



## Dignified: How Infant Mouths Declare God's Majesty

Psalm 8

Pastor David Sunday

January 22, 2012

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This morning, I'm going to break from our normal pattern of exposition and preach on one of the grave moral crises of our time. We're going to turn to two different texts but I'll be drawing from several others. I'd like us to begin in the book of Proverbs then we'll end with Psalm 8.

Proverbs: 24:10-12. Let's stand for the reading of God's Word.

*<sup>10</sup> If you faint in the day of adversity,  
your strength is small.*

*<sup>11</sup> Rescue those who are being taken away to death;  
hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter.*

*<sup>12</sup> 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?"*

This text speaks of a day of adversity that will require divine strength in order to withstand. I'd like you to imagine with me for a moment. We're going to fast-forward to the year 2051—39 years into the future. It's been a long time since you've been in our country because in 2012 you went to be a missionary in Papua New Guinea. After you left a brutal and long-standing war was broke out in our country that prevented you from returning. You've heard the reports and you know you've lost many friends and relatives so you're under no illusion that you're coming back to "the land of the free and the home of the brave." You know everything is not going to be the same as it was but nothing could have prepared you for what you would see.

As you begin to travel across our nation, you discover that whole cities have been wiped out—left in an ashen heap: New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Houston, Philadelphia, Phoenix, San Antonio, San Diego, Dallas, San Jose, Jacksonville, Indianapolis, San Francisco, Austin, Columbus, Ft. Worth, Charlotte, Detroit, El Paso, Memphis, Baltimore, Boston, Seattle, Washington D.C., Nashville, Denver, Louisville, Milwaukee, Portland, Albuquerque,

Tucson, Fresno, Sacramento, Long Beach, Kansas City and half of Mesa, Arizona. All of them wiped out.

It's hard to imagine such a scene. One might find it absurd to even suggest a scenario like that but the fact is, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, the populations of these—the 36 largest U.S. cities—add up to about 50 million people. Imagine 50 million people destroyed in 39 years.

That's the number of unborn children whose lives have been destroyed by abortion since the Supreme Court issued *Roe vs. Wade* 39 years ago this day. Fifty million lives. Enough to fill our 36 largest cities. Enough lives to equal the population of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, North and South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas and more.

If you can imagine a U.S.A. without the upper Midwest, that's how many lives have been taken by abortion in the United States alone. That's the equivalent of seven holocausts per year, right under our noses. We love that slogan about the holocaust—"Never again"—but in reality it is happening every day in the United States.

### **The Moral Crisis of Abortion**

How can we be faithful to the Word of God and remain silent about this issue? We need to have clarity and conviction and courage and compassion to respond in a way that God would desire us to respond because this is not a political issue. This is not a Republican sermon this morning. This is a human rights issue; more than that, it's an assault on the image of God. It's a gospel issue.

One of the reasons Satan would love to lull us into the fog of ignorance and denial about this issue is because he longs to keep people in bondage to the shame and guilt that accompanies abortion. As long as the church remains silent—as long we keep this in the shadows—we give the impression that the gospel has nothing to say to those whose consciences are tormented by this sin. There are millions of people in the United States alone who are festering with guilt over abortion. Some of them are fathers and mothers of aborted children. Others are related personally to someone in that category or have encouraged someone to undergo an abortion. It's almost impossible to talk to anyone who has not been touched by the shame and blood-guilt of this issue. It's a boil that needs to be lanced and the gospel—the good news of what God has done for sinners in Christ—is powerful enough to lance that boil, cleanse that infection and heal that wound.

Satan doesn't want us to know about this healing. He's a tempter, accuser and tormentor of the consciences of millions and millions of people.

