

**Series: A Healthy Church**

**"Body Life"**

**2 Cor. 4:10 - 11**

Big Idea – God gives life to the body He creates to glorify Himself.

Created for life

Two persistent questions people always seem to ask:

"Who am I?" and "Why am I here?"

God answers these for us in the first book of the Bible -Genesis

*Genesis 1:26 Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image and likeness. And let them rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the tame animals, over all the earth, and over all the small crawling animals on the earth."*

*27 So God created human beings in his image. In the image of God he created them. He created them male and female.*

God's view of His creation on the sixth day is very clear

*31 "God saw all that He had made, and it was very good."*

Illus. Several years ago, a fragile young woman came to a doctor's office, expecting her first baby. One month before she was due, the baby was in a breech position. The death rate of breech babies is high because of the difficulty in delivering the after-coming head and the imperative need of delivering it quickly after the body is born. (Listen to the doctor as he tells the rest of the story)

During the delivery, I waited as patiently as I could for the natural forces of expulsion to thoroughly dilate the firm maternal structures. At last the time had come, and I gently drew down one little foot. I grasped the other, but it would not come beside the first one. To my consternation, I saw the other little foot would never be beside the first one. The entire thigh from the hip to the knee was missing.

I knew what a dreadful effect this would have upon the unstable nervous system of the mother. The family would almost certainly impoverish itself in taking the child to every famous orthopedist in the world. I saw this little girl sitting sadly by herself, while the other girls danced and ran and played.

I could slow my hand; I could delay those few short moments. No one in this world would ever know. The mother, after the first shock of grief, would be glad she had lost a child so handicapped.

The little pink foot on the good side bobbed out from its protecting towel and pressed firmly against my slowly moving hand into whose keeping the safety of the mother and baby had been entrusted.

I couldn't do it. I delivered the baby with her pitiful little leg. Every foreboding came true. The mother was in the hospital several months-she looked like a wraith of her former self. As the years went on, I blamed myself bitterly for not having had the strength to yield to my temptation.

Our hospital stages an elaborate Christmas party each year for the staff. This past year, three lovely young musicians on the stage played softly in unison with the organ. I was especially fascinated by the young harpist. She played extraordinarily well, as if she loved it. Her slender fingers flicked across the strings, and her face was upturned as if the world that moment were a wonderful and holy place.

When the short program was over, there came running down the aisle a woman I did not know. "Oh, you saw her," she cried. "You must have recognized your baby. That was my daughter who played the harp-the little girl who was born with only one good leg 17 years ago. We tried everything at first, but now she has a whole artificial leg on that side. Best of all, through all those years, she learned to use her hands so wonderfully. She is going to be one of the world's greatest harpists. She is my whole life and now she is so happy . . . And here she is!" The sweet young girl had quietly approached us, her eyes glowing.

Impulsively, I took the child in my arms. Across her warm young shoulder I saw the creeping clock of the delivery room 17 years before. I lived again those awful moments when her life was in my hand. As the last strains of "Silent Night" faded, I found comfort I had waited for so long.

(Adapted from "Family News from Dr. James Dobson," December 1993, as condensed from the book, *Christmas in My Heart*, by Joe Wheeler, Review & Herald Publishing Co., 1993.)

Created to live.

The unique characteristic of each human being is the reflection of being created "in His image." Each of us reflects the very image of God.

Our peace ("Shalom") is derived from recognizing that we reflect His image and when we allow God to achieve His purpose through our lives. If we lose sight of the value placed on human life, we are susceptible to the temptation to destroy that life designed by God.

Life is sacred. When life is destroyed, we lose the impact of a life that could have enriched our lives and brought glory to God. The movie, *It's A Wonderful Life*, allows a man to see what the world would have missed if he had not been born. A similar experience might help us value our lives and all human life.

A college professor presented this challenging situation for his ethics class to consider. "A man has syphilis and his wife has tuberculosis. They have four children. One has died; the other three have terminal illnesses. The mother is pregnant again. What do you recommend?" The class voted to terminate the pregnancy. The professor noted they had just killed Beethoven.

Ethel Waters, the great gospel singer, was born to a 13-year-old child who had been raped. The world would have been robbed of the wonderful sacred music provided by each of these individuals if life had not been valued even under difficult circumstances.

We are created to live. God saved His breath for the creation of human beings.

*Genesis 2:7 says, "the Lord God...breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being."*

We are created in the image of God and endowed with His very breath to live. That is sacred.

Job, even in the midst of his afflictions, notes that God created him to live - *Job 27:3 ...as long as I am alive and God's breath of life is in my nose,*

Paul when he was speaking to the men of Athens, a great Greek city, notes that God is the giver of life.

