

## **Pro-Life for All of Life**

**Genesis 1-3**

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**January 20, 2013**

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Father, we do thank You for the deep, deep love of Your Son Jesus through the Holy Spirit. Lord, what joy it is to know grace from Your hand. Thank You for this church where we can gather and worship You in freedom. We can consider Your Word together even over difficult subjects. Lord, I pray that the meditation of my mouth would be pleasing in Your sight this morning. I pray that if what I say is in accordance with Your Word, You would help it to be believed and acted upon. If anything I say is unbalanced, unhelpful or unwise, I pray that You would cause it to be quickly forgotten. I pray Lord that Your people would hear a better sermon than I am able to preach. May Your strength and glory be magnified through my weakness. In Jesus' name, Amen.

As Pastor Dave mentioned briefly, this is Sanctity of Human Life Sunday. I have to make a confession at the very outset that a deep part of me does not like this day. In fact, I wish that I didn't have to preach today because I wish that the topic was so accepted and understood that we didn't need to draw attention to it. A friend of mine—Russell Moore—wrote a blog post on why he hates Sanctity of Human Life Sunday. He said that he hopes someday his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren will need a Sunday devoted to this topic about as much as we need a Reality of Gravity Emphasis Sunday.

I have a complicated relationship with this day because 17 years ago this month as a college freshman, I heard my first sermon with the word abortion. I was a life-long church attendee, but this was the first sermon I ever heard that mentioned the word abortion. In high school, I had believed in abortion choice and rights and had come out of that belief. As I sat there and heard the pastor announce that he was going to talk about being pro-life in the sermon, I tensed up a bit and bristled. I was uncomfortable. "Why are we talking about something publicly that should be private, that's personal, partisan and painful? The church isn't the right place for that." Well, I've changed my mind on that as you can see from my topic of being pro-life in all of life. Yet I'm still sensitive to the criticism and don't want to make this primarily political, so we will be looking at God's Word.

Let's have a little bit of background about why I think we need to talk about a matter like this. There was a movie in 1991 called Grand Canyon—maybe some of you have seen it and maybe some of you haven't. It's been so long since I've seen it that I don't know if I necessarily can recommend it but there's an opening scene that is fascinating. There's a hotshot, immigration lawyer driving his fancy sports car home from work and he's caught in a traffic jam. The traffic is simply just not moving—maybe some of you can relate to that at various points in your life. It's just not getting any better so he decides to take a detour and to get home earlier.

This is 1991, in the days before GPS. As he goes, he gets more and more lost. The sun has gone down now and as he continues to go, each neighborhood gets rougher than the one before. Then—of course—his car breaks down in the midst of the worst neighborhood. As he's sitting there stranded, a group of very rough characters surrounds the car, ready to take their pickings. He's able to call a tow-truck driver who makes it there just in time but these thugs don't want the tow-truck driver to interfere with what they want to do.

So the tow-truck driver pulls the ringleader aside and says this little five-sentence speech, "Man, the world ain't s'posed to work like this. Maybe you don't know that, but this ain't the way it's s'posed to be. I'm s'posed to be able to do my job without askin' you if I can. And that dude is s'posed to be able to wait with his car without you rippin' him off. Everything's s'posed to be different than what it is here." That's a very eloquent summary of the world in which we live. In fact, Cornelius Plantinga wrote a book called Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin.

"This ain't the way it's s'posed to be." Even though we're going to focus most of our attention and illustrations on the topic of abortion, Sanctity of Human Life Sunday is larger than abortion. It's the way in which this world is not supposed to be filled with orphanages where children are not adopted. Our nursing care centers are not supposed to be filled with the elderly whose families do not visit or who may want them to quickly meet their demise. It's not supposed to be filled with poor people and children who go to bed hungry every night. It's not supposed to be filled with wives and children who are abused. It's not supposed to be filled with people having disabilities who are neglected, marginalized, mocked or forgotten. It's not supposed to be filled with racism and denigration of people based on the color of their skin or their ethnic background.

It is an interesting providence that Sanctity of Life Sunday and Sanctity of Life Day—which is coming this Tuesday—come right next to Martin Luther King Jr. Day, which is Monday. As we look back at some incredible accomplishments in our nation's history and look back at some terrible blights of how people treated each other, we see things that are not consistent with the sanctity, dignity, worth and value of human life.

Why is Sanctity of Human Life Sunday this Sunday in particular? What's so special about the third week of January? It was almost 30 years ago that Ronald Reagan made the declaration that January 22—which is this coming Tuesday—would be Sanctity of Human Life Day. So many churches across the country spend the Sunday before that day observing the Sanctity of Human Life Sunday.

