

“The Value of One Life”

Luke 12:7; John 10

Big Idea – God created life and every life is valuable.

Luke 12:7 But God even knows how many hairs you have on your head. Don't be afraid. You are worth much more than many sparrows.

An elderly man was out walking along the beach early one morning when he noticed a teenager ahead of him picking up starfish and flinging them into the sea. Catching up with the youth, he asked him what he was doing. The student responded by saying that the stranded starfish would die if they were left in the morning sun.

The man chuckled a bit and said, “But the beach goes on for miles and miles, and there are millions of starfish. You can't save all of them! How can your effort make any difference?”

The young man looked at the starfish in his hand and then threw it safely into the water. He then turned, looked at the older man and said, “It makes a difference to that one.”

As we focus this morning on the Value of One Life, we have to admit that it's easy to wonder if we're making any difference. Life today has been cheapened, our society has been characterized as a “culture of death,” and people who are “pro-life” are often ridiculed and castigated by the media.

Some people would say that abortion is strictly a preference or a political view that shouldn't be discussed in church. I want to argue this morning that it is, in fact, a moral issue that must be addressed.

There is some good news to report. A recent study found: “For the first time since 1975, the number of abortions in the United States dropped under one million (958,700 in 2013 and 926,200 in 2014),

according to “Abortion Incidence and Service Availability in the United States, 2014,” by Rachel Jones and Jenna Jerman. The abortion rate also continued to decline, falling to 14.6 abortions per 1,000 women aged 15–44, the lowest rate ever recorded, and a 14% decline from 2011. The analysis was based on the Guttmacher Institute's 17th census of all known abortion-providing facilities in the United States.

C. Everett Koop and Francis Schaeffer wrote a profound and prophetic book in 1979 called, *Whatever Happened to the Human Race?* They argued that without a biblical view of life, what is unthinkable today becomes thinkable tomorrow. When law and conscience are not rooted in a transcendent source of authority, relativism prevails and anything goes if those in power can be persuaded.

At the beginning, abortion-rights advocates argued that only extreme and rare conditions warranted more liberal abortion laws. Today, almost 44 years and more than 40 million abortions later, a woman can end the life of her preborn child, including using a partial-birth abortion, for any reason. The unthinkable becomes thinkable – and legally protected.

Today, respected experts are arguing that it's OK to take the life of an infant even after it's born.

In an article entitled “Killing Babies Isn't Always Wrong,” philosopher Peter Singer, a professor at Princeton, writes: “Perhaps, like the ancient Greeks, we should have a ceremony a month after birth, at which the infant is admitted to the community. Before that time, infants would not be recognized as having the same right to life as older people.”

He's not alone. American University philosopher Jeffrey Reiman agrees: “Infants do not possess in their own right a property that makes it wrong to kill them.” (BreakPoint with Charles Colson, 9/2/00).

Friends, the unthinkable is becoming thinkable...again.

Which leads to a question. What can we do?

We must begin by recognizing the value of every created person – the preborn, the newborn, the disabled, the mentally challenged, those with AIDS, the elderly, and those we might not care for because they have a different colored skin or religion than we do.

To frame our study this morning, I want us to look at how Jesus dealt with people. Even though He often taught the crowds, Jesus always saw the value of one.

I love the story of how Jesus ministered to the woman who had been bleeding for 12 years. Luke 8:42 tells us that the surging crowds almost crushed Jesus when he was trying to teach. And then this hurting woman comes up behind him and touches the edge of his cloak.

In the midst of all the people, we see how Jesus places supreme value on the individual when he says, “Who touched me?” He then gives her both spiritual and physical healing.

John 10 gives four practical principles that can help address the moral issues of our day.

To make a difference we must:

- Proclaim the Truth (10:10a)
- Preach the Gospel (10:10b-11)
- Promote Obedience (10:1-5)
- Practice Grace (10:14-18)

Jesus loved to use word pictures. In this chapter he describes a sheep pen. It was an enclosure made out of rough stone, only partially covered, if covered at all. It had only one door. When the sheep returned to the fold at night after a day of grazing, the shepherd stood in the doorway and inspected each one as it entered.

If a sheep was scratched or wounded by thorns, the shepherd would anoint it with oil to facilitate healing. If they were thirsty, he gave them water. After all the sheep had been counted and brought into the pen, the shepherd would lay across the doorway so no intruder could enter. The shepherd became the door. Jesus is the Good Shepherd who protects, gives, and sustains the life of the sheep.

1. Proclaim Truth

Let’s begin by looking at the first part of verse 10: “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy...”

