

Psalm 139
The Value of Life

Last week I saw this Jan 9 FB post

Tomorrow morning (Jan 10) should be a day of introspection for conservative churches across this country. If your church leaders remain silent on the violence and insurrection of this week, then it's time to leave that church.

You may agree or disagree, but I can assure you that you don't want me or anyone here to turn this into an opportunity to speak out on every issue.

We have no desire to turn our pulpit into a running commentary on the news of the week. We could spend all morning commenting on news items with moral significance. Our calling here at this time and place is to worship God and hear His Word.

We've been in James and providentially we come to James 3:1

1 Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment.

This is a week that we observe and pay attention to the Sanctity of Life, so I want to consider a teacher's role and the cultural moral voice?

I don't intend to speak out on every moral issue that appears online or in the news, but I note that there is a difference between singular events with a moral significance and a PUBLIC POLICY that violates the biblical commands and values.

This past week we marked the MLK holiday and the anniversary of the Roe v Wade decision. Much of what Dr. King was committed to dealt with public policy, but he also knew that there were deep heart issues involved as well. So too with the issues at the core of Roe v Wade. There are public policy issues, some of which were changed on Wednesday, and there are deep heart issues.

MLK JR spoke about the prophetic moral voice of the church. He had some sobering comments in 1967

<https://worldandeverything.org/2020/12/the-world-and-everything-in-it-december-11-2020/>

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. wrote in 1967, *The church must be reminded that it is not the master or the servant of the state, but rather the conscience of the state. It must be the guide and the critic of the state and never its tool. If the church does not recapture its prophetic zeal, it will become an irrelevant social club without moral or spiritual authority.*

James has so much to say about issues that deal with justice, the heart and with corporate behavior in the church. When those intersect public policy issues, we need to bring a biblical perspective.

If we listen carefully to what James and the scripture is saying, we'll find that there are applications toward "the left and toward the right."

An important Public Policy issue that we must not forget is that of the RIGHT TO LIFE. All other policies that seek to promote life and the general welfare of the American people become skewed or moot if we are a culture that cuts off life in the womb.

As we consider James 3:1 **1 Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment,** I want to be clear that my teaching is grounded in scripture.

I want us to look at a familiar passage from Psalm 139 that gives us the foundation for speaking to the issue of the beginning and the value of life.

13 For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother's womb.
14 I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
Wonderful are Your works, And my soul knows it very well.
15 My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret,
And skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth;
16 Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Your book were all written
The days that were ordained for me, When as yet there was not one of them.

This next passage that is commonly used during Advent also speaks about the status and value of life in the womb.

Luke 1:15 – “this child will be filled with the Holy Spirit from the womb”

39 Now at this time Mary arose and went in a hurry to the hill country, to a city of Judah, 40 and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. 41 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

44 For behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped in my womb for joy.

These are just two passages that affirm a biblical perspective on the value of life in the womb. There is an affirmation of value because God is seen as the maker, the creator. It is by His hand and His skill that each human being is fearfully and wonderfully made.

The passage from Luke 1 ascribes “joy” to the baby in Elizabeth’s womb. The pro-choice argument for nearly 50 years has been that it’s not a baby in the womb, but it’s merely a tissue mass.

A tissue mass doesn’t leap for joy.

I found the testimony and comments of Kira Davis quite compelling on the subject Life and Choice. For years she described herself as Pro-life but pro-choice ...until she had a sonogram at 12 weeks in her first pregnancy and saw the baby sucking his thumb.

After that she knew she could no longer be pro-life AND pro-choice. She said to her husband, ‘We could go and get rid of this baby today and no one would ask a question. The baby was sucking his thumb.’

It was the first moment that a baby became human to me and that’s when I realized that I can’t be pro-choice and pro-life at the same time. I know good people and some believers who say, “Government shouldn’t be making that decision for a couple”, but I want to challenge you on that. If you draw that out to its logical conclusion, the question we run into is “where does life begin?”

(podcast JustListenToYourself episode 4 8:00mark begins story).

