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Sermon Notes

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Why is Human Life Sacred?

Genesis 1:26-29

Today is Sanctity of Human Life Sunday... another opportunity for us both to celebrate with great joy the gift of life and mourn with great sadness the destruction of that life through abortion and euthanasia

A strong view of the sacredness of human life has been behind some of the most heroic moments in history

- It motivated Abraham Lincoln to say, “As I would not be a slave, so I would not be a master,” and to sign the Emancipation Proclamation, effectively making the Civil War a war to end slavery
- It has motivated the self-sacrifice of a great number of soldiers who won Congressional Medals of Honor; like medic Desmond Doss in WWII who personally saved at least 75 fellow soldiers one at a time during the Battle for Guam, lowering them over a cliff hand by hand while under constant enemy fire
- It has motivated rescue teams to risk life and limb to plow through wreckage after earthquakes, hurricanes, tidal waves, and mudslides... it has driven the rescuers to keep calling out for survivors long after anyone thought it possible for any to remain alive, it motivated rescue workers in the Earthquake in Kashmir, Pakistan, October 8, 2005, who braved destroyed roads and blizzards and extremely mountainous terrain to get life-giving supplies to victims
- During Hurricane Katrina, the value of human life drove four members of a Coast Guard helicopter flight crew to make a daring rescue on Aug. 26, 2005. The crew was tasked with flying through the ferocious 100 mph winds and violent 40-foot seas of Hurricane Katrina to rescue three persons on the distressed fishing vessel located only 10 miles from the eye of the hurricane
- The sanctity of human life has driven some of the strongest feelings in the human heart: elation when a baby is rescued from being wedged in a drainpipe, overwhelming grief when a toddler is killed by a stray bullet in a drive-by shooting
- It has driven extraordinary efforts made by physicians in the Emergency Room, laboring for hours over a single victim of a hideous car wreck during an ice storm; or neo-natal specialists going to extraordinary lengths to save the life of a premature baby born after 28 weeks of gestation

- It drives the efforts of famine relief workers in the Sudan, and the political efforts of diplomats trying to end the horror of the genocide in Darfur
- It drives pharmaceutical researchers to find a therapy for AIDS or breast cancer
- It drove me to cry at the first person I ever saw die... a little twenty-day old baby in the Northwest Frontier Province of Pakistan, who was brought to our eye clinic with double pneumonia and kidney failure; it drove the British doctor we were with to work for four hours doing little more than CPR in a hopeless effort to keep this baby breathing, though we were doing nothing to heal the baby's fatal problems

A strong view of the sacredness of human life is woven into the very fiber of our being; it's part of what is best about being a human

Conversely, the suppression of this view is responsible for some of the most horrendous moment in history as well...

I'll not soon forget my tour of the Holocaust Museum in Washington D.C., especially the black and white picture of piles of baby shoes and clothing in Auschwitz. I felt an anger stir inside me for how brutal and hard had become the hearts of the SS specialists who were constantly thinking of better ways to slaughter people they considered sub-human, non-persons

Robert Burns: *From Man was made to Mourn: A Dirge*, 1785:

Man's inhumanity to man Makes countless thousands mourn!

"Man's inhumanity to man" = we make ourselves subhuman and bestial when we treat others as less than human

We lose a little of our God-given humanity when we deny full humanity to other human beings

The Nazis became like beasts when they denied humanity to their victims

So also does any nation or government or people who denies humanity to any human being.

It is even worse when a systematic denial of humanity is enacted into LAW by the GOVERNMENT

When government exploits and crushes the weak, government becomes sub-human; Daniel 7 pictured a series of human governments like beasts rising up from a troubled sea

Daniel 7:7 "After that, in my vision at night I looked, and there before me was a fourth beast-- terrifying and frightening and very powerful. It had large iron teeth; it crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left.