*Acts 17:25 This God is the One who gives life, breath, and everything else to people. He does not need any help from them; he has everything he needs.*

The Psalmist says that God weaves life in the formation of humankind.

*Psalm 139:14 I praise you because you made me in an amazing and wonderful way. What you have done is wonderful. I know this very well.*

*15 You saw my bones being formed as I took shape in my mother's body. When I was put together there,*

Isaiah the prophet is informed that the Lord formed us in the womb.

*Isaiah 44:24 This is what the LORD says, who saved you, who formed you in your mother's body: "I, the LORD, made everything, stretching out the skies by myself and spreading out the earth all alone.*

When we lose sight of a Creator who has formed us with a purposeful life in mind, we can devalue life and even be willing to destroy it. The Roman Coliseum remains a monument to the degradation a culture or society will experience when it does not recognize that humans are created to live. It has often been noted that abortion and euthanasia are only symptoms of a greater problem: our culture no longer recognizes the sacredness of human life.

Mother Teresa said, "Any country that accepts abortion is not teaching the people to love, but to use violence to get what they want. That is why the greatest destroyer of love and peace is abortion."

We are created to live.

Consecrated for life.

Life is sacred. Our lives are a trust from God and therefore should be dedicated and lived to achieve His divine purpose. The music of our lives should be offered as an act of worship to our God the Creator. Life is a sacred trust.

Paul in his letter to the church at Ephesus recognizes that "we are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." Ephesians 2:10

Oswald Chambers states, "If I will come to Jesus, my actual life will be brought into accordance with my real desires; I will actually cease from sin, and actually find the song of the Lord begin." My Utmost for His Highest, June 11

When I realize that my life dedicated to the One who created me actually fulfills the intent of my life, I discover life has meaning.

Jeremiah, the prophet, noted (1:6) that God knew him completely before he was born.

*Jeremiah 1:5 "I knew you before I formed you in your mother's womb. Before you were born I set you apart and appointed you as my prophet to the nations."*

*Psalms 138:8 declares, "The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me; . .*

*"Peter challenged the church (1 Peter 2:16) "...to live as servants of God."*

Like a piece of art or music crafted for a specific purpose, we find that life indeed is sacred when we allow our lives to be given to serve the purposes of our Creator God. We are created to live. We are consecrated for life. He gives life; we give Him our life to be His for whatever He designed us to become.

Celebrated a lifetime.

Henri J.M. Nouwen, noted author, wrote an entire book to celebrate the life of Adam Arnett. Henri wrote the story of his relationship with Adam a severely handicapped young man, because he realized "...that this very disabled human being was loved by God from all eternity and sent into the world with a unique mission of healing...." (Adam:God's Beloved, Henri J.M. Nouwen, Orbis Books: Maryknoll, NY, 1997)

If we understand that life is sacred and that we are created to live and called to consecrate that life to God's purpose, we will be able to celebrate a lifetime!

In Revelation we have a picture of 24 elders celebrating before the throne of God. They recognize that the Creator is worthy of praise for what He has done through His creation. St.

Augustine understood that we were made to fellowship with our creator. He said, "You made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you."

Christ tells the story of a son returning home to the Father. Luke 15 tells us there is a celebration when the son comes home.

We can celebrate the music of the harpist with one leg, Beethoven and Ethel Waters and others because life was valued as sacred and they consecrated their gift to the Creator. Life is sacred. We are created to live, and because we consecrate our lives to the Creator, we have opportunity to celebrate what He has accomplished through the lives of those He created.

In Matthew's Gospel Jesus warns against harming children.

*Matthew 18:6 If one of these little children believes in me, and someone causes that child to sin, it would be better for that person to have a large stone tied around the neck and be drowned in the sea.*

*The Psalmist (127:3) notes that children are a gift from God. Hebrews 4:13 informs us that everything in creation will be uncovered and we will then give an accounting to God. It will be sad to realize the beautiful music that was missed because we did not value life created by God.*

On the other hand, we are clearly told that there will be rejoicing in the presence of God as his people are invited to the tree of life. (Revelation 22)

*Revelation 22:12 "Listen! I am coming soon! I will bring my reward with me, and I will repay each one of you for what you have done.*

*13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.*

*14 "Happy are those who wash their robes so that they will receive the right to eat the fruit from the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.*

Our function as a church body is very similar – to bring life.

2 Corinthians 4:10-12 Through suffering, our bodies continue to share in the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be seen in our bodies.

11 Yes, we live under constant danger of death because we serve Jesus, so that the life of Jesus will be evident in our dying bodies.

12 So we live in the face of death, but this has resulted in eternal life for you.