What happened January 22? Why is that such a special date? This Tuesday is the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Supreme Court ruling of Roe vs. Wade. Roe was a young woman in Texas. It was a pseudonym. Her name was Norma McCorvey but they came up with the name Jane Roe sort of like John Doe. Wade was the district attorney in Dallas. That case wove its way through the court system, up to the Supreme Court, and—by a vote of seven to two—Roe won. It was a decision by nine men; seven of them voted in favor of it. Most of these men were in their 60s, most were appointed by Republicans and all of them were professing Christians. It turned out to be one of the most controversial court cases ever decided, as well as one of the most consequential, misunderstood and misrepresented.

Recent research revealed that in Americans under the age of 30, four out of ten don't know that Roe vs. Wade has anything to do with abortion. As the years go on, it's important to remember some of the facts of what happened, why it is so important in our nation's history and why it is so important for the church.

As we begin here and before we turn to the Word, I want to briefly ask and answer three questions:

- 1) What is abortion?
- 2) What did Roe vs. Wade decide?
- 3) What have been the effects over these last 40 years?

## **1) What is Abortion?**

One way to define abortion is that it's "the intentional termination of a pregnancy." That's a true definition but it's also a rather sterile, polite definition. When you use that sort of language, it's almost as if there's a moral fog that begins to descend and you begin to lack clarity of what this really is. So without being too graphic, let me give a little bit

more detailed of a definition. We can say, “Abortion stops a beating, human heart within a womb.” More specifically, “Abortion intentionally ends the life of a human being.” It’s not just stopping a clump of cells. It’s not the same as losing a body part as if I lost one of my digits. It is the loss of a distinct, whole, living organism that is growing and then is no more. Most specifically, we can say, “Abortion is the intentional killing of a human person in the womb created by God, in the image of God.”

All of us probably heard President Obama last month speak eloquently after the Sandy Hook Elementary School massacre in Newtown, Connecticut. He said these words while speaking of these young elementary school children, but they certainly apply to abortion as well. He said, “They had their entire lives ahead of them—birthdays, graduations, weddings, kids of their own.” But these aborted children—these lives created in God’s image—will never experience even their first birthday, breath, heartbreak or laugh. That is what abortion is.

## **2) What Did Roe vs. Wade Decide?**

Now what did the decision of Roe vs. Wade declare about abortion? We don’t have time and this isn’t the appropriate place for us to go into lots of legal analysis or detail, but I do want you to know one thing in particular. If you understand this point you will understand something that the vast majority of Americans do not know or understand. That point is this: Roe vs. Wade effectively made it so that abortion in the United States is legal at any time of the pregnancy and for any reason. Now most people—even some very smart people who should know better—would say, “That’s simply not true. If you read it, abortion is only legal in the first few months—the first trimester. Then after that, the health of the woman has to be at stake for there to be an abortion.”

Well, there’s a big loophole that makes that statement not true. On the same date, the Supreme Court justices defined “health” in this massively elastic way, stretching it so far that it was filled with holes. Listen to the language they used to describe the health of a woman. It includes all sorts of factors, like “physical, emotional, psychological, familial, and the woman’s age—relevant to the well-being of the patient. All these factors may relate to health.”

Who gets to decide if the woman’s health is at stake? Her physician—or more specifically, her abortion doctor—who obviously has self-interest in seeing that she does have this abortion. If they can make the declaration that this would have an effect on their

family life, then abortion is permissible. If it would have an effect on her emotional life—as of course all pregnancy and birth does—then abortion is legal. So the result—and this really is stunning when you think about it—is that the United States and Canada are the only two countries in the Western world where there is no legal protection for the baby in the womb at any stage, for any reason.

### **3) What Were the Effects?**

Since that decision was made 40 years ago, what has happened in that time? I would describe it as nothing less than a horrific holocaust of human life. If you have ever heard people give advice on how to talk about things publicly, the number one thing they will tell you is, “Don’t compare things to the holocaust. The holocaust was horrible.” It was. The holocaust in Nazi Germany during World War II systematically took the lives of six million Jews. Abortion thus far has taken approximately 57 million lives.

The United States is the land of the free, the country dedicated to the proposition that “all are created equal” with certain “inalienable rights” like life, liberty and pursuit of happiness. In this country, abortions are committed every day. In fact, each year we kill 1.37 million unborn children. That’s 3,700 per day or one unborn life ended every 23 seconds. So of all the pregnancies that happen now in America, 22% end in abortion. By the time a woman reaches the age of 45, three out of every ten will have terminated their pregnancy.

