



“Human Life” Psalm 139:13-16

Idea: Human life is sanctified because it bears God’s image; therefore, it has intrinsic value.

Intro: On June 21, 2020, I stood in this pulpit and started a six-part sermon series on “Faith and Culture” as America was embroiled in utter chaos. The previous four months had been a whirlwind of bad news. The year began with a hotly debated and highly political impeachment trial. In the middle of the impeachment hearings, a new and highly contagious strain of coronavirus began to make headlines as news of the epidemic in Wuhan, China became known. The virus quickly spread from China to nearly every place on the planet. The number of deaths skyrocketed, causing countries and economies to shut down. Fear swept over the globe. Health professionals gave daily updates on the spread of COVID-19, spoke to the threat certain populations faced, and shared preventative actions people should take. These reports went on for several weeks. Then as it seemed like we were beginning to flatten the curve and were moving toward a reopened and flourishing economy, a black man by the name of George Floyd was killed while in the custody of a white Minneapolis police officer. Protests ensued, which turned into violent rioting and looting in Minneapolis and around the country. Racial tension and violence seized our attention for weeks as our news feeds were filled with images of burning buildings, toppled monuments, and funerals.

We were walking through some dark, dark days back in 2020. Unfortunately, the darkness and chaos never left; it only took on a new persona as the U.S. Supreme Court handed down a monumental decision in the *Dobbs vs. Jackson Women’s Health Organization* case from Mississippi. On June 24, 2022, the High Court in a 6-3 decision upheld the Mississippi law and subsequently overturned *Roe vs. Wade* (1973) and *Planned Parenthood vs. Casey* (1992), concluding that the Constitution does not protect the right to an abortion. The Court’s decision returned the issue of abortion back to the states.

As we look out over the landscape of our nation, we can see that there is a growing frustration and unrest. We are a divided people. This division is evident everywhere. We are divided politically. We are divided ethnically. We are divided morally. We are divided spiritually. We are, right now, in a fight for the soul of America. We are trying to figure out who are we and what will we become. This is what is at stake, and people are clashing against one another as they fight for what they believe America should be.

You and I, as the church, are in this fight too. We have a role we must play. God has called us to be salt and light in this dark world (Matt 5:13-14). We are to bring flavor and be a preserving presence in a decadent place. We are to shed light into the darkness. This is our biblical and gospel mandate. The church, however, is having a hard time understanding the times in which we live much less being able to speak to and enact change in these times.

The *Dobbs* decision issued a major defeat to the pro-abortion movement, but they only lost a battle. The war continues. The movement cloaks its culture of death in the language of rights and freedom of choice. The inevitable outcome of the worldview behind this movement leads to abortion on demand at any moment during the pregnancy and shortly after birth. It also leads to a redefining of sexuality and gender. More and more people see their biological gender as a mistake that needs to be corrected. The worldview ultimately leads to devaluing of life among those who have a handicap and the aging.

What are we to do as Christians who believe the Bible? How should we respond? These questions demand we possess a correct perspective of what is happening in our culture today and what the Bible says about human life. This is Sanctity of Life Sunday among Southern Baptists. Each year, we set aside the third Sunday in

January to focus our attention and teach to this crucial issue. This year marks our 40th annual Sanctity of Life Sunday. We do this because our call as believers to love our neighbors and our belief that every person is created in the image of God compels us to live pro-life. Today, I want to remind us that human life is sanctified because it bears God's image; therefore, it has intrinsic value.

Read Psalm 139:13-16.

Inquiry: King David is the author of this great psalm. He had united the nation of Israel, defeated its foes, put its internal affairs in order, and settled down to be a shepherd-king to its people. Then it occurred to him that the living God of Israel, the God he had written about in numerous psalms, the God to whom he owed everything, stilled dwelled in a tent. So, David determined to build God a temple. This desire was told to Nathan the prophet, who then responded with God's reply. David's son would build the temple, but God would build and establish David's house and dynasty (2 Sam 7; 1 Chron 17). This promise rang in the king's soul. He was overwhelmed by the greatness of God's thoughts toward him, so it is very likely that David went home that night and rather than sleeping penned this great hymn.

David sang about God's omniscience (139:1-6). God knew his thoughts, words, and ways. David sang about God's omnipresence (139:7-12). No matter where he was or went, God was there. He also sang about God's omnipotence (139:13-16). His life was not an accident; he was the intentional creation of Almighty God. David knew nothing of the modern science of embryology, nothing of the mysterious process by which a baby grows in the womb. Like John Phillips says, "he had only the haziest of ideas about these things, but he knew enough to be awed at the process."

While David was astounded that God knew everything going on in his life, he was more astounded by the fact that this knowledge reached back to his forming in his mother's womb. God knew him before he ever drew his first breath. King David, like all of humanity, was God's special creation fearfully and wonderfully formed in the womb. As we think about the sanctity of human life, there are three truths we must know.

1. Each person was made by God.

The secular worldview of the pro-abortion movement would lead us to believe that humanity has evolved from single-celled organisms over billions of years. On the contrary, the Bible instructs that humanity was created in one day. Adam and Eve, like the rest of creation, were formed by the creative hand of God. They were not accidents or a collision of molecules. They were not the result of natural selection, but instead they were the recipients of divine intervention.

The first and focal point of biblical teaching concerning the creation of humans is the fact of divine creation. This fact is not just presented in Genesis 1 and 2. God is described fifteen times in the Bible as the one who made humans.

Know that the Lord, he is God!

