

Introduction

So why are we here today? Why are we observing a Sunday called, “Sanctity of Human Life Sunday”? Isn’t that getting a little political? Are we doing this because we live in a society that does not uphold the God-given value of human life? No, there is more to it than that. We do not uphold the sanctity of human life because we live in a society that doesn’t, but because we serve a GOD WHO DOES. Why are we observing this Sanctity of Human Life Sunday? Is it because life is precious? No, there is even more to it than that. We uphold the sanctity of human life because life is precious TO GOD!

The Word of God before us today raises the life issues—things like abortion and assisted suicide—way above the political realm. The Word of God before us today reminds us why it is important for us who are members of the Body of Christ to address these issues. The Word of God before us today tells us that every human life is a life created by God, every human life is a life for whom Jesus Christ died, and every human life is a life Jesus desires to take into His arms and call to an eternal relationship with Him.

Hands that Knit

Yes, the Word of God before us today reminds us very clearly why we observe this Sanctity of Life Sunday. Let’s look a little more closely at each of our texts. First, life is precious to God because His hands knit us together. Now Psalm 139 can be kind of frightening when you first look at it. It reminds us that God knows everything about us, everything we do, and everything we think. There is no place we can go to escape God. God watches everything you do. That could be a big problem!

But that fear goes away when we realize that the One watching is not some Orwellian “Big Brother” or some judge waiting for us to goof up. No, the One watching is our God, our Creator who knit us together with His hands. He’s been creating life with His hands from the

beginning. Using some dirt, He formed Adam with His hands and breathed into him the breath of life (Genesis 2:7). Using one of Adam’s ribs, He made—literally “built”—Eve with His hands.

Then, He told these two perfectly handmade humans to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. He sets into motion a biological process for procreation. But, as our text says, He still involves Himself in this biology and very intimately—with His hands. The Bible does not claim to be a biology text book, but the picture God gives in these verses describes a kind of poetic biology.

“For you formed my inmost being” (v 13a NIV). He first creates the very essence of what is uniquely you. That’s how biology works. When the genetic code from mom and dad come together, you were uniquely you at that moment—male or female, tall or short, blonde or brunette, brown eyes or blue, good at math, sports, music—it was all there at that moment, your “inmost being.” At the moment of conception, you were you. You were not “something” that was going to become you; you were *someone* who was you! That which was hanging around in your mother’s fallopian tube moving slowly toward the womb was your inner being, the very essence of what is uniquely you!

When you reached the womb you implanted yourself into the uterine wall. Yes, *you* did that. You hooked up to mom by producing your own placenta and umbilical cord. Mom probably didn’t even know you were there yet. As one part of you continues this hook up, another part of you, a group of cells called “stem cells,” starts changing. Some of those cells become bone, some skin, some nerves, some muscle, and so forth. Eventually, your whole body will be formed by these cells.

That seems to be reflected in Psalm 139. “Knitted me together” is literally something like, “You wove a covering for me.” So God creates you, your very essence, your genetic identity, and then He covers you, “knits” a body for you. No wonder the Psalmist says, “I praise

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Texts: Psalm 139:13-14 and Mark 10:13-16

Theme: Hands that Knit—Arms that Hold

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you for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well” (v 14). It’s true, each one of you, each and every human being, is fearfully, wonderfully, uniquely, marvelously made—the work of God’s hands.

Do you see how this trumps everything else we think might make life valuable? It doesn’t matter where you live, whether in a mansion or in a womb. It doesn’t matter how big you are, whether six-foot-five or a tiny dot of an embryo in a Petri dish. It doesn’t matter the condition of your health, whether a well trained athlete or unconscious in a nursing home bed. The value of human life does not come from what we are able to do or not do. It comes from what God has done. Every human life is fearfully and wonderfully the work of God’s hands.

God’s Handiwork Corrupted

But sin corrupts God’s handiwork. All the flaws in the work of God’s hands, all the defects—physical, mental, emotional—flow from one giant flaw, sin. Sin corrupts us at our very core. This corruption manifests itself in so many ways, but the one we focus on today is how sin has affected the way we view and value life. Sin makes us judge life’s value based on criteria *we* think is important. Sin turns the source of value from the Creator to the creature.

