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Sermon Notes

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## **Children Are a Blessing from God**

### **Psalm 127**

Today marks the thirty-third anniversary of the infamous Roe vs. Wade decision in which state laws banning abortion were declared unconstitutional. Much to the dismay of abortion advocates, this issue is not going away, not settling into the dustbin of history, not quietly receding in the consciousness of America. Much to their dismay, they see the issue continue to stand in front of America, screaming like an injustice demanding to be rectified, like a victim pleading to be saved, like a country being held hostage and needing deliverance. Maybe they felt that catchy slogans like “Every child a wanted child” would mask the fact that abortion itself ends a child’s life.

And so, abortion was the unspoken focal point of the last two Presidential elections. And abortion was the openly spoken focal point of the recent Senate confirmation hearings with Judge Samuel Alito. Much to the dismay of abortion defenders and proponents (who prefer to be called pro-choice, as though the right to choose itself were at stake), statistics show that they are actually losing ground in the hearts and minds of the American people. Much to their dismay, some are wondering aloud if the Supreme Court will one day repudiate Roe vs. Wade with as much disgust as it once repudiated the similarly infamous Dred Scott decision which declared that slaves were less than human and had no right to a hearing in court. That was the “settled law of the land” then, but truth forced it’s way ever-increasingly on the American conscience until the injustice was crushed, first on a series of blood-soaked battlefields in Virginia and Pennsylvania and Maryland and Missouri and Georgia, then crushed in the halls of legislature with the passing of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments.

Roe vs. Wade came along to question whether preborn infants are actually persons protectable by the government, and effectively answered they are not. Justice Harry Blackmun’s majority ruling stated:

**We need not resolve the difficult question of when life begins. When those trained in the respective disciplines of medicine, philosophy, and theology are unable to arrive at any consensus, the judiciary, at this point in the development of man's knowledge, is not in a position to speculate."**

But by forbidding states from banning abortion, the Supreme Court did more than just speculate. It made a decision that the preborn is not a person. The whole reason this issue won’t go away is that Scripture disagrees with Justice Harry Blackmun’s ruling.

***Luke 1:41-44 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. <sup>42</sup> In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! <sup>43</sup> But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? <sup>44</sup> As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.***

## I. One of Many Casualties in this War

### A. It Is a War!!

1. Some have spoken of the culture wars
2. Others have likened the struggle over abortion to the Civil War
3. However, the issue of abortion is a part of a larger struggle in the heavenly realms between the devil and his angels and God

***Ephesians 6:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.***

***2 Corinthians 10:3-5 For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. <sup>4</sup> The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. <sup>5</sup> We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.***

### B. Many Casualties

1. Certainly the babies themselves... at least 43 million have died since abortion was legalized in this country
2. The mothers... physically, emotionally and spiritually damaged in serious ways
3. The doctors and abortion providers and abortion advocates: spiritually hardened and damaged, consciences seared

### C. One of the Casualties is Harder to Measure: The Perception of Children as a Blessing from God

1. Ironic: Planned Parenthood's slogan "Every child a wanted child"

Margaret Sanger, founder of Planned Parenthood, espoused weird eugenic views that advocated weeding out generically inferior people and races by birth control

- a. Concept: if we have widely available birth control and abortion we can avoid having babies we don't want to have
- b. Implication: tragedies like child abuse and cycles of poverty can be greatly reduced
- c. Problem: Put people in the position to decide if they wanted a child or not... placed the value of the child in the desirability of the child to the mother
- d. Also: children began to be seen as a burden rather than a blessings
- e. A united attack on the basic idea that children are created by God, fashioned in the womb, with intrinsic value simply because they are in the image of God

## 2. Child abuse actually has INCREASED

Between 1976 and 1987 alone, there was a 330% increase in reported cases of child abuse, and there have been scholarly studies on the link of induced abortion and child abuse

This shouldn't shock us... because once a child became something that we ascribed value to, and even worse, that we could destroy or not as we chose, the idea polluted the way children were perceived after birth as well

## 3. More and more couples in America are making the decision voluntarily to remain childless

FACT: the nation's birthrate fell last year to an historic low of 66.9 births per 1,000 women age 15-44. That represents a decline of 43 percent since just 1960.