This terrifying vision of government as a subhuman beast has at its roots the concept of man's inhumanity to man... that we become beastlike when we enact laws that strip humanity of others and crush their lives

So we come to Sanctity of Human Life Sunday

Legalized Abortion has been the Law of the Land now for 12,444 days; it is no small thing when a government declares something immoral as being legal; only God knows the effect this has had on our society and culture; our families; our churches; our view of morality; our violence and our crime; our poverty and our suffering

It is far too complex a problem for any sociologist or researcher to trace out and connect the dots;

Today it is enough for us to declare again how committed we are to the sanctity of human life, how much we yearn to see the demonic spirit behind abortion crushed forever; how much we yearn to see women who have been hurt deeply by abortion healed and forgiven through the blood of Christ; how much we yearn to see babies protected and cherished both inside and outside the womb

Sanctity of Human Life Sunday

A. What is Sanctity?

1. Literally means sacredness or holiness
2. Holiness generally taken to mean free from sin, undefiled
3. BUT it can also mean "set apart unto God for His special use"
 - Moses was told to take off his shoes before the burning bush because the place where he was standing was holy ground
 - Aaron, the High Priest, wore a plate on his turban that said "Holy to the Lord"
 - According to Exodus 30:10, the blood of the atoning sacrifice is "Most Holy to the Lord"
 - According to Exodus 30:37, the formula for the anointing oil and incense were only to be used for sacred purposes, they were holy to the Lord
 - The Sabbath day was consecrated and set apart unto God... it was Holy to the Lord
 - Most importantly of all, Israel itself were chosen by the Lord

Deuteronomy 7:6 For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession.

So, human life itself is sacred, holy, set apart unto God in a special way above everything else that He created

That is what “Sanctity of human life” means

B. Attacks on Sacredness

1. Non-Christian religions

a. Hinduism

- i) Humanity degraded by blurring the lines between ALL life and HUMAN life
- ii) Reincarnation blurs the distinction between humanity and other living creatures; karma may dictate that, when you die, you are reincarnated as a rodent or an insect
- iii) While this may seem to have established an extremely high respect for all living things, it has the effect of degrading humanity
- iv) Humanity also degraded by the caste system
- v) Vast majorities of Hindus are *dalit*, from the untouchable caste, considered the lowest form of humanity, who have to sweep the sidewalks of their footprints so higher caste Hindus would not be defiled by walking where they walked
- vi) For all these reasons abortion has flourished in India; because boy babies are more highly valued than girl babies, many more of them are aborted in sex-selective abortions; also the government even PAYS citizens to have abortions in order to slow population growth

2. Humanistic philosophies

Some philosophers, like [Peter Singer](#) of [Princeton University](#), regard certain types of [animals](#) with high cognitive abilities and a degree of societal development as persons, and argue that some human beings — for example, those with certain types of [brain](#) damage — are not.... he is best known for his book [Animal Liberation](#), widely regarded as the touchstone of the [animal liberation movement](#). He is a founding member of the [Great Ape Project](#), which seeks to persuade the [United Nations](#) to adopt a [Declaration on Great Apes](#) awarding personhood to non-human [great apes](#).

So also materialism reduces us to a mass of impersonal atoms and molecules, and denies any significance to personality

So also utilitarianism and pragmatism... reduces human beings by questions of usefulness and practical value

3. Scientific, Medical and Technological advances

- a. Stem cell research: the great fear is that embryos will be grown and harvested simply for the powerful stem cells they can
- b. Industrial revolution: even Henry Ford's theories on mechanized mass production had the effect of dehumanizing... people became interchangeable parts of a vast production machine

4. Secular governments

- a. Communism: the value and worth of the individual is violently suppressed for the good of the collective state; George Orwell's classic *1984* starkly depicts how ugly life is under communism, how black and white
- b. Naziism: the whole thing based on the theory of racial superiority, of Aryan supremacy

5. Decaying World View in the West

- a. Infiltrated by these aberrant religions and philosophies, the West has grown increasingly brutal, decreasingly human in our views of the sanctity of human life
- b. Netherlands:

March, 2006: Four years after becoming the first nation formally to legalize euthanasia, the Netherlands amended its legislation to provide for the euthanasia of newborn babies, under certain circumstances. If a baby is suffering greatly from a terminal illness...

Arthur Koestler: "The problem of Western civilization is that it has ceased to be aware of the values which it is in peril of losing."

The Sanctity of Human Life is One of those values

C. The Special Problem of Abortion

- 1. Abortion is a special problem because it has been legal so long
- 2. A direct assault on a whole class of human beings without any moral justification at all other than uncertainty

3. The Roe v. Wade decision said it was impossible to know for sure whether or not the preborn is a human person... that was the only justification they had for LEGALIZING abortion
4. It is a brutal moment for a culture to enact into law what is immoral...
5. It is for the pulpits of America to lead the way in protecting the Sanctity of Human Life
6. Scripture MUST BE our fundamental guide here... **GENESIS 1:26-28**

I. Sacred Because Specially Created by God

Genesis 1:26 Then God said, "Let us make man..."