We creatures have not done well in the criteria we have used to determine life’s value. We have used ethnicity as a basis for value and ended up with places like Auschwitz and Cambodia and Croatia and Rwanda—hundreds of thousands brutally slaughtered. We have used skin color as a basis for value and ended up with slave trading and civil war and discrimination and lynching—thousands upon thousands of lives lost. Now we use whether you are born or not as a basis for value and end up with abortion being the most common surgical procedure done in this country. Millions upon millions of lives lost in brutal ways—over 50 million in the United States since its legalization in 1973. More and more we use health as a basis for value and end up with assisted suicide and euthanasia and “killing as a means of caring” and the elderly being led

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to believe they have the “duty to die.” Millions of people with disabilities and people in nursing homes are increasingly at risk of hastened deaths.

This deadly sin of the creature taking the place of the Creator when assigning value to life is not just a sin we point to out there. We in the Church share the blame and shame of what is happening. We do so when we fail to: “Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute” (Proverbs 31:8 NIV). We share in the blame when we fail to deal with these issues because we think they are only political problems or social ills. We share in the blame when we sit silently as the slaughter continues. We share in the shame when we think of the children who will never even have the opportunity to be brought to Jesus through the waters of holy Baptism. We rightly join Jesus in being indignant with the disciples for trying to prevent children from coming to Jesus. But if we do nothing and say nothing about the 3,200 abortions every single day in this country, we also prevent children from coming to Jesus. Jesus’ rebuke should ring in our ears as well, “Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God” (Mark 10:14).

Held in His Arms

When we do not talk about the life issues in our churches, we silence the only message that can really make a difference in the lives of people facing these grave issues of life and death. The message of the Gospel is the most powerful and positive For Life message in the universe! We have a message of our God who loved the work of His hands so much, He came down into our sin-broken world and into our sin-broken lives to bring restoration and healing. He came down to bear the blame and the shame and God’s punishment for all sin and for every sinner. He came for those who have sinned against life. In fact, in one sense, we can say He came *especially* for those who sinned against life and are crushed under that burden.

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That’s the picture He gives in our text from Mark 10 when He says, “Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it” (10:15). He is not referring to “child-like faith.” It’s child-like helplessness. Scripture pictures children as being very vulnerable and completely dependent upon others in order to survive. We do not enter the Kingdom by walking in on our own merits. We are not even capable of crawling in. We lie prostrate on the outside—like a little child—acknowledging our helplessness and completely relying upon Christ and His mercy to come out, take us in His arms, and carry us in.

So often, those with an abortion in their past feel helpless and hopeless. Satan tries to make them feel like they have committed a sin too big to be forgiven. He would keep them from Jesus. But helpless and hopeless are just the kind of folks Jesus came to rescue! One woman who had an abortion finally understood this. She said, “I never realized that Jesus Christ was willing to get down into my muck and miry life and lift me up out of the sewage of my problems. He has since shown me He really is.”¹ Jesus Christ is not only willing to get down into our muck and miry lives, He has! He lifted us *all* up out of the sewage of our sin whether the sin of abortion or the sin of silence while abortions are going on all around us. He has picked us *all* up in His arms, put His nail-scarred hands upon us, and blessed us with forgiveness—unearned, undeserved, free, and complete!

Now to get back to the point of all of this—Jesus doesn’t want anyone kept away from His arms. He desires that all be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. He desires to take every child, every vulnerable, sinful human being into His arms and bless them. He desires to call every life into an eternal relationship with Him.

That’s why we are here today observing this Sanctity of Human Life Sunday. We are not doing this because we want to get political. We are not doing this because we are advocating

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some sort of social agenda. We are not even doing this because the children are precious. We are doing this because the children—all those who are vulnerable and in need—are precious to God. Every human life is a life created by God. Every human life is a life for whom Jesus Christ died. Every human life is a life Jesus desires to take into His arms, bless, and call into an eternal relationship with Him. Amen!

¹ From a letter received at the Life Center of Lutherans For Life, Nevada, IA.