

Introduction

It was the fall of 2008. One of the participants in a meeting in a small house in Ovosibirsk, Siberia, Russia, was Sayanna Nemezhikova from the city of Tuim. She had said that at the last minute she made up her mind to make the 17-hour train trip to attend that little conference. Soon after the meeting began, she asked if she could talk privately with the pastor. Of course she could. The pastor listened carefully as she told her story. She had had several abortions. What could she do? Did she want to confess what she had done as sin? Yes! She confessed without any excuses or self-justification that she had killed her babies. The pastor carefully read and explained 1 John 1:7, 9: “[I]f we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his son cleanses us from all sin ... If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” She understood, honestly confessed her sin, put it on the cross of Jesus Christ, and accepted His grace and forgiveness. Then the pastor asked her where that sin was. “Jesus took it on the cross.” Are you forgiven? “Yes, He has cleansed me from my sin, I am forgiven.” Upon returning home, she soon shared her experience with two other women, both of whom decided not to have the abortion they were planning. *(Some weeks later she penned a profound poem called “The Eyes of Watching Children or the Silent Sin of the World”—included at the end of this sermon.)*

Before I continue, I want to say that perhaps someone here has had an abortion or encouraged someone to have one. As conviction grows within you and pain of guilt envelops your soul, let me tell you what that pastor told Sayanna: Jesus also invites you to the same cross

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and offers the same forgiveness. Remember that “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

This morning, we will be talking about the sanctity of life under three points:

- I. The Gift and the Plan for Life
- II. The Thief and His Dark Work of Abortion
- III. The Wonder of God’s Way

I. The Gift and the Plan for Life

Early in His ministry, Jesus explained that the plan and purpose of His ministry was diametrically opposed to the goals of the thief whose calling was to steal, kill, and destroy. He had come that believers in Him could have life and have it abundantly and that He would lay down His life to make this possible. Long before the age of modern medicine, believers knew of the special value of human life. In Genesis 1:26-27, four different times He refers to us as being made in God’s image or likeness. Psalm 8:5: “Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor.” Again, in Psalm 139:14, we are assured that we are “fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works.” We think of Hannah who desperately wanted a child. She prayed and pleaded with God and He finally responded to her. “For this child I prayed, and the Lord has granted me my petition that I made to him” (1 Samuel 1:27). In Luke 1:41, the unborn baby John the Baptist leaped in his mother’s womb when Mary, the mother of the newly conceived baby Jesus, came into her presence carrying the Savior of the world as the “fruit of her womb.” This Savior would soon affirm the humanity of little children when He “took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them.” (Mark 10:14-16). Finally, we read in 1 Corinthians 6:20, the value of this person,

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whether adult, infant, or unborn child, is measured by what the Lord God was willing to pay to redeem him: “[F]or you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.”

The biological development and humanity of a child, understood more fully in recent years, confirm what Scripture has long taught: A baby’s heart begins to beat at 18-20 days, in 44 days there are brain waves, and within 11-12 weeks the child can squint and swallow. And though there have been exceptions, until the infamous *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court verdict in 1973, most laws of the land enshrined this high value of the unborn child, making it illegal to abort a child. Even the Constitution employed the terminology of the right to “life” and the “pursuit of happiness.” This love, respect, and honor afforded the child was the recipe that shaped the hearts and minds of so many mothers, leading one weary mother of nine children on the cold and dusty plains of North Dakota to remark, “Even though I was exhausted beyond words, if anything were to happen to one of those children, I don’t know how I would survive.” Truly, they are precious in the sight of God.