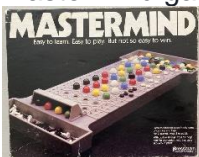
Friends, that question is crucial.

If you avoid that question and its conclusions then you can’t really have an open discussion about what abortion really is.

The starting point is the key – is it a life? Where does life begin?

Our starting assumptions will determine our end point.

Mastermind game – if you have the wrong guess at the beginning it will throw you off.



In the game MasterMind you get clues to help you.
DO WE HAVE CLUES to deal with the question, "Where does life begin?"
YES. Common Sense and then Ps 139

The issue as it relates to public policy is, "What do we do with the clues?"

If we acknowledge that there is life in the womb then there should be a sense of awe.

Psalm 139 shows us that sense of awe.

13 For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother's womb.

14 I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;

Wonderful are Your works, And my soul knows it very well.

One doesn't have to be a believer to understand that life begins at conception. Anyone can follow the science, but a biblical worldview should lead to a sense of awe about life.

A pro-life position has the framework for a consistent view of where life begins – the moment of conception. A cell dividing organism is said to be living, no matter how small or insignificant. It doesn't have to be human life to be a living substance. Plants and animals grow by cell division and we call them 'life'.

EX: If astronomers were to find a dividing cell based form on Mars, the headline would be "There is Life on Mars."

So why can't they see and admit that the dividing cells in the womb are evidence of life?

So the argument goes from, "OK, it is life, but is it a human life?"

WHAT OTHER KIND WOULD IT BE?

EX: If we asked a room full of 7 year olds whose moms were pregnant, "What is growing in mommy's tummy?", What would they say? A BABY

If we ask, "Is it a human baby?" they would look at you like you were crazy.

WHAT OTHER KIND OF LIFE WOULD IT BE?

They know that mom is NOT giving birth to a dog, cat, giraffe, tree, fish, or a bush. She is carrying a BABY.

Even at that age they are old enough to....."follow the science."

In my lifetime Planned Parenthood once followed the science...

1963 pamphlet titled "Is Birth Control Abortion?" . The pamphlet read:

"Is birth control abortion? Definitely not. An abortion kills the life of a baby after it has begun. It is dangerous to your life and health. It may make you sterile so that when you want a child you cannot have it. Birth control merely post-pones the beginning of life."

(Is Birth Control Abortion, Planned Parenthood pamphlet, Aug. 1963, p.1)

By contrast TODAY, the pro-abortion/ pro-choice side has NO consistent coherent scientific baseline for when life begins or for the value of life. For them it's a random guessing game – 20 weeks, 30 weeks, in the birth canal, once it is delivered?? There is no clear answer.

Because there is no principle ABOUT THE value of life we see dangerous results.

Ideas have consequences; Bad Ideas have victims

In 1971, well known comedian/activist Dick Gregory told Ebony magazine the following:
<https://www.liveaction.org/news/dick-gregory-government-funded-abortion-birth-control-programs-equals-genocide-blacks/>

“Government family programs designed for poor Blacks which emphasize birth control and abortion with the intent of limiting the Black population is genocide.” (Ebony magazine, October, 1971)

Later Gregory said:

“I fully support the right to life of every human being, from conception until natural death. In addition, I unequivocally endorse a total human life amendment to the U.S. Constitution, that would promote the value and dignity of every human life.” (42] Peace and civil rights activist Dick Gregory, in his speech to the third annual National Youth Pro-Life Coalition Thanksgiving for Life convention, November 21, 1974.

<https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/library/abortion-the-racists-most-devastating-weapon-9615>

Maafa21.com video on black genocide also on youtube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l6XfU8KVkzI&t=19s>

For the pro-choice/abortion position, the decision of when life begins is arbitrary, which becomes a dangerous slippery slope.

<https://www.equip.org/article/peter-singers-bold-defense-of-infanticide/>

In 1993, ethicist **Peter Singer** shocked many Americans by suggesting that no newborn should be considered a person until 30 days after birth ... Five years later, he was appointed as Decamp Professor of Bio-Ethics at Princeton University

. In 1979 he wrote, “Human babies are not born self-aware, or capable of grasping that they exist over time. They are not persons”; therefore, “the life of a newborn is of less value than the life of a pig, a dog, or a chimpanzee.”

