

Life is About Choices

Scripture Text: John 1:1-5; 10:7-10

Introduction

Today, we celebrate Sanctity of Human Life Sunday. Many churches dedicate a Sunday in January to remind believers about the sacredness of human life, particularly in regard to the issue of abortion. Since we worship a Creator of all life, we believe that human life is sacred and worth protecting. Unfortunately, not all people do. Approximately 125,000 babies are aborted worldwide every single day. In Wake County, North Carolina, 7,530 babies were aborted in 2015 alone. Those statistics are alarming! And yet, in a bit of craziness, thirty-eight states treat the killing of an unborn child as a form of homicide. They have “fetal homicide laws”, even though abortion on demand is still legal in those states. Why? It is because of choice! It is illegal to take the life of the unborn if the mother *wants* the baby, but it is legal to take the life of the unborn if she *does not want* the baby. A baby’s “right to live” is dependent on the mother’s “right to want” a child.

The Right to Choose?

In the beginning, God chose to create life. God chose to create mankind and to breath life into the very first human. And throughout history, God has chosen to sustain life and to give life to each one of us. If you are reading or hearing this message, you have been given the gift and opportunity to live in this moment by the sovereign Creator of all life. God chose for you to have life. I think that is an important concept as we consider the sanctity of all human life. Many people speak about their right to choose. Americans have such a love for freedom and we fight for the right to be free and to choose. Surely, we believe we all have the right to choose what to do with our own bodies. This is often mentioned in the context of a woman’s right to choose abortion. But, none of us have absolute authority of our own bodies. If you think you have the absolute authority to choose what to do with your body, then run down the street naked. You will probably find out quickly just how much freedom you have.

In general, I would argue for every person’s right to choose to do what they want with their own lives. In fact, it is a God-given right for each of us to choose what to do with our lives. I believe life is about choices. God has given each of us a will and the capacity to choose good and evil. Of course, He wants us to choose good. Unfortunately, our will has been distorted by sin, therefore, our inclination is to choose evil. But, we still have the freedom to choose. When does a human being get the freedom to choose? When does a human being get the freedom to live? What about an unborn baby’s right to choose life or to do what he or she wants to do with his or her life? What about that choice? If it were only about the mother’s right to choose, then we might understand. We may encourage the mother to not do anything that would harm herself, and yes, there is harm to a mother in abortion. Emotionally. Spiritually. But, we are not really talking about what a mother does with *her* body. We are talking about what she does with another person’s body. We are talking about her choice to end the life of another human being who has done nothing wrong and has no choice in the matter.

All Human Life is Sacred

We tend to think of life when we see a newborn baby. We rejoice in the new life God has given. Scripture reveals to us that all people are made in the image of a holy God and, as such, all human life is sacred and should be respected and protected. One truth we see in scripture is that God created everything, including all life. Not long after God reveals that truth to us in the very first book of the Bible, He reveals to us that all human life is sacred. God breathed life into the first human beings, but He gave them something special. He made them in His own image. Look at the following verse.

Genesis 1:27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

God created all human life in His image. All human beings bear the image of God and thus, their lives are sacred. This includes the life of the unborn, that is being formed in the mother's womb. But, let us consider all of human life, from the womb to the tomb. The sacredness of life is not just defined by the protection of the unborn. It includes even those who are born. We should not forget that living people who are also in the image of our Creator should also be protected. If people can devalue a segment of society in the name of convenience or under the guise of choice, what is to stop them from devaluing any other group in society? What is to stop people from devaluing the life of people of another race or ethnicity? What is to stop people from devaluing the elderly or the in-firmed? What is to stop people from devaluing any segment of society just because they are seen as too burdensome or inconvenient? When a person becomes unimportant, or worse, a burden to those with power, it is easier to call them less-than-a-person or worse, non-human, and cast them aside. However, all human beings have value and God wants His image bearers to live. God desires for none of His image bearers to perish, but for all of them to live. Look at the follow verse.

Ezekiel 18:32 For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord GOD; so turn, and live.

To be fair, this verse from the prophet Ezekiel has to do with repenting and choosing the right course that leads to life, such as obeying God. However, I think this verse tells us something about the heart of God. God created all human life, the bearers of His divine image. As such, God desires His image bearers to live. He desires for them to make the right choices that lead to life. In regard to abortion, God desires for us to choose life. Pregnancy may be an inconvenience for some. It may even be a traumatic experience for others, but *pregnancy is temporary*. Death is permanent! In regard to parenting, God desires for parents to make good decisions that will ensure life for their children. God wants us to make choices that lead to life. So concerned about our life is God that He took extraordinary steps to ensure life for us. The most famous of all Bible verses shows us to what extent God went to give us life and it shows us how much God loves us.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

God sent His one and only Son so that His image bearers would live. God wants the unborn child to live. He wants the little baby to live. He wants children, adults, and the elderly to live. He wants you to have life. He sent His one and only Son, Jesus, so that you could truly live. Jesus left His home in glory to willingly die for the world so that we would have life. And, it is only from Christ, the Lord of life, that we truly have life.