II. The Thief and His Dark World of Abortion

Jesus perfectly describes the world of the thief. His calling in life is to steal, kill, and destroy. He steals the lives, honor, and integrity of those who admit his presence. At the hands of the despots of the world, he kills—babies, the innocent, the weak, and the helpless. He lives up to Jesus’s description of him: “He was a murderer from the beginning” (John 8:44). He has always been this way. This is not new. The biblical record reveals his dark history. God’s people were warned not to join the nonbelievers in giving their offspring to Molech as a sacrificial offering (Leviticus 18:21). Again Ahaz, the young 20-year-old king of Israel, bowed to the homemade idols and “burned his son in the fire ...” (2 Kings 16:3). Manasseh, son of the godly

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king Hezekiah, became king when he was only 12 years old. He soon surrendered to the dark, satanic temptations of lust and blood. He built altars to the Baals, the pagan deities, and “made his son pass through the fires” (2 Kings 21:6). It should be no surprise that kings like Herod would kill babies (Matthew 2:13-18). When Stephen was arrested by the Jewish priests, in his defense, he reminded them of the child sacrifice of their spiritual fathers as they worshiped at the altar of the Baal deity Molech (Acts 7:43).

Today, we see the same idolatries re-enacted before our eyes. Under different names, Molech is back at work among us. Many schools use a book entitled, *It's Perfectly Normal*. Endorsed by many, including Publisher's Weekly, and indifferent to the consequences, this book unashamedly erases all moral guidelines and openly and unabashedly advocates for unrestricted sex among children and teenagers, accepting and endorsing abortion as a necessary “medical procedure for ending a pregnancy” (page 73). We ask, how could a nation with the godly heritage of the United States surrender to the same undercurrent of evil which brought judgment to the people and kings of Old Testament Israel?

The answer is the same. Believers who knew better acquiesced. They allowed the thief into the house in broad daylight. They remained silent rather than risk popular disapproval. Pastors, leaders, and teachers surrendered from the commitment to hold to the clear traditions and teaching of Scripture and quietly embraced the spirit of compromise. Moral teachings were redefined to include practices totally offensive to biblical teaching. Even with the knowledge of the indescribable practice of abortionists, where babies even up to the time of normal birth can be legally and systematically dismembered, the sinister silence remains. Many pastors and leaders who personally hold to the authority of Scripture remain silent for fear they might offend

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someone in their congregations. Denominations, including some Lutherans, have officially embraced the practice of abortion. Our popular culture reasons that if we want the baby, then any and all medical procedures can be used to protect it. On the other hand, the abortion mentality says that if you don't want the child, you can have him or her put to death. Along with abortion, further excuses have come to justify killing—hasten the death—of people to “relieve them of pain or suffering.”

The same spirit controls the minds and morals of our people as prevailed in the former Soviet Union, where abortion was widely accepted and underwritten by government. In those days, they paid to kill their children. With the current crisis of declining population, the government now rewards people for having babies. Payment for the first child is around \$2,000. Payment for the second child is around \$25,000—enough to buy a first house. Yes, money can buy the lives of some of those babies for now, but that is a fragile foundation for life. What government gives, government can take away.

III. The Wonder of God's Way

The way *ahead* is the way *back* to God who created us in His image. We can meet Him only at the foot of the cross. We began with the story of Sayanna. She came to the foot of the cross in repentance with the heavy burden of guilt and shame she carried over her abortions. She accepted the gift of forgiveness, not just as a momentary word of comfort but as a fact created and sealed by the cross of Jesus Christ. The pain of guilt and condemnation under which she lived, even in that atheistic and abortion-minded culture, was removed and transferred to the cross of Jesus. It is there at the foot of the cross that He reaches out and embraces us. He assures us there is “therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1).

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Why? It is only because “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

There was a missionary’s wife who came to a pastor with profound grief. No, she had not had an abortion, but, at one time early in their marriage, she had thought briefly about it. But just having briefly entertained that thought brought deep condemnation. Again, there was no attempt to justify or minimize her feelings. They went to the cross, leaving her remorse and guilt there. She wept for nearly a half hour but went home released and free from the darkness of guilt and shame.