## 4. Great emphasis on problems and costs of raising children

- a. March 30, 1998 *U.S. News and World Report* article "The Cost of Raising Children" which suggests that raising one middle class child to age 22 costs almost 1.5 million dollars.
- b. For 2004, the newest data available, the U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates that families making \$70,200 a year or more will spend a whopping \$269,520 to raise a child from birth through age 17. Higher-income families in urban areas in the West spend the most, \$284,460.

## 5. Legal and ethical issues surrounding something called "wrongful life", the idea that it is immoral to bring children into the world if they are likely to suffer because of birth defects, poverty, disease, or other issues

## 6. Proliferation of anti-child movements

- 1) “No Kidding”... voluntary childlessness advocated
- 2) “Happily Childfree”... angry website advocating that people should choose to remain childfree... strongly argue on the basis of world overpopulation
- 3) The Voluntary Human Extinction Movement

Voluntary human extinction is the humanitarian alternative to human disasters.

“When every human chooses to stop breeding, Earth's biosphere will be allowed to return to its former glory, and all remaining creatures will be free to live, die, evolve (if they believe in evolution), and will perhaps pass away, as so many of Mother Nature's "experiments" have done throughout the eons. Good health will be restored to the Earth's ecology... to the "life form" known by many as [Gaia](#)”

### D. Real Danger: Attitude Like This Creep Into the Church

1. Albert Mohler, President of Southern Seminary has been proactive in addressing the issue of Christians who marry but who choose to remain childless
2. In a recent article printed in the Louisville Courier-Journal, Mohler uses one example of a couple in Atlanta

Joe and Deb Schum of Atlanta aren't worried about baby proofing their house or buying a car seat. As a matter of fact, the couple doesn't ever intend to have children, and they are proud of their childlessness. According to the newspaper's report, "the Schums are part of a growing number of couples across the country for whom kids don't factor in the marriage equation."

Mohler: “The Schums just don't want kids to get in the way of their lifestyle. They enjoy cruising to the Georgia mountains on their matching Harley-Davidson motorcycles. They love their gourmet kitchen, outfitted with the very latest stainless steel appliances and trendy countertops. Deb Schum explains, "If we had kids, we would need a table where the kids could do homework." Clearly, children aren't a part of their interior design plan”

3. Mohler’s concern: some of the world’s views on children are creeping into the church

“My larger concern is with the bare fact that an anti-natalist philosophy has now infected much of the Christian church. I fully expect non-Christians to think and to act as unbelievers. Nevertheless, I am perplexed by Christians who seem to believe that marriage and reproduction can be separated while glorifying God within the marital bond.”

4. Mohler used vigorous language to challenge Christians on the issue of voluntary childlessness

Couples are not given the option of chosen childlessness in the biblical revelation. To the contrary, we are commanded to receive children with joy as God's gifts, and to raise them in

the nurture and admonition of the Lord. We are to find many of our deepest joys and satisfactions in the raising of children within the context of the family. Those who reject children want to have the joys of sex and marital companionship without the responsibilities of parenthood. They rely on others to produce and sustain the generations to come.

5. Dr. Mohler was careful to state that he is not referring to the painful issue of sterility... couples who want to have children but can't

"Morally speaking, the epidemic in this regard has nothing to do with those married couples who desire children but are for any reason unable to have them, but in those who are fully capable of having children but reject this intrusion in their lifestyle."