In addressing an issue like this, the first thing we must do is to proclaim the truth. Jesus made it very clear that Satan is committed to kill and devoted to destruction. He will do whatever he can to steal life from us.

two parts of proclaiming truth as it relates to abortion.

1. Every person has value because they’ve been created in the image of God.

Genesis 1:27, “So God created man in His image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”

8 biblical reasons establish life in the womb is not only viable, but also valuable.

1. The preborn are called “babies.”

“When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb...” (Luke 1:41).

2. The life of the preborn is protected by the same punishment for injury or death as that of an adult.

“If men who are fighting hit a pregnant woman and she gives birth prematurely...if there is serious injury, you are to take life for life.” (Exodus 21:22-23).

3. Christ was fully human from the point of conception.

“...Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son...” (Matthew 1:20-21).

4. Preborn children have a propensity to sin.

“Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.” (Psalm 51:5).

5. Personal pronouns are used to describe preborn children.

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart...” (Jeremiah 1:5).

6. God calls people to ministry even before they are born.

“Before I was born the Lord called me; from my birth he has made mention of my name.” (Isaiah 49:1).

7. God creates the preborn.

“For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb.” (Psalm 139:13).

8. God knows the preborn intimately and personally.

“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, your eyes saw my unformed body...” (Psalm 139:15-16)

As we proclaim the truth, we need to know what the Bible says. However, since some people don’t accept the Bible as the ultimate truth source, we can also argue for the value and sanctity of the preborn by focusing on the baby’s development in the womb.

Ultrasound reminds us that pregnancy isn’t about disability or illness. It’s about a little person.”

Based on both biblical and medical evidence, the first conclusion is obvious: human life is sacred and full of dignity. The baby in the womb is a tiny human being with an eternal soul being formed in the “image of God.”

2nd part of Proclaiming truth:

2. it is wrong to murder an innocent human being.

To take the life of someone created in God’s image is to indirectly attack the God who created life. Abortion must be defined as the destruction of a human life in violation of the 6th Commandment: “You shall not commit murder.”

That’s exactly what Satan wants to happen. Look again at

John 10:10: “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.”

The evil one is a thief who steals. This word is “klepto” in the Greek. It’s where we get the word “kleptomaniac” which is someone who has an abnormal and irresistible desire to steal, especially things of symbolic value. This is one of the ways Satan tries to get back at the Creator by snatching that which God has created.

“Kill,” is the word used to denote a “sacrifice by slaying a victim.” The devil is determined to snuff out life at every opportunity he can find.

The word, “destroy,” carries with it the idea of utter destruction. Satan not only is destroying life in the womb, he is also trying to destroy the women who have had abortions. Abortion comes from hell. It is the work of the devil himself.

Now that’s the bad news. It needs to be proclaimed. But we can’t stop here even though many Christians do. We’re often known more by what we are against than by what we’re for.

We have to move on to the good news.

2. Preach the Gospel

After proclaiming the truth about abortion, the second step is to preach the gospel.

Take a look at the last half of verse 10 and verse 11:

“...I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” John 10:10b, 11

While we can, and must, support legislative initiatives to overturn Roe v. Wade, and protest partial birth abortions and RU-486 on moral grounds, we must also preach the gospel. Our society will ultimately be changed as hearts are transformed by the life-changing power of Jesus.

Jesus came to cancel out the coming of the thief. He has defeated the deceiver who only wants to take life. Jesus came in order to give life.

He is the good shepherd. This phrase in the Greek actually reads this way: “I am the shepherd, the good one.” The basic meaning of the word “good” is “beautiful or excellent.” The beautiful Shepherd lays down his life for the benefit of the sheep by dying in their place.

Jesus came to forgive our sins and give us eternal life. He also came to give us abundant life that is to be experienced this side of heaven. The idea here is that the Christian life is meant to be filled with showers of God’s blessings. This kind of life is to be normative for all believers. It’s not a separate stage or level that just a few are supposed to reach. To know Him as shepherd is to have everything change in your life.

We’re to live a life that is overflowing. God brings on blessings so that we can ask Him to bring on more ministry in our lives. We have been blessed with life that is full – if we’ll but live that way.

That’s the message we’re to share. Jesus is ready to forgive, restore, cleanse and to give a new and abundant life to those who are dead in their sins.

Schaeffer and Koop urge us to “stand against the loss of humanness in all its forms. It is God’s life-changing power that is able to touch every individual, who then has a responsibility to touch the world around him with the absolutes found in the Bible. In the end, we must realize that the tide of humanism, with its loss of humanness, is not merely a cultural ill, but a spiritual ill that Christ alone can cure.” (As quoted by Douglas Groothuis in “Culture Watch”, Moody Magazine, 12/00, page 50).