A. Created, Not Evolved

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

B. The Climax of Creation

Genesis 1:3 And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.

Genesis 1:6 And God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters."

Genesis 1:9 And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so.

Genesis 1:11 And God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth." And it was so.

Genesis 1:20 And God said, "Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens."

Genesis 1:24 And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds- livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds." And it was so.

1. We should not imagine that God is unconcerned or uninvolved... not one of these things could have happened without God's direct power and wisdom
2. BUT when it comes to the creation of Man, He uses an entirely more personal way of speaking

Genesis 1:26-27 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.

C. "Let Us Make Man"

1. Fascinating expression, with great significance
2. People have debated this mysterious plural for centuries
3. Some wacko theories, like Erich von Daniken's

Chariots of the Gods?: Unsolved Mysteries of the Past is a book written in 1968 by Erich von Däniken. It is centered on the theory that many ancient civilizations' technologies and religion were given to them by space travelers who were welcomed as gods

He cites as proof the plural form of Genesis 1: **“Let US make man in OUR image, after OUR likeness...”**

4. Some people think God is talking to some kind of a heavenly council, like to the angels who were watching and applauding His every move
5. The problem is the “us” with whom God speaks is the same one who will do the making of man, and in the same image
6. However, it does not stretch a Christian's mind too far to assume that God is speaking within Himself, an early display of the Trinity
7. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit equally involved in the special creation of man

This explains the PLURAL language... just as Jesus speaks of in our salvation:

John 14:23 Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.

8. The HUMAN RACE is sacred because God specially created us on the sixth day by His intricate wisdom and power, by His direct involvement

II. Sacred Because Created in God's Image

Genesis 1:26-27 Then God 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." 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

A. What Is the “Image of God”?

1. Two key words: image and likeness
 - a. “image” used elsewhere to refer to idols, little figurines made of deities
 - b. This is what God forbids in the Ten Commandment... we are not capable of making any image of God suitable to represent Him

Exodus 20:4 “You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.”

- c. The Jews entering the land of Canaan were commanded to destroy all the images and idols the Canaanites had made to worship
 - d. However, what we are forbidden to do, God did at creation... making the only acceptable image of Himself in physical creation: the human race
2. The human race in its entirety are created in God’s image
 3. The perfection of this is in Christ

Colossians 1:15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

4. In some mysterious way, humanity displays the glory of God more than anything else He has made
5. So also “likeness” ... a sense in which we are LIKE God but still distinct and somewhat distant from Him

Ezekiel 1:26-28 And above the expanse over their heads there was the likeness of a throne, in appearance like sapphire; and seated above the likeness of a throne was a likeness with a human appearance. ... Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD.

We were created in the LIKENESS of God, similar to Him in some very powerful ways, but still different and separated from Him

6. What does this mean?
 - a. Our inner being is like His with certain capabilities not shared by any other creature
 - i) The ability to think and reason; to feel emotion; to build relationships; to converse; to plan for the future; to remember the past; to observe other creatures and understand them; to take existing raw materials and shape them into something according to an internal plan and design; to choose and to reject; to love and to hate
 - ii) These things are all part of the internal image of God
 - iii) However, it should not mean that any loss of those capabilities means we are LESS in the image of God than we were
 - iv) The “image of God” goes deeper than merely our mental capabilities
 - b. Also our bodies are in His image as well

- i) Many times God uses our bodies to speak of His powers as well
- ii) God's mighty hand and outstretched arm brought Israel out of Egypt
- iii) He who made the ear, does He not hear? He who made the eye, does He not see?
- iv) Man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God
- v) So our souls + our bodies are TOGETHER in the image of God
- vi) All of it is specially designed by God to reflect His own nature

7. Also, the image of God is directly related to our position of authority and rulership over this world... more on that in a moment

B. Both Genders Equally Sharing God's Image

- 1. Notice also that God specifically communicates the value of BOTH genders, male and female, and of SEXUALITY ITSELF in the creation of the human race
- 2. Both male and female are EQUALLY in the image of God
- 3. And it is a GOOD THING for a male to be a male, and for a female to be a female
- 4. Other religions and philosophies can denigrate either males or females, or the very idea of sexuality
- 5. NOT THE BIBLE!!!
- 6. From the moment of conception, each one of us was either male or female as God saw fit

C. Still In the Image of God

- 1. Certainly Genesis 3 describes the awful tragedy of the fall of humanity into sin
- 2. Certainly this fall has had a devastating effect on the human race
- 3. Certainly we have become in some ways and many cases far more like the devil than we are like God
- 4. BUT we are still in the image and likeness of God, however marred

James 3:9-10 With [the tongue] we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. ¹⁰ From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so.