Jesus is the Lord of Life

Life is an essential quality of God and only by Him is life transferred from Him to His creation. God is the ultimate source of the universe. He is the real Life-giver. God has life and He wants us to have life, too. We find much about life and God's view of it in the Gospel According to John. John wrote more about life than any other New Testament writer. One such verse is in the very opening verses of the book.

John 1:4–5 ⁴ *In him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*

The “him” in verse four is Jesus, or as John called Him in this passage, the “Word”. This section of John’s account of the Gospel introduces many of the major themes that we see later in the book, such as Jesus as the life, the light, and the truth. As we read through John’s Prologue, we move on from creation in general to the creation of life. Jesus is the Creator of all that exists and Jesus is the source of all life. In the book of John we know that Jesus died so that people might have everlasting life (3:16). We know Jesus gave His flesh for the life of the world (6:51). Only those who consume Jesus have life (6:53–54), and similarly only those who come to Jesus have life (5:40). As Lord of life Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead (ch. 11), proving that He had power over death, and twice Jesus said that He is “the life” (11:25; 14:6). Jesus is not only the Creator of all that exists, but He is also the source of all life. But verse four does not just say Jesus is the source of all life, it says, “In Him was life”. For people to have real life, for them to know real life, they must have the real Life-giver, Jesus Christ.

Jesus Gives Us Full Life

But, what does it mean to have life? Is it simply to be alive, to exist? Is there more to life than just existing? Surely, we should live each day to the fullest. Each day of life is a gift of God and He wants us to live abundantly, to the full. Thus, Jesus said that He came that people might have life and have it more abundantly. Look at the following verse.

John 10:10 *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.*

There is a thief who only wants to steal, kill, and destroy. There is an enemy who does not want you to live, but who wants you to die. But there is a Good Shepherd who came so that we may have life. But, Jesus did not just want us to have life. He did not just want us to exist. Jesus came so that we would have life abundantly. In Jesus is life and from Jesus is abundant life. There is nothing cramping or restricting about life for those

who enter Jesus' fold. The Greek word for "abundantly" here means "that which goes way beyond necessity." It pertains to a quantity so abundant as to be considerably more than what one would expect or anticipate. That is the quality and quantity of life Jesus gives. Abundantly, or to the full, suggests fat, contented, flourishing sheep, not malnourished or terrorized sheep that have to live off the meager scraps they find in the field. Are you really alive in Christ, or are you merely existing?

Some people may be tempted to think of God's promise of eternal life when reading this verse. Some may be tempted to think about knowing Jesus so that they can live forever, but that is not the full extent of the life Jesus gives. An abundant life in Christ means that the life Jesus' true disciples enjoy is not to be construed as more time to fill (merely 'everlasting' life), but it is a life to be lived to the full. A full life in Christ is one lived now with purpose, joy, contentment and hope. Jesus' promise of abundant life, which begins already in the here and now, might bring to mind some Old Testament prophecies about abundant blessing. When God gives, He gives to the full. Jesus calls His followers, not to a lifeless, miserable existence that squashes human potential, but to a rich, full, joyful life, one overflowing with meaningful activities under the personal favor and blessing of God and in continual fellowship with His people. John wanted all his readers to know that the gift of Jesus is life beyond their wildest dreams. It is a life filled with purpose where each day is lived with joy for the One who gave His life for us.

Choose Life, Choose Jesus!

Jesus is the only way to life! Because Jesus has life in Himself, He is able to give abundant life and eternal life to all who place their trust in Him. Thus, there is a choice that means the difference between life and death. It is the choice of trusting in Jesus and following Him. There is no other way. Look at the following verse.

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

The real life and death choice we must make is whether to choose Jesus or not. That is literally a choice of life and death. There is no other way. On Sanctity of Human Life Sunday we often fail to consider the mother who could come to regret her past decision but must live with the fact that it cannot be undone. We neglect to remember the father who now remembers his teenage years forcing his high school girlfriend to get an abortion. And we forget about the doctors and nurses who once performed these procedures before the Lord changed their heart. The burden of these past sins will weigh heavily on them on Sanctity of Human Life Sunday. Each of these people may have contributed to the atrocity of abortion, but none of them are beyond the saving grace of God. No one is beyond God's gift of life and beyond the choice of abundant life in Christ. No one loses his or her status as God's image bearer because of the sins he or she commits. That image becomes distorted by sin, but it is not lost. We serve an all powerful and all gracious God who can bring the most lost sheep into His fold. Therefore, what will you choose? Will you choose life, an abundant life? Will you choose to share this abundant life with others? May it be so! Thanks be to God. Amen!