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Sermon Notes

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In Christ is Life, So Let's Fight for Life

John 1:1-5, 14

On January 22 of this year, Democratic New York state legislators passed into law the Reproductive Health Act... the law allows abortions to be performed by an authorized practitioner within the first 24 weeks of pregnancy, or if the baby isn't viable, or at any time if the mother's life or mental/emotional health is at risk. The law establishes the right to kill a fully-formed baby right up to 40 weeks, right up to birth, for any reason at all. What happened right after the vote, however, shows the moral crisis we are in... a YouTube video went viral showing legislators cheering and hugging each other at that historic moment... cheering the right to kill a fully formed baby moments before birth. It doesn't matter that such procedures are rarely performed... it's that it would be LEGAL anywhere in the country, and WILDLY CHEERED by some people that is so shocking.

But worse shocks were yet to come. Other states began to assert that they would be moving in the same direction. In the state of Virginia, a bill was introduced by Democratic Virginia Delegate Kathy Tran that would significantly roll back restrictions on late-term abortions. Under current Virginia law, in order for a woman abort her baby in the third trimester, three doctors had to certify that continuing the pregnancy would likely cause the mother's death or "*substantially and irremediably impair*" her mental or physical health. The proposed bill would reduce the number of doctors required to ONE, and remove the "*substantially and irremediably impair*" qualifier. All that was needed for a late-term abortion was one doctor saying that the mother felt greater emotional distress over giving birth than she did over having an abortion. In the committee hearing, another Virginia delegate pressed Kathy Tran to answer the question, "Does your bill allow for abortions even if the mother is in labor?" She came right out and said that there were no restrictions in her bill at all.

That was horrifying enough. But two days later, the Democratic Governor of Virginia, Ralph Northam, was asked about the bill in a radio interview, also viewable on YouTube. He addressed what would happen if a child were born after a failed attempt at abortion:

“If a mother is in labor, I can tell you exactly what would happen. The infant would be delivered. The infant would be kept comfortable. The infant would be resuscitated IF THAT’S WHAT THE MOTHER AND FAMILY DESIRED, and then a discussion would ensue between the physicians and the mother.”

Absolutely STAGGERING. We’re talking about a baby that has been born, is separated from the mother, is fully alive, and like all newborn children needing direct care in order to stay alive. The baby would receive that care IF that’s what the mother and family wanted. IF NOT, the baby would be allowed to die. There would be a DISCUSSION that would ENSUE concerning whether to kill the baby or not.

This is a key moment for Christ’s church to stand up and speak passionately for the humanity of the preborn:

Matthew 5:14-15 "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.

We are called on to shine in this present darkness, and to do it with courage and clarity.

So I felt moved by these recent events and by the TIMELESS TRUTH of the personhood of the preborn and the sacredness of human life to speak again on this issue.

I. In Jesus Is Life Physically

John 1:1-5 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴ In him was life, and that life was the light of men. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.

A. Life is Staggeringly Complex... Crafted by God

1. Some time ago, I was doing some work on a talk on creation vs. evolution
2. I came across a prize being offered by an evolution group called “The Origin of Life” prize... they offered \$1.5 million to anyone who could come up with merely a plausible scenario in which the first living cell could evolve from non-living chemicals.
3. In order to win the prize, you had to show how that first living cell would have all the functions necessary for life

Nine conditions of a living cell:

1. Cell Wall: a membrane that separates the cell from its surrounding environment, but which also allows nutrients to pass through into the cell, and wastes to pass through out
2. Information for Reproduction: Write, store, and pass along **information** (instruction) needed for life
3. From Information to Chemicals: Bring to pass the recipe instructions for the production or acquisition of chemicals needed for life
4. Eat: Capture, store, and call up energy for work
5. Reproduce: Actively reproduce; pass along the apparatus and "know-how" for metabolism and reproduction into progeny,
6. Heal: Self-monitor and repair its constantly deteriorating aspects
7. Grow: Develop from immaturity to reproductive maturity,
8. Deal with Environment: Productively react to environmental stimuli
9. Be Stable Yet Adaptable: Possess genetic stability, yet sufficient diversity to allow for adaptation and potential evolution.

