 24:11, NLT)? In what way does the church’s general silence on ”social” issues such as abortion, impact the world?
- Imagine you had the opportunity to lovingly talk with a “pro-choice” proponent over lunch - just the two of you. How would you approach them? What would you do? What would you share? At the end of the conversation, how would you know you had been successful?
- How does standing up for what is right, fit within the context of our ministry of reconciliation spoken of in 2 Corinthians 5:19?