Oxana was a leader in her little congregation, a remnant of the German settlements that had built these many strong farm communities until the great deportation in 1941 when Stalin consigned them to the steppes of Siberia. She had become the unofficial leader of their little congregation. At the end of the third night of special meetings held in the community center of their village, she was weeping profusely. While young people were playing guitar, singing, and visiting, she met with the pastor and confessed to having had eleven abortions before her son was born. What could she do? Of course the answer was clear—bring that terrible burden to the cross of Jesus. Then she honestly confessed, not to having made “a little mistake,” but that she had killed her own children. With that repentance and confession, the pastor could announce the great Gospel Word. She found forgiveness and freedom again at the foot of the cross with those powerful words of 1 John 1:7: “the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.” Truly they experienced “godly grief [that] produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.” (2 Corinthians 7:10).

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Yes, unapologetically we preach and teach the great gift of God’s grace and forgiveness of sin—all sin. But even more, *we are stewards* of that great, powerful, and foundational truth called the Sanctity of Life—created in the image of God. It is this undisputable conviction of the godly origin of every child that convinces us that a child at any stage of development is to be valued, loved, and protected. This constitutes a “job description” for pastors and leaders in the church. At every age, there should be preaching and teaching of this fundamental biblical perspective from the pulpits, Sunday schools, and podiums across our land. The pulpits, the Sunday schools, Christian schools, confirmation classes, youth groups, youth camps, retreats, and clear instruction in church colleges are places where we as followers of Jesus are called to lift up the truth of the Sanctity of Life. Even in our abortion-minded culture where the God-given value of every person is muted or silenced, when the message of the Sanctity of Life is applied wisely and prayerfully, our Lord will use it. The lives of a countless number of children will be saved. The bitter acid of soul-quenching guilt and remorse for having killed their own babies will be avoided. It will enable those many children and adults who live with a profound sense of inferiority and worthlessness to understand and embrace the truth that they are not who others think they are, or even who they think they are, but who God says they are. Their value is not determined by popular opinion or political expediency but by the fact that they were created in His image and “bought with the price” of the Son of God and who are in Christ, indeed, a new creation.

As pastors, teachers, or ordinary believers by the grace of our Lord Jesus, by the clear truth of His Word, by the strong statements of our catechism and confessions, and by the prayer and encouragement of one another, we can and must overcome the fear of people that so often

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silences this life-giving message. We can trust that great Gospel of Jesus crucified and risen to do its work of grace and redemption in our lives and our people's lives. We can rejoice because it is true that we can stand before Him who because of that cross of Jesus Christ. "If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared" (Psalm 130:3-4). It is this Jesus who welcomes us to the foot of the cross where He "came that they may have life and have it abundantly" (John 10:10). We must break the silence. We must speak the great truth of the sanctity of human life!

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The Eyes of Watching Children or the Silent Sin of the World

Child, I created you in the womb
I enlightened you when I have known you
My eyes observed you
Until you slowly entered the world.

I called you, child, my creation
And your days were appointed by Me
I entered your name in the Book of Life
When you weren't even born.

But these days will not come to pass
The world has already dealt with your life
With hardened heart and cruel hand
World murders unborn people.

Your mother and the world don't need you
She was the one to give you birth
But she opted out of giving you life
She immersed your little body in sin.

But everything, child, might have been different
You could have walked on foot into the world
But your life has ended in the womb,
Under the scalpel, on the bloody table.

You see the inner world with your eyes
And sleep in waters
And mother gives you food,
Her voice you will tell from anyone else's.

One moment—and creation is destroyed
Your little heart is beating to the rhythm of ... knife
Where to go? There is no escape, no protection
And you look with your life into their eyes.

But you are just a piece of meat for them,
But you are ALIVE, and life flows within you
But they don't feel pain,
And don't believe that you are alive.

You cried to them with silent cry
The world was deaf, and only I heard that

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How, step by step, they tore to pieces the little body
Throwing the bloody parts into a tray.

Your little torn body, child,
Jesus took on Himself and brought to the cross
But the world nailed Jesus to the cross
And didn't let you be born.

No one ever will tell you, child,
"Hello, baby, welcome to our world!"
And you won't build sandcastles in a sandbox
Because your life has gone through their hands.

