

Life Is Sacred

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[0 : 00] There are a couple of Psalms that I want to share with you that are going to be the text for! The first is Psalm 139 verses 13 through 16.

So if you have your Bible at home, go ahead and grab that and turn to Psalm 139 verses 13 through 16, and then I'll also be reading Psalm 106 verses 36 through 39. So put your finger there in Psalm 139 and then turn over and put another finger in Psalm 106. Psalm 139 verses 13 through 16 say this, For you formed my inward parts. You knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works. My soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance. In your book were written every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them. And then in Psalm 106 verses 36 through 39. They served their idols, which became a snare to them. They sacrificed their sons and their daughters to the demons. They poured out innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan. And the land was polluted with blood. Thus they became unclean by their acts and played the whore in their deeds. Well, early in the book of Genesis, God made a promise to Abraham. God called Abraham and told him that he would make a great nation through his descendants and that he would also give him a land, a place to work, a place to live, a place for his descendants to flourish as they worshiped God. Above all, God promised Abraham a seed, a seed that would be a blessing to all the nations. But for 400 years, the promise that God made was continually under threat. And we see that is the case in Exodus chapter 1. There we find the Israelites, God's people living in Egypt. If you recall, they had not yet inherited the promised land yet. They had arrived in Egypt as a result of Joseph's bringing them there. Joseph, if you remember, was used by God to save his people from a lengthy famine that threatened to wipe them out. And so they were brought to Egypt where for a time they lived in peace and prosperity and were fully supplied.

But as time went on, the Egyptian rulers forgot who Joseph was. And later, when a new pharaoh saw that the Israelites were having a lot of children and that their numbers were great, he felt threatened.

[3 : 43] And he felt threatened because according to his understanding, there is strength in numbers. And so he feared that the Israelites would be so great in number that they would eventually overcome and overthrow the Egyptians. And so Pharaoh was resolved to work the Israelites hard, thinking that that would put an end to their increase in numbers, that hard work would wear them out and decrease their desire to have children. But his plan backfired and the Israelites were having more children than they were before.

But undeterred, Pharaoh decided to force the Israelites into harder labor. He forced them into slavery and intensified their labors. He also set up a meeting with two Hebrew midwives. A midwife was a woman who helped pregnant women deliver their babies. And when he met with them, he gave them this order recorded in Exodus chapter 1, verse 16. When you serve as a midwife to the Hebrew women and see them on the birthstool, if it is a son, you shall kill him. But if it is a daughter, she shall live. And so, you know, while we're familiar with many of the heroes of Scripture, we tell our kids stories about Noah and the dark about Abraham, about Joseph, Moses, Samson, and David, two heroes that are seldom mentioned are these two midwives, Shiprah and Puah. Imagine being in the place of one of those women. Pharaoh, the king, the most powerful man in the land has given you a direct order. To disobey him meant that you would draw his ire. And he had power to do great harm to you and to your family. But these two courageous women feared God more than they feared man, no matter how powerful he might be. And so, in Exodus 1, 17 through 21, we see how

these two bold and courageous women responded to Pharaoh's order.

But the midwives feared God and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but let the male children live. So the king of Egypt called the midwives and said to them, why have you done this? And let the male children live. The midwives said to Pharaoh, see their boldness, because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women, for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife comes to them. So God dealt well with the midwives and the people multiplied still and grew very strong.

And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families. And so from this short passage of scripture, we learn several things. First of all, we learn that God is to be feared more than any man, no matter how powerful that man might be. And any law that contradicts God's word, any law that would cause God's people to sin against him is a law that should not be obeyed and a law that they should work to have abolished. The second thing we learn here is that life is sacred. Pharaoh was inconvenienced by the amount of children by the amount of children the Israelites were having, and he wanted to get rid of them. Later, he'd give an order to throw all of the male children into the Nile River. To him, to him, no life was more important than his own life. But these women were willing to die to protect the lives of the innocent because they knew, as God has said, that life is sacred. Third, we see that action must be taken to protect the innocent. These women committed an act of civil disobedience.

[7 : 52] They didn't resign from their positions to avoid a difficult situation. God put them in that situation to protect the lives of the innocent, and they took action to do that. Finally, we see that with obedience to God comes blessing. They obeyed God, and he blessed them and those around them as a result.

The slaughter of innocent lives continues today in our nation. Since our nation legalized abortion in 1973, over 60 million children have been torn from their mother's wombs. And so today, again, many pastors are standing behind many pulpits this Sunday calling God's people to demonstrate courage and action, much like those two bold and courageous Hebrew midwives.