## **God's Forgiveness is Available for Abortion**

Before I say anything more about this moral crisis, I want to say something about the good news of our Lord Jesus Christ that speaks right to the heart of this crisis. I'd like you to hear these beautiful words from the New Testament letter of 1 John. John says this under the inspiration of God the Holy Spirit,

*"This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness..."*—including the unrighteousness of abortion.  
(1 John 1:5-9)

Jesus died on the cross to remove the guilt and shame of abortion. His cleansing is so perfect that the Bible says when we confess and renounce our sins and turn to God through faith in Jesus Christ, He removes our sins from us "*as far as the east is from the west...*" (Psalm 103:12) and "*He remembers our sins no more*" (Isaiah 43:25). As Corrie ten Boom said, "When we repent and believe in Jesus, God takes our sins—the past, the present and the future—and dumps them in the sea and puts up a sign that says, 'No Fishing Allowed.'" Satan wants to go around fishing, dredging up stuff from the past. If I can leave you with anything this morning, it's that if you have confessed your sin and turned to Jesus, there is no condemnation for you in Christ.

I want to tell a little story that Pastor Tullian Tchividjian (Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church, Ft. Lauderdale, Florida) tells about a middle-aged woman who needed help from her pastor.

She went to her pastor and said, "Pastor, you know that I had an abortion a number of years ago."

"Yes," the pastor replied.

"Well, I need to talk to you about the man that I have since met."

"All right," replied the pastor.

"Well, we met a while back and started dating and I thought, 'I've got to tell him about the abortion,' but I just couldn't. A little while later we got engaged and I thought, 'I've got to tell him about the abortion,' but I just couldn't. Then we got married and I thought, 'I really need to tell him about the abortion,' but I just couldn't. So I needed to talk to someone, Pastor, and you're it."

The pastor replied, "You know we have a service for this. Let's open God's Word and go through that together." So they did; they had a service together where she confessed her sin and she received the good news of God's forgiveness through faith in Jesus Christ. The pastor assured her through the promises of God's Word that those who trust in Christ are forgiven and their sins are forgotten.

When they were finished, she said to him, "Now I think I've got the courage to tell my new husband about my abortion. Thanks, Pastor."

The pastor replied to her, "What abortion?"

What abortion? Those of us who stand clothed in His righteousness alone will be faultless when we stand before the throne of God above, cleansed of our guilt, clothed in the righteousness of Jesus. If this morning your conscience is tormented by guilt over this, I would encourage you to talk to one of our elders or pastors. You will find that we desire nothing more than to point you to Jesus and comfort you with His truth. There are also a couple women in our church who are specially trained to offer counsel and care to women who've been involved in abortion—or men who have been involved in abortion—and we can point you in their direction.

### **God's View of the Sin of Cowardice**

Let's also consider the sin of cowardice. That's what this passage from Proverbs is addressing—the sin of cowardice. Maybe you've never done anything to actively participate in abortion but have you never done anything to rescue others from this sin? Have you ever done anything to stop the shedding of innocent blood?

The Chicago Tribune did an article a while back about American's attitudes toward abortion. They concluded that most Americans find themselves in the "mushy middle" on this issue. The mushy middle are people like Kay, a 44-year-old mother in Elmhurst who said, "Abortion is a personal decision that people have to make for themselves; but I have a hard time with it. Where do you draw the line? We can save 26-week-old fetuses now. For myself, I wouldn't draw that line but for others, I wouldn't presume to know." That's the mushy middle. That's where most Americans are on this issue.

Bethlehem Baptist Church ran a clever ad in the Minneapolis Star Tribune a few years ago that had this statement: "I am personally pro-life but politically pro-choice." Underneath it said, "Pontus Pilate". That's the mushy middle. "Well, this man is innocent, but I wash my hands of the matter. You do with Him as you please." The mushy middle.

I want to persuade you this morning that no one who worships the God of the Bible can be in the mushy middle when it comes to abortion. This is one of those matters where

we have to be crystal clear; we need moral clarity and the courage of our convictions. One of the reasons we preach this on Sanctity of Life Sunday is I think there is a Satanic-fog machine that is just aiming to keep Bible-believing Christians in the fog of denial and ignorance about this issue. If we've been redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, we cannot be indifferent about human life. Whether it's pre-born life or physically disabled life or racially-different life or elderly life, no matter how weak, helpless, challenging, no matter how seemingly unproductive, any life and all life belongs to the Lord, is created by God and is worthy of our care and our protection.