3. Promote Obedience

We must first proclaim the truth about abortion. Second, we are to preach the gospel. Third, we must promote obedience. Check out

verses 3-4: *“...and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice.” John 10:3, 4*

Did you catch the two key phrases? We are to “listen” and we are to “follow.” Jesus continues to paint a picture of a shepherd with his sheep. His listeners would know that at night various flocks would gather together in the safety of the sheepfold. In the morning the shepherds would come to take their sheep out to pasture. Interestingly, the sheep will only follow their own shepherd. They recognize his voice and they know He will care for them. Following is the constant habit of true sheep.

We’re a lot like sheep, aren’t we? We tend to go astray. And yet, if we know the Good Shepherd, we’ll be locked into listening to His voice and focused on following Him. Even with all the other voices clamoring for our attention, we’ll want to follow Jesus.

Let me give you a practical way to promote obedience in your own life: commit yourself to moral purity. If our society would limit

physical intimacy to the safety and pleasure of marriage, we would see a significant drop in the abortion rate. Will that ever happen?

It can if hearts are changed by the Shepherd. Changed hearts will lead to changed morals. Guess who needs to take the lead on this one – we do!

I read this week about a very practical way to live out your listening and your following. According to a new study published in the American Journal of Sociology, “adolescents who take public pledges to remain virgins are much less likely” to be physically intimate with someone before marriage. According to the authors of this study, the delay effect is “substantial and robust.” In fact, those who make “purity pledges” wait about 18 months longer to engage in physical intimacy than those who don’t.

One of the guys who designed the survey, J. Richard Udry, from the University of North Carolina said, “We were cynical about the likelihood that the pledge would produce significant results. But we were wrong.” (Christianity Today Weblog: “True Love Actually Does Wait,” 1/4/01).

The Bible puts it this way in

1 Thessalonians 4:3-4: “It is God’s will that you should be sanctified; that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable.”

Friend, as you commit to listen to the Shepherd and follow Him wherever He leads, He may expand your territory in ways you’ve never dreamed. I can’t tell you specifically how to respond to the issue of abortion, but I urge you to follow the Holy Spirit’s nudges. We can’t just sit back and do nothing.

Proverbs 24:11 lays it out in strong words: “Rescue those being led away to death; hold back those staggering toward slaughter.”

It may be more comfortable to adopt a passive stance with regard to the abortion issue. It certainly would be the least offensive response. But who, with a clear conscience, can sit back, say little,

and do nothing while babies continue to be killed? Here are a few ideas – ask God to expand your ministry borders as you consider the following:

Volunteer at a Pregnancy Center.

Support the CPC financially and with other gifts like diapers, formula, etc.

Consider adopting a baby.

Write letters to your legislative representative.

Offer to baby-sit for a single parent.

Invite a pro-life speaker to your school.

Start a support group for women who have had abortions.

Be an extended family to a young woman in need.

Talk to your children about sexual purity.

Practice Grace

Let’s proclaim the truth about abortion and then let’s preach the gospel. As we do, we better make sure we’re promoting obedience in our own life, and in our own church. The final challenge is perhaps the most difficult for us as believers – let’s practice grace.

When the Pharisees first heard Jesus paint this picture, they became very angry. They were especially troubled by His teaching in verse 16: “I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also...”

Jesus not only valued everyone He came in contact with, He went out of His way to “seek and save the lost.” He loved to give grace to those who had little value in the eyes of the church crowd.

Like Jesus in John 4, Jesus spoke words of life to a woman who had multiple marriage partners and was living with another man. Instead of condemning her, He gave her what she was really looking for – a relationship with the Good Shepherd.

Like Jesus in John 8, when the righteous religious people were ready to wipe out a woman caught in adultery, instead of slinging a stone, Jesus launched some love and gave some grace.

Brothers and sisters, I'm not really sure why we're so hard on people when they mess up, but we need to practice some grace. I've said it before and I'll say it again. Why do we get so angry with people who sin differently than we do?

Some of us are more like the Pharisees than we care to admit as we act like our sins smell better than the sins of others.

Abortion is wrong. It's repulsive and sinful. But, it's forgivable. While we need to speak out against moral concerns in our society, we must also offer love and compassion to those who need help. We need to remember that the primary biblical call is to make disciples, not win arguments.

The Elliot Institute in Springfield, Illinois recently conducted a comprehensive survey of 260 post-abortive women. Not surprisingly, 92% of these women report that they have experienced feelings of guilt and 87% indicated that they suffered some depression.