

The Value of One: The Sanctity of Human Life

Sermon Outline

In all my years as a pastor, I've never received more criticism than when I spoke about my pro-life stand. Responses ranged from sarcasm to anger to apathy. Yet, the defense of the unborn and the less fortunate must be at the forefront of who the church is and what the church does.

The facts speak for themselves:

[Pastor -- please pull statistical information from "[State of Abortion in America.](#)"]

Quote: "If we teach a young mother it is okay to take the life of her own child in the womb, we inevitably pull the thread that permeates the entire garment of the sanctity of life -- forever."

-- Martin Palmer, pro-life advocate

But my desire is not to talk only about the abortion aspect of Sanctity of Human Life Sunday -- I want to address the Value of Life -- the responsibility of all of us to honor and protect life. And I will do so in making three points.

In the gospel of John, Jesus presents Himself as the door (John 10:8) and He warns us about those who would come to do us harm ... to teach us falsely to ... to distract us from the truth. In John 10:10, He warns of those who promise life but in the end bring death and suffering.

Jesus was one who was rejected by those who promoted themselves as spiritual leaders. He demonstrated this determination ... to value all life. He detested heresy. He said, "I am the good shepherd! I know My sheep and My sheep know Me and I lay down My life for the sheep" (John 10:14).

I. We Have an Example

In John 10:14, Jesus speaks about giving His life for His sheep. As He ministered, He saw people one at a time, and placed great value on each individual. But in the end He realized He must finally face the greatest enemy -- the cross -- and in so doing He ministered to those He met along the way with a sense of urgency ... for His ultimate gift was eternal life (John 10:28).

Examples of Jesus reaching out to one in His flock:

A. The leper in Matthew 8:2-30. He touched the leper who asked Him for healing and by doing so He touched the AIDS epidemic of His day. He understood the suffering and the rejection of the victim.

B. The elderly woman with the "issue of blood" in Luke 8:43-48. This woman touched His garment and was healed. She came to Him trembling. He saw value in life even in the aged, and brought comfort and hope.

C. The little children in Mark 10:13, Matthew 9:13 and Luke 9:47. Jesus took the children in His arms, put His hands on them and blessed them. He realized the "little ones" would face huge obstacles to their faith and morality, and He warned those who might attempt to prevent them from coming to Jesus there would be consequences (Matthew 18:6). His warnings hold true even to this day.

Jesus' life showed His willingness to respond to the call of one person. He looked them in the eye as though there was no one else in the crowd. He made them feel loved and very special.

[Pastor -- place an illustration here of how you, or a member of your congregation, ministered to just one person.]

II. We Have a Mandate

From the life of Jesus Christ, and His teaching in parables, we are given a mandate to look after those less fortunate. Some examples included:

A. The Parable of the Lost Son -- Luke 15:11-32 -- "Your brother was dead, now he is alive; he was lost, now he is found." The next step was celebration. We must do all we can to recover that one who seems lost or separated. We no longer have the luxury of picking and choosing who is important. If Jesus died for them they have the right to hear the message of hope.

B. The Parable of the Good Samaritan -- Luke 10:25-37 -- We are expected to respond to the needy and the fallen, even when the organization of the church fails to do so. To those who were listening, Jesus said, "Go and do likewise ..." (Luke 10:37). Good intentions are not enough. We must respond to a lost world's cry for help.

C. The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant -- Matthew 18:21-35 -- Forgiveness is met with forgiveness. The church must be willing not only to receive those who have been hurt or rejected by us, but we must be willing to forgive them as though they've done us no harm. Jesus is the giver of second chances -- even those who have aborted or failed or fallen (Luke 7:47).

[Pastor -- Use a personal illustration of someone in your ministry whom everyone had given up on but, through God's love and mercy, was restored to health and wholeness.]

III. We Have an Opportunity (as disciples of Jesus Christ)

A. Discipleship is servanthood -- The true disciple of Jesus Christ is not a disciple because of their position in the church or community. Rather, they are disciples because they are willing to be servants (John 13:1-5). He loved totally and unconditionally.

B. Discipleship is service -- Jesus admonished His disciples to care for one another through His example of washing their feet. Then He said, "Now that you know these things you will be blessed if you do them" (John 13:17).

C. Discipleship is sacrifice -- As we are committed to serve the kingdom of God, we in turn serve Him -- "As you did it to one of the least of these, you did it to me" (Matthew 25:34-40). Though the Lord was probably referring to Israel, He was also making reference to those we meet along the way. "Whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me" (Matthew 24:45).

Illustration: I once heard the story of a very wealthy man who each day in his limousine passed a weary, ragged newsboy at a big city intersection. One day he stopped, bought all the young man's papers, and invited the lad to his home. He fed him, gave him new clothes, and promised to help with his support. When the rich man delivered the boy back to his home and bid the child farewell ... the youth hesitated,

and then turned back to the limousine and said simply, "Mister ... are you Jesus?" I believe the world is looking for Jesus in you.

[Pastor -- Use an example of yourself or someone in your congregation who had an experience where another person saw Jesus in them.]

As Hebrews 13:2 encourages, "Do not forget to entertain strangers for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it."

"It Matters to This One!"

A young man was walking along the seashore. Far ahead of him, he saw a distant figure: someone who, like him, was walking, but who paused every few steps, stooped down, and seemed to be throwing something into the sea.

His curiosity aroused, the young man hurried forward, his feet awkward in the sand, as he tried to catch up with the man. As he came closer, he saw that it was an old man, and the reason that he would stop every step or two was to pick up a starfish and fling it into the ocean. It was only then that the young man noticed the thousands of starfish that littered the beach for miles, stranded there by the tide.

The young man felt a rising sense of anger. What the old man was doing seemed so pointless, and he couldn't wait to catch up with him to tell him so. By the time the young man came abreast of the older man, he was out of breath.

"Why are you doing this?" he gasped. "You can't save all of these starfish! It's useless! What does it matter?"

The old man paused for a moment, looking down at the crusty starfish he'd just picked up. He turned it over slowly, then answered.

"It matters to this one," he said, as with a slow deliberate motion he tossed it back into the sea, into life.

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