Look at Proverbs 24:11 again and read these words that call us to do something. "*Rescue those who are being taken away to death; hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter.*" Linger there a moment.

## **God Rescued Us from Death & Judgment**

The first thing I want us to see from this short passage is that God has done this very thing for us in Christ. We have been rescued from death and damnation. We have been held back when we were stumbling to the slaughter. That's what we sang about this morning: "I was on my hell-bound course and Jesus rescued me." That's what the Bible says Jesus came into the world to do.

- Luke 1:47, He came so "*that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him [God] without fear...*"
- In Colossians 1:13, we read about our Heavenly Father who "*rescued us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son...*"
- In Galatians 1:4, Paul says that our Lord Jesus Christ "*...gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father...*"
- And in 1 Thessalonians 1: 10, we read of Jesus "*...Who delivers us from the wrath to come.*"

So we are a people who have been rescued and that ought to shape our response to the scourge of abortion in our society.

## God Strengthens Us to Stand Firm

The second point that we need to observe comes from verse ten. We have the Lord's strength to stand firm even when the opposition is intense. We're going to need that strength. We're talking about a day of adversity, a satanic deception, a world-wide epidemic of 42 million abortions every year. This is all in the last half century. There is a battle going on here that we do not have sufficient strength in ourselves to withstand but if we pretend there's nothing to do, what we're really saying is that our God is too small and He will not give us the strength we need to do something about this issue. Instead, we need to realize, "I have the Lord's strength to stand firm even when the opposition is intense."

Friends, we need to understand that the battle for pre-born life is a spiritual battle. If you take a stand on this, some people will fiercely oppose you. Others will be very annoyed by you. Others will want you to stop talking about it. You may lose some friends. You may not be popular if you take a stand on this issue. But we have a strength greater than ourselves. "*If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small*" (Proverbs 24:10). But our strength is great in the Lord.

Let me give you two illustrations from that same Chicago Tribune article that describe the spirit of this age. There's a nurse named Allison who works at the Hope Clinic (which I think is a lamentable name for this business) in Granite City, Illinois. They perform 7,000 abortions per year. Allison has worked there over 23 years. After all this time on the job, this is what she said, "There's not a day when I wake up and I'm not excited about going to work. We give women their lives back and that's important, holy work." That's almost sacrilegious language about abortion. Holy work? You see the mindset we're up against?

Another illustration is from John Piper who had lunch with an abortion doctor in Minneapolis. The man bluntly told John, "You don't need to waste your time proving that the unborn are human beings. I believe that. I know that. The issue is whether the taking of human of life is warranted by the greater good of a woman's right."

Friends, fleshly weapons are never going to destroy that kind of argument. Thank God that the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God and take every thought captive to obey Christ (2 Corinthians 10). It's through those divinely powerful weapons that we will not faint in the day of adversity through the Word

of God and the Spirit of God. It's through the gospel of Jesus that we can stand firm in this battle.

## **God Calls Us to Intervene**

When we know of innocent blood being shed, God's people are called to intervene—to do something. Who are these who are being taken away to death in verse 11? Who are these who are stumbling to the slaughter? To whom does this apply? What situations fall under the category of Proverbs 24:11? Could it be victims of vigilanti justice? Captives taken at war? Persons wrongly condemned? Drive-by shootings? Children being abused? We don't know—it's left open ended. The situation is left unspecified so no one will be able to exempt himself from responsibility. It's a general, all-inclusive, broadly applicable command. We cannot be non-committal about this. We are commanded to do something about this.