5. AND salvation in Christ perfectly restores the image of God to us in the pattern of Christ

D. Attacks on Humanity are Attacks on God

1. The reason Satan attacks humanity so much, hates us so much, wants to murder us so much is that any attack on a human being is an assault on the image of God
2. So all the false religions the debase humanity, all the humanistic philosophies that degrade humanity, all the addictions and sin patterns that drag us down into the muck and filth are part of Satan's hate-filled attack on God Himself
3. Thus abortion is a filthy attack on the image of God
 - a. The effort to call the pre-born baby a "fetus" is depersonalizing and an attack on the image of God
 - b. The effects of abortion are degrading to both the mother and the child, as well as to the medical personnel who carry out the procedure
4. We should not imagine this degrading of the human race is an accidental by-product of abortion; rather it is Satan's whole purpose
5. We resolve this by lifting the preborn back to the status of being what it has always been in the eyes of God: fully human; not merely the "product of conception" or "fetus"... as though it weren't a person

III. Sacred Because Pre-Eminent Over All Other Earthly Beings

A. Clear Superiority Over Other Earthly Beings

1. Fish of the sea
2. Birds of the heavens
3. Livestock, creeping things

B. The Nature of the Superiority

1. Not by might, nor power, nor strength
2. Not by quickness, or speed or size

3. Not by agility or flexibility

We hold **Olympic** events every four years measuring the best the human body can achieve:
Olympic motto: **Faster, higher, stronger**

Faster: the cheetah would womp any sprinter in the world if he could be trained run at the starting gun and stay in his lane... he could hit as high as 70 mph; the fastest large fish in the world is the Sailfish, able to hit 68 mph; it could win any swimming event in the pool if he could be trained to swim in his lane and to make the turn at the wall

Higher: imagine the high jump potential of a puma... clearing 15 feet in a single bound! The human record is eight feet, five inches... or forget that... any bird could easily clear any height set in the pole vault without even using a pole; the new long jump record would not be measured in feet or meters but in miles or kilometers—the longest nonstop migration of any bird is by the [Bar-tailed Godwit](#), which flies approximately 6300 miles without stopping from Alaska to the North Island of New Zealand. 'There's your new long jump record: not 29'4 1/4" by Mike Powell, but 6300 miles by a Bar-tailed Godwit!!

Stronger: Weightlifting: the Gold Medal winner at the Athens 2004 Olympics, Hossein Reza Zadah, called the Iranian Hercules, set the clean and jerk record of 580.9 pounds, a little more than double his body weight.; an African Elephant would laugh at that and pick up over one ton with its trunk; if we're going relative to body weight, the Rhinoceros Beetle can lift 850 times its own body weight

So, bottom line, we humans would LOSE the planet-wide Olympics if we're not allowed to use our brains to help our otherwise weak bodies

BUT if we are allowed to use our tools, our inventions, our intellect, anything we want, then we win everything:

No bird has ever flown higher than the Apollo Space Missions to the moon, nor could they; neither could they travel faster than the SR71 Spyplane which flew more than 3 1/2 times the speed of sound

No animal can lift as much as the awesome shipbuilding cranes at large Shipyards; 600 tons

No fish can swim as deep as the bathysphere that explored the bottom of the Marianas trench, or as fast as the speedboat which set the world record at 180 mph. last year

No animals can communicate like we can, cooperate like we can, observe and learn and study and organize and invent and create and analyze and build and destroy and move and shake the earth like we can

God assessed it this way at the Tower of Babel:

Genesis 11:6 The LORD said, "If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them.