6. Neither Dr. Mohler nor I believe that having children is essential to a fruitful life here on earth, and that you cannot be a fruitful Christian without having children

Our Lord Jesus Christ never had biological children

There is no record of John the Baptist or the Apostle Paul having children

Some are clearly called to a life of singleness for the sake of the gospel

YET even Christ is spoken of as having children spiritually

***Hebrews 2:13 he says, "Here am I, and the children God has given me."***

And the apostle Paul used distinct parenting language when speaking of his relationship to his disciples

***1 Corinthians 4:15 Even though you have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel.***

***1 Timothy 1:2 To Timothy my true son in the faith:***

***Titus 1:4 To Titus, my true son in our common faith***

7. Even Christian parents who have children and who see them as a blessing still need to fight off the cultural message that children are primarily a burden...
8. We have to continually renew our minds and thoughts to realize the struggles of parenting are themselves a gift from God

Psalm 127 gives a healthy dose of Biblical perspective on the value of children

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

## II. Unless the Lord Build the House

***Psalm 127:1-2 Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. <sup>2</sup> It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep.***

### A. Solomon's Psalm of Ascents

1. Meant to be sung as the pilgrims made their way from all over Israel to Jerusalem to celebrate one of the three major religious feasts of Israel's year
2. Three times a year, all the men of Israel were required to ascend to Jerusalem to worship: Passover, Pentecost, Feast of Tabernacles
3. Undoubtedly the men would be surrounded by their families as they traveled and they used the time to teach their children the joy of following the Lord

### B. God Must be Central to the House

1. Unless the Lord builds the house they labor in vain who build it
2. God must be central to everything you do
3. The Christian version is in Christ's statement

***John 15:5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.***

"Only one life, 'I will soon be past... Only what's done for Christ will last."

4. "House" is not primarily referring to the structure (the four walls and roof) where they lived
5. Jews considered it more of a family lineage involvement generations of descendents

At the time of the birth of Christ:

***Luke 2: 4 Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David.***

6. Prophetic play on words: David wanted to build a house for God... the temple; The Lord had promised to build a house for David, and it meant a GENEALOGY of descendents, resulting in the birth of the Christ

***1 Chronicles 17:10-11 "I declare to you that the LORD will build a house for you: <sup>11</sup> When your days are over and you go to be with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, one of your own sons, and I will establish his kingdom.***

7. Basic idea of Psalm 127: If the Lord isn't at the center of your life, if the Lord isn't building your lineage, your family, your household, YOU ARE WASTING YOUR TIME
8. Along with that: the reverse is true!! If the Lord DOES build your household by blessing you with children, your house will stand forever
9. This concept is extended to every are of life... the vanity and emptiness of doing ANYTHING apart from the blessing and will of the Lord... it is a waste of time
10. Ultimately the house God is building is ETERNAL, made up of people who come to faith in Christ

***1 Peter 2:4-5 As you come to him, the living Stone-- rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him-- <sup>5</sup> you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.***

***Revelation 21:2-3 I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. <sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.***

### III. Children Are a Heritage and a Reward from the Lord

#### A. Central to Psalm 127: Children are a BLESSING

1. Topic introduced with the word that makes us sit up and take notice: BEHOLD

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

2. Look at the words the Lord chose: HERITAGE and REWARD
3. "Heritage" is a powerful word, pointing to a multigenerational legacy; the word is frequently translated "inheritance"... something of great value passed on from one generation to the next

4. "Reward" is also a clear idea... the sense of something of great value and worth; something desirable, frequently connected in some way to living a righteous life
5. Some brief advantages listed
  - a. Having children is like a warrior having arrows to shoot
  - b. [Notice: the children of one's youth... God gives children for the most part to young couples, because of the immense effort and energy it will take to raise them for twenty years; Abraham and Sarah are obvious exceptions to this general rule
  - c. The Psalmist celebrates a MULTIPLICITY of children; it is a BLESSING to have a quiver FULL of children
  - d. How much does this run in the face of modern thinking!!
  - e. Solomon speaks of the influence of a man who has many children: to speak with the enemies at the gate is to do the business of the city; and the more children you had, the greater your influence