## **God Will Hold Us Accountable**

That leads me to the last point from verse 12. Pleading ignorance will not succeed with God. If you say, "*Behold, we did not know this...*"

We want to pretend that we didn't notice and look the other way. We want to respond to this danger by playing dead and pretending it will go away. When we see danger, our natural human response is not to "do unto others as we would have them do unto us"—our natural human response is to walk to the other side of the road and pretend we don't see what is going on over there.

But God says, "*If you say, 'Behold, we did not know this,' does not he who weighs the heart perceive it?*" What's He saying to us? God knows what we know. God knows that we cannot turn a blind eye and a deaf ear to the issue of abortion in our day. In fact, being under the hearing of the Word this morning raises our responsibility to do something. We can't hide in the fog of denial and willful ignorance. God won't let us evade responsibility.

Friends, if 42 million two-year-olds were being killed around the world every year, could we bury our heads in the sand? Could we ignore that? No! We'd be horrified. What makes the difference between that two-year-old and a baby in the womb? Let me quote Scott Klusendorf who makes a very good philosophy point here. He says, "How does a

journey of seven inches down the birth canal transform the nature of a fetus from non-person to person?"

You see, there's something happening here that we have to act upon. We have to do something about it. There's a rescue that needs to take place. There's a holding back that we need to be involved in and there's this Satanic deception trying to blind people to this epidemic. We're not going to be able to say to God in the end, "I didn't know anything about it. I had no responsibility in this." No, God expects us to act when we're seeing what is going on in our society today and He will strengthen us with His power to stand firm in the day of adversity against the forces of evil, to defend those who are being led away to death. That's what we need to learn from these Proverbs.

## **God is to Be Worshipped by All**

Now let's turn to Psalm 8. It's a beautiful Psalm in the Bible. What we see here is that our response to abortion reveals who we worship. If you ask a Christian why this matter is so urgent, it ultimately boils down to the first commandment: "You shall have no other gods before Me." Abortion is about God, the Creator. In our worship of Him, we grieve over the evil of abortion because we delight in the goodness of God Who is the majestic Creator of all life.

Listen to how David does this in this Psalm:

*<sup>1</sup> O LORD, our Lord,  
how majestic is your name in all the earth!  
You have set your glory above the heavens.*

*<sup>2</sup> Out of the mouth of babies and infants,  
you have established strength because of your foes,  
to still the enemy and the avenger.*

*<sup>3</sup> When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,  
the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,*

*<sup>4</sup> what is man that you are mindful of him,  
and the son of man that you care for him?*

*<sup>5</sup> Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings<sup>[b]</sup>  
and crowned him with glory and honor.*

*<sup>6</sup> You have given him dominion over the works of your hands;  
you have put all things under his feet,*

*<sup>7</sup> all sheep and oxen,  
and also the beasts of the field,*

<sup>8</sup> *the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea,  
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.*

<sup>9</sup> *O LORD, our Lord,  
how majestic is your name in all the earth!*

Praise God. Look at verse one and then verse nine. There's a frame at the beginning and the end of this Psalm. It's framed by the worship of God's majesty. "*O LORD*"—when all capital letters are used, that's the word Yahweh, the covenant name of God. The great I Am. Then "*our Lord*" with smaller letters—that's Adonai, the almighty Creator, the uncreated Creator of all things. "*O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!*" In other words, "You're the God of all the earth—not just a tribal deity. You're not just a god for one day and age. You're not one among many gods. You're the God Whose glory shines in the whole universe. You're the eternal God. You're the One Who made all things. Your name is majestic; You reign and are worthy of praise."

## **God Elevates Humanity**

So the Psalm is framed by the worship of God's majesty but then look at what's in the middle of the Psalm in verse three through eight. What is the Psalmist marveling at here? What is he amazed at? In the middle of this Psalm, he is marveling at the dignity of humanity. In fact, verse five says God has crowned humanity "*with glory and honor.*" So this is a Psalm about the majesty of God and also about the majesty of man under God. Man is crowned—a crown is a regal item. It speaks of majesty. God has crowned man with glory and honor. So we have a Psalm about the majesty of God and the majesty of man.