It is he who made us, and we are his;

we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. – Psalm 100:3

For you formed my inward parts;

you knitted me together in my mother's womb. – Psalm 139:13

Adam and Eve were God's special creations in Eden, and each person since then is His special creation in the womb. No one is an accident. We did not rise up by chance from a slimy ooze. Our origin is seated in God. Human life is sanctified because it bears God's image; therefore, it has intrinsic value.

2. Each person was wonderfully made by God.

I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

That last phrase can also be translated, “*for I am fearfully set apart.*” The creation account in Genesis 1 helps us understand what David is saying. It is deliberately structured to reach its apex in the creation of humans. We see this in the change from the repeated phrase “*Let there be*” to the special phrase “*Let us make.*” It is interesting that only humanity was created with special deliberation within the Trinity and with special design.

God created man in His image and likeness (Gen 1:26). The root meaning of the Hebrew word *צֶלֶם*, translated *image*, means “to carve” or “to cut off.” It is a concrete term that is coupled with the Hebrew term *דְמוּת*, translated *likeness*. It refers more to similarity in the abstract or in the ideal. It is evident from the use of *צֶלֶם* that man was created in the image of God, but in order to ensure that man does not view himself as an exact representation of God, the word *likeness* is attached. Nonetheless, man does to some extent bear the image of God. This verse reveals that to be human is to image and reflect the glory of the Creator.

Not only are humans created in the image and likeness of God, but they are also created male and female. Sexuality and gender are two areas in much debate today. Genesis 1:27 states, “...*male and female he created them.*” As we seek to understand and engage people in this culture, we must begin and remain in the lane of Scripture. God’s Word makes it clear that He does not make mistakes. He creates each person either as a male or as a female. Scripture also makes it clear that God is good and that what He creates is good. In the case of humanity, this creation is “*very good.*” As a result, the life of every human being, both male and female, is sanctified because he or she is wonderfully created in the image of God. It has intrinsic value.

3. Each person was made for the glory of God.

I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

The first phrase points out the reason for our creation. It is for the glory of God. Human life is created in the image and likeness of God for the praise of His great name.

⁶*Oh come, let us worship and bow down;
let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker!*
⁷*For he is our God,
and we are the people of his pasture,
and the sheep of his hand.* – Psalm 95:6-7

The Apostle Paul magnifies this great truth in his letter to the church in Colossae. He says, “*For by him all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things were created through him and for him*” (Col 1:16). In essence, Paul says to each of us that we were made by God and for God. We were made for His glory. Therefore, if we were made for His glory, then human life is sanctified and has intrinsic value.

Each person was made by God. Each person was wonderfully made by God. And each person was made for the glory of God. With this biblical worldview of human life, there are five actions Christians must take. They must:

- Affirm the sanctity of human life from conception to natural death. Politicians, lobbyists, and ethicists are debating the issue of life and when it begins. The *Dobbs* decision has reversed *Roe* and pushed the issue back to the states. Now, each state is wrestling over where they will land on life. The more progressive states are legalizing abortion all the way through pregnancy. Others are opting for bans up to a certain point, such as the first fifteen weeks. While these debates

might be good for politicians who are seeking to please their constituents. We, as the people of God, only have one Person to please. We stand on the truth of God's Word that declares life to be sacred from conception to natural death.

- Recognize the moral atrocities that devalue human life.
Abortion is not the only front in this war on the sanctity of human life. There are many more moral atrocities that devalue human life. Therefore, we dare not turn a blind eye to human trafficking, the sexualization of children, rampant and accessible pornography, the intentional destruction of the nuclear family, and the neglect of the poor, just to name a few.
- Pray for God to turn back the tides of secularism.
The challenges before us are immense and beyond our ability to enact change. For that reason, we must first and foremost pray. We pray for God to intervene, change hearts, and shed His mercy on a nation that has lost its moral compass. We must pray for God to give His people courage, conviction, and compassion. We also must pray for God's Spirit to bring a spiritual awakening throughout the land. Our hope is not in legislation. Our hope is in the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Equip themselves with God's Word to teach the truth about the sanctity of life.
The cultural drift toward secularism is carrying too many Christians and churches along with it. We must swim against the current by preaching and proclaiming the glory of humanity that is enshrined in God's creative order. We must engage in the debate and take back the narrative for God's glory and our good as persons created in the image and likeness of God.
- Champion adoption and foster care.
If all life is sacred, then believers must champion these two issues and be willing to step in to take care of children who would have otherwise been aborted. As those who believe in the sanctity of human life, who is better fit to be the leaders in the care of children?

If we want to see an end to abortion on demand, then we must have a solid alternative for unwanted children. So, as a local church let's stand with great organizations like the Pregnancy Resource Center of Metro Richmond. They provide care and counsel to women and men who are faced with an unplanned and many times an unwanted pregnancy so that a life-affirming choice might be made that protects the unborn baby. Let's also stand with organizations like March for Life who brings awareness to this issue locally and nationally. The National Safe Haven Alliance is another great organization who provides alternatives that prevent infant abandonment. Our own Leah Kipley is the assistant director of this organization. Let's also stand with foster care organizations like Hope Tree Family Services who provide opportunities for children to be placed in a loving and caring family. Could the Lord be calling some of our families to foster care ministry or permanently adding to your family through adoption?

How can you champion adoption and foster care individually and as a family? What should this look like for you?

Conclusion: Our biblical worldview on human life ought to drive our convictions and actions on this issue. You and I, as the church, are in this cultural fight. We have a role we must play. God has called us to be salt and light in this dark world (Matt 5:13-14). We are to bring flavor and be a preserving presence in a decadent place. We are to shed light into the darkness. This is our biblical and gospel mandate. Will we continue to struggle to understand the times in which we live, and will we remain silent and unengaged? The gospel calls us to leave the sidelines and enter the game for God's glory and the good of mankind.