It is painful and horrific and we often don’t say a word about it. But God has spoken in His Word. So I want us to turn to the first book of the Bible. Turn now to the Book of Beginnings—Genesis 1.

I’m thankful that there are pro-life billboards across America. They have pictures of little babies on them with a little saying to make you think in a pro-life way. I support that and hope that continues, but seeing a cute little picture of a baby can’t be our only basis. We need to have something more solid and we also need to start in the beginning with the very first words of Scripture, because the first words give you a preview of what’s to come. They help you enter into the story, understand who the main characters are and understand what’s going to happen.

So look at the very first verse—Genesis 1:1—which is probably familiar to most of us, “*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.*” Note three very simple things here:

- 1) Who's the subject? Who's the One doing the action? Who's the main character of this sentence? The main character of this sentence—and indeed of the entire Bible—is God Himself. It's not just some generic god but the triune God. Verse two says that *"the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters."* We learn from the book of beginnings in the New Testament—in John 1:1—that Jesus was *"the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."* It goes on to say in verse three that, *"All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made."*
  
- 2) What did the subject do? In the beginning, God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—did something. What did He do? He created. He called into being that which was not, to be that which is. We're all creative people at various levels. My kids like to create art. But they're not really creators—they're recreators. They're rearrangers. They take some crayons, construction paper, glitter, scissors and they rearrange those things that already exist. They create something cool. But God speaks mountains, oceans, stars and aardvarks into being out of nothing. He creates human life. Every single one of us in this room was created by God.
  
- 3) What does the subject create? He creates everything, including us. I recommend you read Psalm 139 to hear what it means to be created by your Creator. Verse 13 says He *"knitted me together in my mother's womb."* I have to confess, I don't know a lot about knitting. I do know it takes a long time and you can't do it with big fat fingers like mine. It's an intricate process and it's detail-oriented. That's what God does to each of us. He knits us together in our mothers' wombs. When you think about God being the Creator, why is that such a big deal? Why do we need to begin there with God as our Creator God? It's because if you understand that God is Creator, you'll understand that God is the Owner and Designer. If you create something, you own it. You can do with it what you want. God has told us how He wants the creation to operate. He wants us to go according to His plans and He does it so that He will get all of the glory.

Now, flip just over a page to Genesis 1:26. Let's see what God says about His creation of mankind. Genesis 1:26 says:

*Then God [Father, Son and Holy Spirit] said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."*

God declares this of mankind and no one else. He does not say that the animals or even the angels are created in His image. Man is in His image. Verses 27-28 go on to say:

*So God created man in his own image,  
in the image of God he created him;  
male and female he created them.*

*And God blessed them.*

So one of the most foundational and important things you can say about God is that He is the Creator, the Owner and the Designer to Whom all is owed. Then it follows that one of the most important things you can say about yourself or about every other human being who has ever been conceived is that we have been created in the very image of God.

### **What Does It Mean To Be Created in God's Image?**

To be in the image of God means that you resemble Him in some way. You're created—male and female—to have relationship with God. We're created to rule over the rest of creation underneath the rulership of God. That is what each of us is designed to do, but remember that it's not just something we do. The image of God is something we are. It's every person, from the smallest embryo to the oldest person who has ever lived. We are all in the image of God. We do not lose the image of God even after the Fall.

In Genesis 9:6—clearly after the Fall when things are terrible—God declares, *"Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for [here's the reason] God made man in his own image."* The reason you can't murder is because to murder would be to destroy the image of God. We see the same thing in James 3:9 where James is talking about the maddening way in which we use our tongues for good purposes and evil purposes. *"With it [this instrument that God has created] we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God."*

Here's the point of bringing this up: Things like abortion, racism and denigration of those who are different are not just an attack on the sanctity of human life. They are a denigration and offense to the living God Himself. We can see this as a man-centered view—that people are important—and that's very true. But the reason it's such a crime is

because ultimately we are offending God Himself. If we want to see why the world is “not the way it’s supposed to be” as the movie pointed out, we have to turn to Genesis 3.

If you look at Genesis 2:25, you see the last description of Adam and Eve before you get into chapter three and the Fall. You have Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, together enjoying marital bliss, and it says in particular that they were “*not ashamed.*” For those of us who have felt the deep pain of shame, think about how this is a time when there was no shamefulness because there was no sin.