That we must care, that we must not give up, and that we must also not be silent as this modern day Holocaust continues to take place before our very eyes. The unborn don't have a voice, but you and I do. And it is yours and my God-given obligation to declare that life is sacred and that abortion must come to an immediate end. And so I pray that as we look at God's word today, you will be convicted and you will be encouraged by God to speak and to act on behalf of those who cannot defend themselves. While you won't find the word abortion in the Bible, that does not mean that Scripture is silent on this issue.

And so we're going to look again at two psalms this morning. One that defines clearly that life is sacred. And another that reveals that God is angry towards cultures that shed the blood of children. And so this is the main idea for this morning's sermon. God says that life is sacred and killing children is evil. While abortion is a divisive issue in our country today, it should not be a divisive issue in our churches. God's word is clear. As a Christian, your allegiance must be to Christ and Christ alone. And if your feelings, your opinions, or your political affiliations get in the way of that, then you must put those things aside and not sit idly by saying and doing nothing as so many children are being put to death in our nation. And so the first thing that we see from our text in Psalm 136 is this, life is sacred to God. Life is sacred to God. You see, mankind, the Bible says, is unlike any other creature that God made. We did not evolve from animals. We instead were created in God's image.

[11 : 27] Genesis 1, 27 through 28 tells us as much. So God created man in his own image. In the image of God, he created him male and female, he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.

Human beings are unlike any other being in the world that God created. We have the ability to reason.

We are rational and intellectual beings. We are emotional as well. We communicate and we know what it means to love. We have a conscience. We are moral beings with an understanding of what is right and what is wrong. And as the pinnacle of God's creation, we have a unique and a special relationship to him that no other created being enjoys. We were created to worship God. And in worshiping God and in knowing him, we find as human beings, the greatest fulfillment and joy that there is to be experienced in life. God is the creator of human life and it is a sacred thing to him.

As we turn our focus to Psalm 139 now, I want you to see some things in this passage that reveal this truth that life is sacred to God. First of all, it tells us that God is the giver of life in verse 13. Let me read that again. For you formed my inward parts. You knitted me together in my mother's womb. David is the human author of this psalm whom the Holy Spirit inspired. And he declares in verse 13 that the life that he was given to him by God when God formed him inside of his mother's womb. David makes the point here that before his mother gave birth to him, before air filled his lungs for the very first time as a newborn baby, he was given life by God. And he states that God was intimately involved throughout that process. He says, you formed me. He says, you knit me together. Here we learn that God providentially watches over the development of the child in the womb. They are human beings, and they are beings created in his own image. And the Bible says that murdering human beings is a front to God's authority as the one who is the giver and who is also the taker of life. Genesis 9, 6 says this, whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed. For God made man in his own image. Therefore, abortion is an affront to God's sovereign authority as the giver of life.

Life is given by God, and it's up to him to give it and to take it to way as he so chooses. But to treat it as if it is nothing to kill for the sake of inconvenience is to spit on his image and is to deny his authority as the giver and author of life. Next, we see that human life is an awesome work of God. [15:42] In verse 14, David says, I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works. My soul knows it very well. In my office here at church, I have a sculpture, a wood carving of a wood duck. And it was given to me by a man in my previous church a long time ago as a gift when I graduated from seminary. And he was so skilled. He could make amazing things with his hands. I know that I was amazed to see one of his pieces of work there at Fort Leavenworth at the officer's college in Eagle that was very large that he crafted himself. And when I went into his house, I was always amazed by all of the things that his hands had made. And so David is doing something kind of similar here. He's marveling at the work of God's hands. And if you know the science surrounding what happens at conception and in the womb as a baby is formed, you know that it is a marvelous and amazing work of God. The science proves that what is conceived and takes form in the mother's womb is a life. And it's a wonderful work of God. At just three weeks after conception, the baby's heart is formed and it starts beating. At six weeks, the diaphragm is formed and the four chambers of the heart are fully formed and the first brain waves can be detected. At seven weeks, the baby's hands and feet and arms and legs and its major organs are detectable. At this stage, it's possible for the baby even to hiccup in the womb. I remember when

Danny was pregnant with Jack and seeing her tummy rise suddenly and fall, it was Jack hiccuping in her womb. At eight weeks, major systems of the body are in place and the baby will recoil from a pinprick.

At nine weeks, the baby sometimes will suck its thumb. At ten weeks, the baby develops its own unique set of fingerprints. And at 12 weeks, the baby has taste buds and can even smile. The whole process from conception to birth is truly an amazing thing to behold. It's incredible to see the process by which a human life takes form inside of a mother's womb. Human life is an amazing work of God.

And we know from the scripture that God, thirdly, designed the womb to be a place of safety for the unborn. Verse 15 says, My frame was not hidden from you when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Scripture repeatedly says that a mother's womb is a place that God designed to be a place where He is at work. It is designed to be a place where a baby can grow safely while it is tucked away inside of its mother. If someone disrupts that safety and harms that child, it angers God, as Exodus 21, 22 through 24 point out. There it says, When men strive together and hit a pregnant woman so that her child come out, but there is no harm, the one who hit her shall surely be fined as the woman's husband shall oppose on him, and he shall pay as the judges determine. But if there is harm, then you shall pay life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.