B. Consistent Teaching in Scripture: The connection between children and the blessing of the Lord

To Adam and Eve at creation:

***Genesis 1:27-28 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. <sup>28</sup> God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it.***

To Noah and his sons after the flood:

***Genesis 9:1 Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth.***

To Abraham concerning Ishmael:

***Genesis 17:20 And as for Ishmael, I have heard you: I will surely bless him; I will make him fruitful and will greatly increase his numbers. He will be the father of twelve rulers, and I will make him into a great nation.***

To Isaac concerning his own descendants:

***Genesis 26:24 That night the LORD appeared to him and said, "I am the God of your father Abraham. Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bless you and will increase the number of your descendants for the sake of my servant Abraham."***

To Israel as they were about to enter the Promised Land:



***Deuteronomy 7:12-14*** *If you pay attention to these laws and are careful to follow them, then the LORD your God will keep his covenant of love with you, as he swore to your forefathers. <sup>13</sup> He will love you and bless you and increase your numbers. He will bless the fruit of your womb, the crops of your land-- your grain, new wine and oil-- the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks in the land that he swore to your forefathers to give you. <sup>14</sup> You will be blessed more than any other people; none of your men or women will be childless, nor any of your livestock without young.*

***Deuteronomy 28:2-4*** *All these blessings will come upon you and accompany you if you obey the LORD your God: <sup>3</sup> You will be blessed in the city and blessed in the country. <sup>4</sup> The fruit of your womb will be blessed, and the crops of your land and the young of your livestock-- the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks.*

To women who were barren:

Sarah

***Genesis 17:15-16*** *God also said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah. <sup>16</sup> I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her."*

Rebekah

***Genesis 25:21*** *Isaac prayed to the LORD on behalf of his wife, because she was barren. The LORD answered his prayer, and his wife Rebekah became pregnant.*

Rachel

***Genesis 30:1*** *When Rachel saw that she was not bearing Jacob any children, she became jealous of her sister. So she said to Jacob, "Give me children, or I'll die!"*

***Genesis 30:22-23*** *Then God remembered Rachel; he listened to her and opened her womb. <sup>23</sup> She became pregnant and gave birth to a son and said, "God has taken away my disgrace."*

Hannah

***1 Samuel 1:10-11*** *In bitterness of soul Hannah wept much and prayed to the LORD. <sup>11</sup> And she made a vow, saying, "O LORD Almighty, if you will only look upon your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the LORD for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head."*

And, after the Lord granted her prayer, she celebrated with a joy scarcely equaled

***1 Samuel 1:27 I prayed for this child, and the LORD has granted me what I asked of him.***

Elizabeth

***Luke 1:13-14 But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John. <sup>14</sup> He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth***

One of the greatest gifts God gave to any of these women ever: the gift of a child

***Psalm 113:9 He settles the barren woman in her home as a happy mother of children. Praise the LORD***

Summary: Psalm 127 relates what all Scripture affirms: children are a BLESSING from God

#### IV. How Children Are a Blessing from God

##### 1. A Display of the Glory of God

***Genesis 1:26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness***

- a. Every child created in the image of God
- b. They are in the image of God from creation; and as they develop from that point, they display more and more of God
- c. Human beings are the highest and greatest and most complete and most complex displays of God's glory in the world
- d. When you are a parent, you have the opportunity to watch the theater of God's glory more in the development of your child than in a beautiful sunset or a majestic mountain range

##### 2. Most Effective Disciplemaking in the World

- a. Christ commanded us to make disciples of all nations, teaching them to obey everything
- b. Paul taught us that daily life role modeling is essential to spiritual maturity in Christ

***Philippians 3:17 Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you.***

***Philippians 4:9 Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me-- put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.***

- c. Nowhere is there a more effective place for the creating and shaping of powerful and mature disciples of Christ than a godly family