Look at Genesis 3:1 because everything is about to change. “*Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made.*” We learn quickly this is Satan working through this crafty serpent. It goes on to say, “*He said to the woman...*” Pause there for a moment. Up until this point, there’s not been one sinful word uttered on earth. There’s not been one bit of pain, brokenness, sin or doubt. Then here it is—Satan says something that is an outrage. It is evil to its core. Horrific. Insurrection and treasonous. He says, “*Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’*”

I hope you will know and apply this one thing to your own life: Every sin you commit has that question underneath it, “Did God *actually* say? Did God really say that? Did God really mean that? Is He really a truth-teller? Is He really good?”

That’s the second line of attack. Look at Genesis 3:4-5, “*But the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die.’*” Translation—God is a liar. “*For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.*” Satan’s first point is that God is a liar.

His second point is that God is not good. He’s holding something back from you—something that is good, that is desirous, that you want and should have. Eve buys it hook, line and sinker. Here we might be tempted to blame Eve. Have you ever asked, “Where’s Adam?” Adam’s just standing by passively. He’s not protecting the garden or his wife. He’s not leading his wife; not tramping the serpent out.

Listen to verse six, “*So when the woman saw that [number one] the tree was good for food, and that [number two] it was a delight to the eyes, and that [number three] the tree was to be desired to make one wise...*” She thought, “This is good. These promises that he made are enticing. There are pleasures here. My desires can be fulfilled. God doesn’t have my good at heart. God is not telling me the truth.” If you ever wonder why we have abortion, brokenness, racism and neglect of the poor, this is the reason. Here sin entered into the world.

Now as every single one of us is conceived, we are not only conceived and created in the image of God, but also in the image of Adam as sinner. As we grow up and act out in sin, every single sin has this twofold pattern of:

- lessening the authority of God, and
- promising all sorts of pleasures and enticements.

Every sin is based in the belief that if you only go against God's will and way, things will go better; God does not have your good at heart. So we can see why things like abortion happen—because we do not listen to what our Creator has said about human life. There's this false promise that if you just put it away, nobody will know, nothing will happen and your life will be better.

Then if you look at Genesis 4, here's the next sin on the scene. What's the result of this conspiracy of sin between Satan's plan, Eve's willingness and Adam's passivity? The first man-to-man sin is murder. Not only murder, but family murder. Why was this the case? It was because Cain's desires were not fulfilled. His sacrifice was not accepted and Abel's was. He got angry and wanted to put away his brother who got in his way of what he thought was right and good. As James 4:2 says, *"You desire and do not have, so you murder."*

You might be reading along and thinking, "Well, I guess Satan has left the scene. He kind of slithered into the garden and now he's off the scene." But if you read the whole Bible—Genesis to Revelation—you'll see he's actually one of the main characters here. Jesus—while talking to the Pharisees—says in John 8:44, *"You are of your father the devil...He was a murderer from the beginning..."* Satan was there. He's deceiving. He's destroying.

Second Corinthians 4:4 really clarifies that Satan is alive and well today. We are a church who believes in the sovereignty of God. He is absolutely sovereign, powerful, in charge, ruling and reigning. There can be a temptation for those of us who hold to that theology—and I do, absolutely—that we can forget the power and activity of Satan. Second Corinthians 4:4 calls him *"the god of this world,"* saying that he *"has blinded the minds of the unbelievers."* Ephesians 2:2-3 calls him *"the prince of the power of the air."* We must resist him day after day after day.

The greatest thing about the story of Satan is that one day he will be thrown in the pit of fire to be destroyed forever and not to wreak his havoc anymore. Do you know where his decisive defeat was? It was because of a murder. The murderer himself from the

beginning was defeated at the cross of Jesus Christ. That day when he thought he was achieving victory, he was actually working for his own defeat.

I think it is crucial for us to set these foundation stones in our Christian worldview from the very beginning of Genesis that God is Creator, Owner and Designer. Everything is designed for His glory, including us—who have been created and conceived in His image—even though we're sinners. We're still reflections of Who God is. Every embryo—no matter how small—is designed to be a little mirror to magnify, glorify and reflect God's glory. Sin—working in hand with Satan—has entered this world. The devastating repercussions are unimaginable. Every day Satan conspires to destroy life and undermine the value of human life by causing us to forget Who God is and why He matters.

### **What We Should Do**

So when we step back and look at this world where things aren't the way they're supposed to be—they're painful and confusing—we inevitably should ask, "What can we do?" In some sense, are we living in a sort of Nazi Germany? We look back at that time and think, "How could people have just gone about their day, had their birthday parties, gone to work and not said anything?" Yet we live in a holocaust of our own.