Look at what David is doing in verse three. As a shepherd, he was often out in the fields, looking at the heavens. Many nights he's been looking at the moon and stars which God has set in place. He sees the Milky Way. Clear nights. Innumerable stars filling the sky. Galaxies beyond that we don't even know about. Look at what David says about those galaxies, those stars which God has set in place. What does he call them in the second phrase of verse three? They're "*the work of Your fingers.*" God made the stars and the galaxies with His fingers. That's how immense, how grand, how great our God is. He made it all with His fingers!

So in contrast to God, this vast galaxy of stars is tiny and in contrast to this vast galaxy of stars, our planet is tiny. And in comparison to all that, we are tiny. Just think of

a forest that is crowded with magnificent trees. How much would that forest be diminished if one leaf fell to the ground? Think of the entire universe with all its innumerable stars. How much would the universe be diminished if the earth was dissolved, never to be seen again? Then think of mankind. Think of yourself in the midst of all this immensity. The question David asks at the beginning of verse four is the obvious question anyone who has their eyes opened to the magnificence of creation should be asking. "*What is man...?*" Who are we? We are tiny. We're like a little grain of sand on a remote beach in comparison to this whole universe that God has made. What is man? If the answer is, "Man is nothing. Man is insignificant" would any of us have the audacity to object.

"We are a moment, You are forever  
Lord of the Ages, God before time  
We are a vapor, You are eternal  
Love everlasting, reigning on high"

(Be Unto Your Name, Lynn DeShazo, Gary Sadler)

What is man? It's amazing to consider the fact that God even takes notice of us. That God cares for us. David's amazed at that in verse four and then David says, "Not only do You take notice and care for us, You've made us '*a little lower than the heavenly beings.*'" Look at that in verse five—"a little lower than the heavenly beings." The word there is Elohim. It could be referring to the angels or it could be referring to God Himself. Either way, it's telling us God has put man on a pedestal. God sees humanity as His masterpiece. Humanity is God's favorite, most splendid work. More than anything else God has made, He values humanity so much so that God became a Man. One of us.

Hebrews 2 picks up on this Psalm and says that because we share in flesh and blood, He Himself—the Spirit of God—partook of flesh and blood so that through death, He might destroy the one who holds the power of death—that is the devil—and liberate those of us who are in captivity to the fear of death. That's what Jesus did for us---He became human for us. He was conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary. He was an embryo. He was a fetus. In doing so, He consecrates the womb and dignifies life in the womb as precious to God—as God's masterpiece.

There's one more thing I want to point out from this Psalm. Look at Psalm 8:2.

*"Out of the mouth of babies and infants,  
you have established strength because of your foes,  
to still the enemy and the avenger."*

God has enemies—adversaries—who rage against Him but they are no threat to God. He says, “I will take what is most insignificant, what is most weak in humanity—babies and infants—and through them, I am able to silence My most violent enemies because look at what I’ve done. Look at what I’ve knit together in the womb of a mother. I have knit together this masterpiece that bears My image, My likeness; that has fellowship with Me and communes with Me. This is My delight; this is the pinnacle of My creation. Through a little, tiny infant, God says, “I can destroy My enemies because they can never make what I make in the womb. They can never create what I create there.”

John Calvin called infants “invincible champions of God.” They offer perfect and pleasing praise. When a tiny baby—God’s masterpiece—comes forth from the womb, she praises her creator. She speaks loudly of the goodness of God Who provides her with nourishment throughout her gestation and Who opens her mouth and equips her to suck. These speechless infants are sufficient weapons to destroy the enemies of God. They are witnesses and preachers of God’s glory. They are witnesses; all it takes to shut the mouths of all God’s enemies.

So what we see in this Psalm is that we cannot worship God’s majesty and wreck God’s masterpiece. Or as John Piper says,

“You cannot worship and glorify the majesty of God while treating his supreme creation with contempt—whatever color or whatever age that creation might be.