No one will tell you "Happy Birthday!"
And you will never go to school
And no one will congratulate you on your wedding
And you will never give life yourself.

Child, you will never see skies and the sea
The blinking stars, but they will be without you
You will never gather flowers in the field.

Sister and brother don't know you
Because you didn't cross the threshold of the house
Only the bloody, torn thread is left
From the very first breath to the last.

The thread that connected you with the world
In which you should have been born
Forgive, child, your mother and the world
Their sin has been paid long ago on the cross.

Their sin has been washed away by Jesus on Golgotha
Where He was beaten, nailed to the cross
Your thread of life has been washed
By His blood.

Where is your grave, oh child?
It is customary to have it in the world.
Where is the place with fresh soil
Where one can lay the flowers for you?

The world calls you the flowers of life
But their tenderness is cruel

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They easily pluck your souls,
Like cornflowers in the field.

You are not precious to the world
It hasn't given you even a piece of soil
It erases you from the earth
So that you will not remind it of its sin.

The world doesn't care about you, child,
It can hear children laughing nearby.
With a steel spring suffocating you,
It kills your laughter and your soul.

Who will stop this slaughterhouse?
Who is strong enough to show the world its sin?
Not the world, oh child, but only the Christians
Will expose the world's sin to it.

Oh world, stop for a moment,
And open the "ears" of your heart!!!
Listen to the children's silent cry
And let him be born as you were born before.

You came to earth with a loud cry
The silent cry has frozen in your "ears"
But the earth gladly accepts you
It was created by God for them and for you.

You didn't let them go around the world
The ocean's tide could not touch them
And mountains that drew them, they will never see
Because you murder them.

You didn't let them see the sun
You took their breath away
You didn't let them
Watch the shooting star.

You didn't let them build sandcastles as a child
You didn't let them twine the wreaths
And play ball on fields.
You simply forbade them to come into the world.

You played ball on the field with your friends

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And chased pigeons on the roof,
Why do you act so cruelly
And let their life drip through your fingers?

You yourself were playing ball with friends,
And plucking flowers you twined into wreaths,
Why so heartlessly do you pluck their souls
Like flowers from the field?

You kill them in their mother's womb
Not letting them see the world like you can see it.
You grudged a piece of bread for them
And tear them into pieces in the darkness.

But God created the heavenly bodies even for them,
So that sun would warm them with its light,
So that the night sky would lighten their way
And show with stars their way to the Creator.

God created them like you some time ago,
But you can see the earth, the sky, and flowers,
And enter life with school-leaving certificate
Why don't you let them come?

You dealt with their life so cruelly
And being so arrogant you took the role of judge
You kill what was created by God only
Not even letting the little bodies be buried.

Even the "city" out of soil was built for you
So that your remains will be committed to earth
But why so cruelly
Erase these little ones from the earth?

You took away their childhood, their youth, and their old age.
You heard the words "hello" and "goodbye"
Your children will be there at your last journey
Whom you gave life.

How can you be so cruel
And tender at the same time? This is hypocrisy; this is sin.
You calling the children flowers of life
Pluck their lives.

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The murder of the children you call abortion
And building up the wall you turned away from God
You break the soul against this wall,
By your hand you tear them apart.

You, heartless and stubborn,
Killing the children, don't even bury them,
You hide their little bodies somewhere else
But not in the earth.

God gave a name to each one of them,
And entered their name into the Book of Life,
But you throw them into oblivion
Without name or rank.

The earth was created with one purpose,
So that people possessing it would give birth to life
And multiply like the pieces of sand
That cannot be counted.

No one and nowhere in this huge world
Can count the killed children
Only God, knowing about it,
Has washed your sin away by His Son's blood.

You, world, kill the children each minute,
The number grows, but you don't keep count of it.
And with hardened heart you won't go away,
To let the little ones come to the altar.

But your sin, oh world, has been paid long ago.
It has been washed away and has been made white.
Fold your bloody hands in prayer
And humbly weep.