So what should we do? What should I be doing? What should you be doing? I'm going to resist the temptation to tell you what you should do because I don't think there's a one-size-fits-all answer. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians that we are one body here but we have different parts. They're not the same parts; they have different designs. We have different gifting, are at different stages in life and have different backgrounds. That doesn't mean we shouldn't do anything, but what you are called to do might be different from what I'm called to do. We may adopt; you may not adopt. You may write poetry; I may not write poetry. You may volunteer at a crisis pregnancy center; I may not. You may run for political office and be part of changing the laws of this land and others may not. There is one thing that Scripture says applies to all of us without exception and that is to pray. All of us are to pray and pray without ceasing.

### **Three Ways You Can Pray**

So as we close here, let me give you a few prayer prompts. These are a few ways to pray and a few ways to ask, "Lord, what might You have me do in 2013 to help create a culture of life rather than a culture of death?"

- 1) Pray that the Lord would open the eyes of your heart to see this issue for what it really is. I remember being in high school and looking at abortion pictures and not feeling a thing, even though I was a Christian at that time. I did not feel a thing. For some of us, we may be exercised about this issue. I've read a lot on this issue. I'm preaching on it right now and I've talked to people who have assisted with abortions. This has become a significant part of my life and yet I still don't feel the horror exactly for what it is. It still feels like numbers. It still feels abstract and surreal. So I think we need to pray, "Lord, help me see this reality for what it is. Help me see what abortion truly does."
  
- 2) Pray that the Lord would open the eyes of your heart to see the beauty, value and dignity of human life. It's an easy thing to do when we look at magazine covers and see all the beautiful people of the world—flawless in many ways—and think, "Oh, what a beautiful creation!" But there are many other people who in various ways are neglected by society. They're not the beautiful, strong or well put together. They're people who struggle with various forms of physical, mental or social disorders that make it difficult for others to relate to them. We need to have the eyes of our hearts opened to view every single person—no matter their abilities or inabilities—as creatures in the image of God. C.S. Lewis one time said, "You've never seen an ordinary person." Every person you ever look at, no matter who they are, will live forever. If you could actually see them as they will be someday—in their glorified state if they're a believer—you probably would not be able to look on them without being blinded by them. So try to have eyes of faith to see each person created in the image of God. For some of us, that will mean we need to repent over the sort of jokes we tell or the sort of people we might avoid.
  
- 3) Pray for the vulnerable and ask the Lord, "What might You have me to do?" Has that ever been part of your prayer life? Have you ever prayed for those who have disabilities or are poor and can't get enough to eat tonight? Have you ever prayed for those who are feeling abandoned and lonely and are losing their memories in the nursing home right now? These are scary prayers. Ask the Lord, "Do You want us to adopt this year? Do You want us to contribute a little extra to this

fund or to that? Do You want us to volunteer? Do You want us to form a relationship with a young single woman or an at-risk teenager? Lord, what might You have us do?" I've been in that position of not wanting to pray certain prayers for fear of how the Lord might answer, but take a step of faith in 2013.

I want to close with a word about grace because in a room this size it would be an unusual thing if there was no one personally affected by abortion. Maybe it was somebody in your family whom you tried to stop. Maybe it was a girlfriend in the past or a daughter for whom you did nothing to discourage from stopping. Or maybe it was even you yourself. Probably the majority of us have not been complicit but have been absent, passive and have simply done nothing. We've pretended as if this issue just did not exist. The point is all of us need grace.

One of my favorite verses in the whole Bible is James 4:6. It's just a few words, "*But he gives more grace...*" When we're at the foot of the cross together, it's hard to look down upon one another as we look up to Christ. It's a level playing field and God's grace is sufficient. He has more than enough grace. He wants to give you grace and does not want you to live in shame. One of Satan's last remaining weapons is to make false accusations and to worm it into your mind that you're not truly forgiven. He wants you to believe that what you have done or not done will make you the exception and that God will not forgive you. God stands ready to forgive and welcome you in. He is glad to give you grace through Jesus Christ.

Let's pray. Lord, we thank You once again for the deep, deep love of Jesus. This is a hard, painful and broken world. I thank You that You did not just let us be but You sent Your only Son—Your beloved Son—into this world to become a man. He is the ultimate image of You God, our invisible Creator. Thank You that He can sympathize with our temptations and weaknesses. Thank You that He defeated death on the cross and rose triumphantly from the grave. Lord, our heart cry this morning is that You would come quickly—come to set everything right. In the meantime, keep us faithful and seeking after You. I pray that each of us would endeavor by Your grace to live lives that would honor the sanctity of human life that You have created. We pray all of this in Jesus' name and by the power of the Spirit. Amen.

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*All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.*

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