- You cannot starve the aged human and glorify the majesty of God.
- You cannot dismember the unborn human and glorify the majesty of God.
- You cannot gas the Jewish human and glorify the majesty of God.
- You cannot lynch the [African-American] and glorify the majesty of God.
- You cannot treat human pregnancy like a disease and glorify the majesty of God.
- You cannot treat the mixing of human races like a pestilence and glorify the majesty of God.
- You cannot worship and glorify the majesty of God while treating his supreme creation with contempt.”

This is God’s Word to us. It’s a clear Word. It’s a decisive Word. It’s one of these truths that can allow for no waffling. We must be clear. We must act.

## **God’s Call to Action**

So what can we do? How can we respond to a message like this? It calls us to action. Let’s consider a number of things.

1. We need to think with moral clarity and teach our children to do the same. It is impossible to raise children—to disciple children and youth—in this day and age without speaking regularly about the sanctity of human of life. We must equip our children to think clearly about this. They are going to confront this issue throughout their lifetime.
2. We must pray earnestly because this is a spiritual battle. We will faint in the day of adversity if we don't draw our strength from the Lord.
3. We can stand firm in many ways.
  - a. Volunteering at a crisis pregnancy is a great way to act. People in our church are doing that.
  - b. Maybe you're a good writer. What about writing an article for your local newspaper to counter articles that are obviously biased and slanted. Some of you would do a great job putting forth the truth. There's a good example on the Desiring God website where John Piper wrote an article to the Minneapolis Star Tribune.
  - c. Some of you should run for political office and speak about issues of God and life in the public square and defend the unborn.
  - d. Youth, you can work to bring a pro-life speaker to your school or college. Invite your friends to come and listen.
  - e. Be prepared with truth you can use in dialog with your friends. There's a great book by Scott Klusendorf—Case for Life—filled with excellent arguments to prepare you.

Do something and be encouraged. God's people *are* making a difference in this issue. Abortion clinics *are* closing. Earlier this month, Northern Illinois Women's Medical Center in Rockford shut down. First because of their practices not being up to snuff but in the article I read, the director said they decided not to reopen it because there wasn't enough support in the community for it. Last October, another abortion clinic in Lincolnwood, Illinois shut down. All this is happening while pregnancy help centers are multiplying and public opinion is shifting on this issue. Young people are thinking differently about abortion today than they were when I was younger. We can give thanks to God for this change.

So let's not be skeptical; let's not fall prey to unbelief. As Ted prayed this morning, ask God to keep us from falling into futility and resignation about this issue. Let's believe that just as God changed the whole mind of our nation about slavery, He can do the same about abortion.

One of the most encouraging trends over the last few years is an increased awareness and involvement of Christians in foster care and adoption. I'm so encouraged by what I see happening in our own church family. It's not just here; I had lunch with Pastor John Sale on Monday and the same thing is happening in his church in California. Christians are waking up to the fact that if we are serious about reducing and ending abortion, then we need to work together as God's people to increase the ministry of adoption and foster care.

If you read last weeks "Life Together" (the weekly church newsletter), you saw a blog article by our deacon Paul Freidel and his wife Rebecca, about the biblical teaching on adoption. They're going to follow up this week with part two—a practical ministry we are developing as a church to support families who wish to adopt children, as well as families who want to take in foster children through Safe Families or the State foster care system. They're going to give many details about this in the newsletter. This year, we're taking some steps of faith as a congregation to start a ministry where we can financially and practically help families in our church who are interested in adopting. I think this is a great step forward.

Let's be encouraged and let's look forward with hope to what God will do as we work together in a variety of ways. What are we trying to do? We are worshiping God's majesty by caring for God's masterpiece—humanity from the womb all the way to the grave. We worship God's majesty by the way we care for, protect, defend and nurture God's masterpiece. As we do so, may all glory and praise go to Jesus Who gave Himself for our sins to rescue us from this present evil age according to the will of our God and Father. Amen.

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