As I was reading this, I realized how staggeringly complex life is... for this is just a ONE-CELL creature

Imagine something as complex as the human body, with all of its various massive systems, separate from each other but interdependent... the skeletal system, the circulatory system, the nervous system, the respiratory system, the digestive system, and all the rest... each of them made up of billions of specialized cells, each with its own job to do

4. Life is COMPLEX and amazing

Psalm 139:14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

- a. The psalmist celebrates the **direct activity of God** in crafting his physical body

Psalm 139:13 For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.

- b. **Knitting** is an amazing verb to use

- c. It shows intricacy and skill; you can picture the nimble fingers of a woman knitting something together row upon row
 - d. So it is that God knits each human being together, cell upon cell, system upon system; every hour that the embryo is being formed, more and more majestic complexity is being combined to craft a living body
5. Life is also FRAGILE... just a slight displacement of a few cells, and the whole body dies

A number of years ago, I remember my daughter Jenny was working on a knitting project while we were travelling to a mission conference. As we got to the airport in Paris, the security there would not allow her to take her KNITTING NEEDLES on the plane... Jenny was a young girl, maybe 12 or 13 years old! The airport security agent coldly slid her knitting needles out of the blanket she had been working on, causing the project to unravel.

That is as nothing to the devastation of abortion... instantly STOPPING the meticulous process by which God the Creator knits together every human being in his mother's womb.

There are NO ACCIDENTAL HUMAN BEINGS! The parents may not have intended or wanted the child, but God does not reluctantly or under compulsion do what he alone can do... knit a human being together with staggering and meticulous skill; abortion interrupts what God is joining together

B. All Physical Life Crafted and Sustained Through Christ

- 1. Jesus is called the WORD in verse 1... tied to God's use of words to create everything
- 2. God says "Let there be light" and there is light; God says "let there be birds" and there are birds; God says "Let there be animals" and there are animals

Psalm 33:6 By the word of the LORD were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth.

- 3. So John 1:1-5 is saying that God the Father did all his creating THOUGH Jesus, the Son... Jesus is the active agent by which all life came to exist
- 4. God SPEAKS life in every case through Jesus Christ
- 5. Not only in creation, or a new creature being born, but also moment by moment, CHRIST SUSTAINS all living creatures

Every living creature – all birds that soar across the sky, all dolphins that play in the seas, all the chimpanzees that swing in the jungle, and every human being that goes about his business in the populated cities of Asia – all of them are sustained in their existence moment by moment by Jesus

Hebrews 1:3 The Son ... sustains all things by his powerful word.

6. So, as we think about embryonic development, we must think about the direct activity of Jesus Christ... it is by him as the Word of God that each biological system is knit together with such precision and skill

C. Christ Became Flesh... Personally Embracing Physical Life

1. The text tells us plainly that Jesus Christ, the Word of God, became a human being

John 1:14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

2. This is the miracle of the incarnation, as Gabriel told Mary:

Luke 1:31-35 You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. ... He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David; his kingdom will never end." ³⁴ Mary asked the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" ³⁵ The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God."

This verse shows that Jesus was the Son of God and the Son of David FROM THE MOMENT OF CONCEPTION!! He did not become human or the Son of David once he was out of the womb!

Jesus came to share in our humanity... he EMBRACED the physical life we know as a full human being

II. In Jesus is Life Eternally

A. The Life that John Celebrated was MORE than merely physical life

John 1:4-5 In him was life, and that life was the light of men. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.

1. Jesus' life was the light of the world specifically because he showed us the true nature of God

John 1:14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

2. By looking at Jesus, his disciples were seeing who God really is

John 1:18 No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known.