### 3. Opportunity for Personal Spiritual Growth

- a. Children were given to us in part because we are not yet done with our own journey of salvation
- b. The awesome task of parenting, with its amazing situations, gives more opportunities for your own development as a Christian than any other endeavor
- c. For example, you will learn the Bible so much better when you are forced to teach it daily to your children
- d. Also the fact that your children will much more easily pick up your sins than your good patterns causes you to walk carefully in your daily life, to discipline yourself for godliness

### 4. Constant Occasions for Prayer

***2 Corinthians 1:8-11 But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. <sup>10</sup> He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, <sup>11</sup> as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many.***

- a. Prayer is essentially a declaration of dependence on God
- b. In prayer we are saying we are helpless to do the thing we're asking for
- c. Children bring us to one moment of helplessness after another
- d. Perhaps: devastating illness, like a child with leukemia, or a premature baby
- e. Perhaps: a behavioral issue with a two-year-old or a teenager
- f. Perhaps: a desire for your children to have godly spouses or grow in Christ themselves
- g. ONE PRAYING SITUATION AFTER ANOTHER

### 5. An Antidote to Self-Centeredness

- a. The essence of sin is self-centeredness

- b. Children force parents to learn to give like God, to learn to think of others first
- c. From the first midnight feeding, to the time your toddler has the flu and needs a new set of sheets, to the time you sacrifice financially to pay for your kids clothes or medical bills or college... it is one lesson in selfless servanthood after another

#### 6. Objective Lesson On God's Love for Us

- a. Many people testify that they really didn't understand God's fatherly love for them until they had children themselves
- b. As we see how much we love our own children, how much we are willing to sacrifice for them and give them anything, how readily we forgive them any sins they commit against us, how eager we are for their growth... we can understand God's love much more powerfully as a result

#### 7. Source of Joy and Happiness

- a. We cannot calculate the number of unspeakably precious moments a child brings into a home
- b. Most people remember above all else these encounters during their children's growing up years
- c. They cherish every gift crafted by the child's little hands
- d. They cry at weddings because those years are now coming to an end
- e. But yet they are tears of joy because of thankfulness at the years that have now flown by like the wind

#### 8. Deep Friendship

- a. Christian parents also take joy in building a bond of friendship so deep it can scarcely be measured
- b. The times of shared experiences... of crafts done together, of books read on a beautiful fall day, of vacations and camping trips and heart to heart talks, and family devotions
- c. These build an incredible friendship which the world cannot understand
- d. How much sweeter to know that your children, if they come to Christ, will spend eternity with you in heaven

#### 9. Lasting Personal Legacy

- a. Multigenerational view: an impact beyond your years
- b. God has a plan whereby your spiritual harvest can be multiplied for generations to come
- c. The lessons and faith and character God builds into your child through you will bear a harvest of fruit for eternity to come... and in this world, your impact will be greatly increased
- d. Grandparents testify that there are few joys like that of the cherishing of a grandchild

#### 10. Blessings in Old Age

- a. Biblical social security... not merely financial but relational
- b. Freedom from the great scourge of old age: loneliness
- c. The joy of tracing out the accomplishments and growth of your children and their children
- d. A role to play even till your dying day

#### V. Application: Taking Every Thought Captive

***2 Corinthians 10:3-5 For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. <sup>4</sup> The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. <sup>5</sup> We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.***

- A. Learn to take every thought captive to Christ
- B. To think Christianly about the value and worth of children
- C. Parents: do not complain about the burdens of parenting
- D. Young people: do not envision life in voluntary childlessness
- E. Those who are childless: you can still have a ministry to children through the church... be an example to children teach a child's Bible class; work with CEF in the inner city; ADOPT a child
- F. Christians: challenge the anti-God patterns of abortion and "Every child a wanted child"
- G. Love Your Children and Cherish Them
- H. Believe What God Has Said

*Psalm 127:3 Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward.*