Humanity is Sacred Because We Are Clearly Pre-eminent over all other species, and no other species is even CLOSE

We don't see any species of animal, bird or fish able to do remotely what we can

And the Scripture clearly establishes human preeminence right from creation

IV. Sacred Because Given Dominion by God Over the Earth

A. God Also Gave to Man Dominion... Rulership

Genesis 1:26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

Genesis 1:28 Fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

B. Superiority over the Earth Itself, In All Its Spheres

1. Sea

- a. Fish naturally swim in the sea and feel comfortable there, far more than we
- b. But it is given to man to rule the waves

2. Air

- a. Birds naturally soar through the heavens and feel comfortable there
- b. But it is given to man to rule the sky

3. Earth

- a. Animals roam the earth and live far closer to the earth than we do, even tunneling through it for their habitats
- b. But it is given to man to rule the earth

C. This is the Right to Rule Coupled with the Capacity for It

- 1. The capacity for rule comes from being created in the image of God
- 2. The right to rule comes from being established in that position by Almighty God
- 3. It involves servant leadership... protection and enabling the creation to be all it could be

4. It involves caretaking and provision... a link between us and the world
5. Clearly established when the ground was cursed because of man's sin
6. Clearly established also with Noah and the Flood
 - a. Most animals were destroyed because of human sin
 - b. Some animals were saved, by being NEAR NOAH and cared for by NOAH on the Ark

D. This is the Very Thing We Surrendered to Satan in the Garden of Eden

Luke 4:5-6 [Satan said the Christ], "I will give you all the authority and splendor [of the kingdoms on earth], for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to.

E. The Very Thing Christ Won Back for Us at the Cross

Revelation 5:9-10 And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. ¹⁰ You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."

Human life is sacred because we were to rule over this earth and everything in it

V. Sacred Because Blessed by God in Procreation

Genesis 1:28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth

A. Abortion Calls into Question the BLESSING of a Baby

1. Planned Parenthood has a bizarre slogan: "Every child a wanted child"
2. The slogan already degrades human beings
3. As though they only have value if they are wanted
4. Modern mentality: to make much of the trouble and difficulty and BURDEN of raising children

B. Scripture IMMEDIATELY Links Children to a Blessing

C. Scripture Repeats this Blessing Again

Psalm 127:3-5 Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward. ⁴ Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's

youth. ⁵ Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them! He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate.

VI. Summary and Application

A. Summary

1. The Sanctity of Human Life Means it is sacred, set apart unto God as holy
2. The Sanctity of Human Life is Established from the Beginning in Genesis 1
3. Established in Five Ways
 - Sacred Because Specially Created by God
 - Sacred Because Created in God's Image
 - Sacred Because Pre-Eminent Over All Other Earthly Beings
 - Sacred Because Given Dominion by God Over the Earth
 - Sacred Because Blessed by God in Procreation

B. Honor Each Other's Humanity

1. Don't dehumanize people... making them enemies who deserve to die
2. Reject racism and any other attack on the basic value of all human life
3. Fight "quality of life" philosophies that lead to euthanasia

C. C.S. Lewis's "Weight of Glory"

1. Stated that every single human being you will ever meet will either end up in heaven or in hell; in heaven they will be transformed to be more glorious than we can possibly imagine, so glorious we would be tempted to worship them; in hell, they would be transformed into something so hideous and grotesque we would run away screaming from them
2. There are no ordinary people, and therefore there are no ordinary encounters
3. The people you gossip about or play with or snub or invite over to your home or work with or go to church with or ignore or get frustrated over or delight in... PEOPLE every last one of them, are all in the image of God
4. Every time you encounter them and touch their life in some way you help them along to heaven or hell
5. There are no ordinary people or ordinary encounters

D. Evangelize

Luke 19:10 the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."

1 Timothy 1:15 Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners-- of whom I am the worst.

E. On the Abortion Issue

1. Learn to make a defense for the sacredness of human life from Scripture
2. Have the courage to speak up for the pre-born
3. Look at the insert from Focus on the Family... spectacular photos of the development of the baby inside the mother's womb
4. Be active at Pregnancy Support Services (PSS) or other Pro-Life ministries
5. Be willing to give godly counsel to women who are desperate and seeking advice
6. Give sacrificially to help them make wise choices
7. If you have had an abortion, know this... Christ is merciful and forgiving; be honest about the sin, but also know that Christ's blood shed on the cross is sufficient to cleanse us from all unrighteousness

F. Above All PRAY for an End to Abortion and Euthanasia