3. Jesus came to teach us the true meaning of life... knowing God

B. Eternal Life is Knowing God and Jesus

John 17:3 Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

C. Eternal Life Was Determined Before the World Began

1. God elected people before they were even born

Ephesians 1:4-5 God chose us in Christ before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love ⁵ he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ

All the spiritual blessings we enjoy in our eternal lives are given us IN CHRIST!!

2. So, babies have a destiny even while Christ is knitting them together in their mothers' womb

Jeremiah 1:5 "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."

3. It is not ours to mess with that or disturb it or interfere with it

D. Apart from Christ, We Are All Spiritually Dead

Ephesians 2:1-2 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ² in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.

E. Abortion Occurs Because People Haven't Found Life, But Are Pursuing Joy Apart from God

1. All of our lusts and sinful desires come from seeking to find meaning and purpose and pleasure and happiness in the physical things of this world
2. Sexual immorality, which is behind the overwhelming majority of abortions, comes from men and women who are idolaters, seeking meaning in temporary pleasures and end up getting pregnant

3. Sinful selfishness leads men to turn away from their responsibilities as the father of the child, and women to seek similar sexual freedom that the men have—being able to engage in sexual freedom with no responsibilities, able just to walk away, like the man does
4. The ultimate outcome of all this sin is DEATH... a culture of DEATH
5. Satan is powerfully active in this culture of death; Jesus came to destroy his culture of death and give us life instead

John 10:10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

Satan HATES God and hates all human beings, who are in the image of God

John 8:44 [The devil] was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

I cannot overstate how DEMONIC the whole abortion industry is, how bloodthirsty the demons are for the babies they are killing

I will never forget how overwhelmed I felt by the prolife ministry I did in Brookline, MA... how we would go on Saturday mornings to speak to women who were going there to get abortions, trying to persuade them to turn away, to not go in

I was confronted by such hate-filled demonstrators who were there to oppose us, yell at us with hate-filled eyes

When our time was done at noon, I would get in my car and drive home with my heart racing and bizarre feelings of terror and paranoia; then I would go home and sleep for the rest of the afternoon... Abortion is DEMONIC, DEVILISH

Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil:

1 John 3:8 The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.

The Way Jesus Did This is by DYING AS A SACRIFICE for us

III. In Jesus is Life Sacrificially

Hebrews 2:14-15 Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death-- that is, the devil-- ¹⁵ and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

1. It is vital for us to understand that Christ died for sinners JUST LIKE US
2. So many people feel so guilty in this matter... guilt perhaps because of past sins—either having gotten an abortion or persuading someone else to get an abortion; or being involved medically in an abortion... or FOR ALL OF US: not being sacrificially involved at all, though selfishness or cowardice
3. Christ's death on the cross is sufficient for our sins!

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.

It was by DYING that Jesus took away all our guilt

Begin by calling on him for the forgiveness of your sins

Then... live sacrificially like him

1 John 3:16 This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.

- B. The Church is Called to Be Willing to Lay Down Our Lives for the Suffering, the Weak, the Lost, the Dying
- C. The Only Way the Church Can Win is by Sacrificially Denying Ourselves for Others
 1. We don't win by arguing better with feisty fighting demeanor, but by sacrificial lives of service driven by love and truth
 2. When I was first involved in the Pro-life movement, the pro-abortion demonstrators used to yell at us that we cared nothing for the women, or for the babies after they were born
 3. However, in the last twenty years, there have been over 3000 (XXXX) crisis pregnancy centers that have been started, mostly by Christians who are sacrificially loving BOTH the mothers AND the children... before, during, and after the birth; helping the mothers put their babies up for adoption if they so chose; or helping them financially and with lavish support if they desire to keep their babies and raise them
 4. These crisis pregnancy centers have been powerfully fruitful in winning desperate people to faith in Christ

IV. Jesus' Call on Us: Fight for Life

- A. There is a Spiritual War Going On in our Country... New York, Virginia, Washington, everywhere
 1. Christians have to stand up and courageously speak the truth

2. BUT our struggle is not ultimately with other people but with Satan and demons! We “fight” by loving, serving, and speaking the truth

B. Make the Pro-Life Case

1. The Biblical case: human from the moment of conception
 - a. Jesus was the Son of David from the moment of conception
 - b. David in Psalm 51 says

Psalm 51:5 Indeed, I was guilty when I was born; I was sinful when my mother conceived me.