Some might say, “OK, life begins at conception, but ...IS THE LIFE VALUABLE ENOUGH TO SAVE?

What would YOU want if it were you in the womb? Even in the tragic cases of severe abnormalities and certain death for the baby, we should honor and respect the VALUE of each life.

I’m old enough to remember when some prominent leaders in the African-American community were pro-life because abortion was seen as “black genocide.” I cited Dick Gregory, but there are others.

The question of valuing human life was actually seen as an indicator of the state of the soul of a nation.

From Carl R. Trueman, ***Strangers on a Train | Carl R. Trueman | First Things:***

<https://www.firstthings.com/blogs/firstthoughts/2017/01/strangers-on-a-train>

<https://www.patheos.com/blogs/geneveith/2017/01/when-jesse-jackson-was-pro-life-and-why-he-changed/>

There is one passage in *Speaking Freely* by Nat Hentoff (177-78) that offers disturbing insights into modern political culture. Hentoff quotes a certain politician on abortion:

“What happens to the soul of a nation that accepts the aborting of the life of a baby without a pang of conscience? What kind of society will we have twenty years hence if life can be taken so casually?”

This politician had himself almost been aborted, and he saw the clear connection between the dehumanizing of a child in the womb and racial oppression, in that both involve a denial of real personhood to a human being.

Later on, this politician decided to run for president and magically changed his mind on abortion. His name? Jesse Jackson.”

<https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/jesse-jackson-once-pro-life-runs-away-from-question-about-abortion-as-black>

It is a sad irony that the MLK Jr. Holiday and the anniversary of Roe v Wade often fall on the same week.

Dr. King and other leaders of the civil rights movement in the 60's were opposed to abortion in the black community.

Planned Parenthood's founder Margaret Sanger was committed to limiting the spread of childbirth among the Black community. She was an eager eugenicist, basically arguing more children from the fit, less from the unfit. Minorities and those who were impoverished and those who had any kind of physical or genetic affliction were considered the people who were unfit, who should not have babies. In other words, Planned Parenthood and the entire movement that it was a part of, were actually based in racism.

<https://albertmohler.com/2021/01/18/briefing-1-18-21>

In the debate over when does life begin and does all life have value, we must face this question...

TO WHOM WILL YOU GIVE THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT?

The baby or those who are unclear about when life begins?

To protect the 'least of these' shouldn't we give the benefit of the doubt to the life of the baby?

There are all sorts of issues that flow out of this topic and they can't and won't all be addressed this morning. We had an excellent informative training yesterday that went far deeper, so if you have questions there are folks here who can talk with you.

My concern this morning is to take us back to the BIG PICTURE and the biblical perspective about life.

This issue isn't the only "pro-life" issue, but it is FOUNDATIONAL. Other pro-life concerns disappear for those who are not allowed to live at all.

How should we then live? From "prophetic voice to pastoral voice"

- Embrace a pro-life ethic from the thoughts of our hearts to our actions – EX; James has already mentioned caring for the orphans and widows. That is pro-life
- Repent of murder in the heart and dehumanizing others who may disagree on this or other issues.
- Embrace the forgiveness that comes from Christ for our sins that violate the biblical ethic of Valuing Life – whether it is actual abortion or other specific acts of hatred, violence and anger towards others that violated the "image of God" in them.
- Jesus brings healing to those who know the brokenness of sin.

ONE STEP THAT GUIDES OUR HEARTS BACK TO Christ IS Communion

The Bible is clearly pro-life so it is counter-intuitive that we celebrate a death through our songs and through this table before us.

Jesus lay down his life for us. There is a difference between His death and ours. We are all headed for death as a result of our fallen world. We don't have a choice, but Jesus did. Jesus did not have to die. He chose to die.

The only pro-choice death that I celebrate is that of Christ. He chose death to give us life.

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