Your hands carry the blood of children;
Of the ones that you never let be born
With cruel hands you continue to shed the blood
Of the silent babies.

You erect monuments for the victims of the world
You, killing yourself, erect them,
Why can't you make the monuments for the children
Whom you have killed?

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You are so greedy, stubborn, and cruel
To spend the money on murdered babies.
It's easier to erase them, so that they will never remind you
Of your sin.

Don't be so cruel, oh world,
The earth belonged even to those children,
Whom you murder and fearfully erase
So that they will never remind you of themselves.

You are sinful, merciless, and crafty,
But the most amoral sin is when
You murder *Them* and don't let *Them* be born
This is your mean and *silent sin*.

Shake yourself, oh world, come to your senses and repent,
The earth and life are given for all people,
But remember, world, murdering the children
You will never erase the eyes of looking babies.

You announced your coming with loud cry,
But the silent cry of the infant you didn't want to hear,
And you continue to destroy the already-living little bodies of the
children in your slaughterhouse.

by Sayana Nemezhikova from Tuim, Russia

This poem is dedicated to Lutheran pastors Alvin Pinna, Canada, and Don Richman, USA, whose hard missionary labor help people from different countries to hear the SILENT CRY of the unborn CHILD, which is being murdered every minute according to the diagnosis "unwanted pregnancy."

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Additional Information

Introduction from Pastor Don Richman: Ordained in 1963, I began my ministry in the Lutheran Church in Brazil where I worked with university students in Porto Alegre. Upon returning home, I served at Trinity Lutheran Church in Jamestown, North Dakota. Subsequently, I was called to be the senior pastor at Emmaus Lutheran Church in Bloomington, Minnesota. In 1988, I began ministry in eastern Europe. With the collapse of communism, I resigned from the pastoral ministry at Emmaus and, with the help of several others, formed the East European Missions Network in October of 2003. Along with Dr. Jean Garton, Dr. Jack Eichhorst, Rev. Dave Wende, and others, in November of 1978 we held the first Lutherans For Life meeting at Concordia College in St Paul, Minnesota. After having served on the board of directors for several years, I was asked to combine ministry of LFL with the ministry of East European Missions Network in Russia and eastern Europe. I continue ministry in eastern Europe and Russia. I am grateful for pastors and co-workers like Pastor Leif Camp who diligently carry on pro-life ministry in and around St. Petersburg, Russia.

A word of encouragement for pastors from Pastor Don Richman: A great shadow of guilt and darkness lies over America, leading people to suppress the healing truth of the Gospel. Many pastors or teachers strongly believe in the biblical truth of the sanctity of human life; however, for fear of people, fear of being considered a fanatic or “uncool,” or for other reasons, many choose the “safe” alternative of silence and never seriously mention the issue of life.

Fear of people has led some pastors, teachers, and other leaders to silence or reconfigure clear biblical teaching and quietly justify abortion “in some circumstances.” Others might reason that they know that such and such a person has had an abortion but “it would stir up all kinds of guilt, and they would feel terrible if we ever mention it.” Some believe we can “confidently” affirm that “no one in our congregation would do that.” That may be true, but since having had an abortion is usually a carefully guarded secret, how would we know? Or someone might become angry and leave the church if we talk about that. Or for a host of other reasons, many pastors and leaders choose to remain silent about it, depriving their people, young and old alike, of the blessing of knowing the wonderful truth of the high value and sanctity of life—our lives.

The prophet had strong words for those of us who are the watchmen on the wall (Ezekiel 33: 6-10). Because we see the sword being wielded against our beloved children, let us have godly courage to speak the Word, warn the wicked, and love and protect our children.

Given the gravity of this issue, let us strive together to overcome these or any fears that might tend to silence our pulpit and teaching ministry in any way. Yes, we are called to deal with these and other critical issues, repent where we have failed, and trust the Lord, His Holy Spirit, and His Word to move us forward in His grace and truth and help bring people to the foot of the cross.