- c. John the Baptist LEAPED FOR JOY in the womb... Elizabeth, John’s mother said to Mary

Luke 1:44 As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.

2. The biological case

Concerning the development of the child, prior to the earliest abortions, the unborn already has every body part he/she will ever have; at 18 days after conception, the heart is forming and the eyes start to develop; by 21 days, the heart is not only beating but pumping blood throughout the body; by 28 days, the unborn has budding arms and legs; by 30 days, the baby has multiplied in size 10,000 times; the baby now has a brain and blood is flowing through his veins; by 35 days, mouth, ears, and nose are already taking shape; at 40 days, the baby’s brainwaves can be measured; the child’s heartbeat (which started three weeks ago) can now be heard by an ultrasonic stethoscope; by 42 days, the skeleton is formed, and the brain is controlling the movement of muscles and organs; the unborn reflexively responds to stimulus and may already be capable of feeling pain... THIS IS ALL BEFORE THE EARLIEST ABORTIONS TAKE PLACE!!!!

In the womb, 4D ultrasounds show women the faces of their babies, them sucking their thumbs, rubbing their eyes

Nothing radically changes from these early stages until birth; just the babies get bigger and bigger

3. The legal case:
 - a. 37 states have fetal homicide laws; but yet ALL 37 of those states also permit abortion

The only difference between the two cases is the WILL of the mother; if she WANTS the child, the person who caused the death of her child is guilty of manslaughter. But if she DOESN'T WANT the child, she can abort it legally

This is an evil "might makes right" ethic; the powerful can decide if the weak are worthy of life or not. The woman can declare someone a person or not... it's her choice about their humanity... This is legal schizophrenia

4. The medical case

- a. In the same hospital, exquisitely skilled neo-natal physicians can perform surgery in utero to correct some abnormality in the baby... AND also down the hall, other doctors are killing another baby
- b. Babies can survive now after 24 weeks of gestation, by the incredible advances of neonatal technology and medical practice; but babies the same age or older can legally be killed
- c. This is medical schizophrenia

5. The ethical case

- a. nothing changes from the birth canal out into the world such the babies should suddenly have human rights
- b. It is a legal and ethical principle: whenever two individuals have conflicting rights and only one can be satisfied, the more significant claim takes precedence; so the baby's right to life is more significant than the woman's right to not be pregnant

C. Government: Establish Just and Righteous Leaders

1. As we look on with horror at the governmental leaders in New York and Virginia (and many other states and Federal leaders as well), it is vital for us to understand the central purpose of government: to protect the inalienable rights of its people—life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness
2. Any governmental leader who uses his power to deprive his people unjustly of life, liberty, or property without due process of law is NOT FIT TO GOVERN!
3. Let's not mince words... we have a basic two-party system in our nation; but one of those parties—the Democratic party—has pushed all of its prolife candidates and leaders out years ago; they have openly embraced the culture of death. That doesn't mean you should vote Republican... for if that party does the same thing, they are not worthy to govern either; but I am calling on Christians to look at the facts and refuse to give power to any candidate who supports the killing of babies

D. Educate Yourself and Your Family

1. Make certain that all your kids know what abortion is when they are old enough to understand it
2. Teach them the facts of abortion and of the biblical, medical, legal and ethical proof of the humanity of the pre-born

E. Speak Up in Public

1. On the college campuses, in conversations at work
2. Don't lay down for this growing culture of death

F. Get Active in a Crisis Pregnancy Center... PSS wants to come to Durham!

1. Great evangelistic opportunities as we show people sacrificial love
2. IN CHRIST IS LIFE!!

G. PRAY!!!

1. This is a spiritual issues... Satan has staked out his claim and will not give up this territory without a fight