Now, think about this too. Jesus, the Son of God, came to us by a miraculous conception of the Holy Spirit in Mary's womb, his mother. The plan of salvation that existed from eternity past was brought to fruition with Jesus emptying Himself of all of His divine prerogatives, adding a human nature to His divine nature, and being safely placed, tucked away inside of His mother's womb. Where there, He, like you and I, safely grew until the right time for Mary to give birth to Him. That the Son of God came to earth, not as an already fully formed man or even a fully formed child, but

as we do, reveals once more that what God thinks about life in the womb. That again, it is to be a safe place for a life that He says is very sacred to Him. And then fourthly, from Psalm 136 in this text, we learn this, that God recognizes the unborn as a person. He recognizes the unborn as a person. Look at verse 16.

[21 : 27] Your eyes saw my unformed substance. In your book were written every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them. Before David was David. In the eyes of the world, God knew him. God had a plan for him and had foreordained the days of his life. He wasn't just a clump of cells with potential. He was a person whom God had a plan for. The abortion debate is centered around this argument. Is the life inside the womb a person or not? But honestly, what else could it be?

What else could it be but a person? As we saw from the passage in Exodus, God, the giver of life, has determined that the unborn are persons with rights. And it's a denial of God's Word and a denial of scientific evidence to suggest that the life formed in the womb is anything other than a human life. And a human life is a person. It's a personal being. And though it can't speak, it has a right to life. To say that the life inside the womb is not a person is truly just an excuse used by abortion advocates so that they don't have to admit the truth that they really know. See, man doesn't determine who is and who is not a person. God determines that because, once more, he is the giver. He is the author of human life. You know, it's interesting to me too, whenever a celebrity gets pregnant or even a princess gets pregnant, the whole world goes into a frenzy trying to figure out how much they can learn about how much they can learn about this unborn child. They treat it very much like a person because to them, it's someone of value. But when it comes to children that are aborted, in the eyes of the world, they don't care. They deny that person, personhood, because of the inconvenience it brings to the mother or the father or potentially, in their eyes, the rest of the culture. If it's unwanted, if the child is something they think that is an inconvenience, they discard it for the sake of their own convenience. The Bible says that life is sacred to God. That's clear. And it also reveals, as we see in Psalm 106, that God despises the shedding of a child's blood. God despises the shedding of a child's blood. Now, as I turn your attention to Psalm 106, let me first say that this Psalm begins and ends with the phrase, praise the Lord. There's a lot of pain and there's a lot of sorrow in this Psalm.

But as the Psalmist reveals, there is still much and many reasons to praise God. And that's the overall goal of this Psalm. To inspire praise of God. So, the Psalmist wants us to see God as praiseworthy and good and loving as we read this Psalm. And that includes our attitude towards Him in the ways that He judges as revealed in the text. Beginning in verse 7, the Psalmist records a downward spiral of sinfulness. A downward spiral of sorrow. As Israel continually rebelled and rejected God.

And as they continually rejected His word. And as they continually rejected their identity as His people. And that spiral of rebellion. And that spiral of rebellion. That compounding of sin led them to do the unthinkable as we read in verses 36 through 39. They served their idols which became a snare to them.

They sacrificed their sons and their daughters to the demons. They poured out innocent blood. The blood of their sons and daughters whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan. And the land was polluted with blood.

[26 : 29] Thus, they became unclean by their acts. And they played the whore in their deeds. Israel's downward spiral of rebellion, jealousy, idolatry, desiring sin, and despising God's good gifts led to unbelief. And grumbling. And assimilation with the sinful cultures that were around them.

And then with that, the abandoning of the one true God whose image they were created in so that they could serve other gods created in the image of sinful mankind. This downward spiral of sin and sorrow led them to dehumanize humanity. They killed their children. And in sacrificing their children, the psalmist points out that what they were really doing is that they were truly participants in demonic activity.

And so we see from verses 36 through 39 that it's demonic forces that are behind child sacrifice. Demonic forces are behind child sacrifice. In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul used this teaching from the Old Testament to clarify what was truly going on in the temple sacrifice that were taking place in the city of Corinth. In 1 Corinthians chapter 10 verses 19 through 20, he says, what do I imply then? The food offered to idols is anything or that an idol is anything? No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice, they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants

with demons. In other words, whatever system the world comes up with, whether it's a religious system, or a secular one, if it obscures the truth of God as revealed in his word and contradicts that revealed truth, it will lure people to seek happiness by making sacrifices to that system which defaces and destroys God's image. Behind that system, the Bible says, are demonic forces. And their goal is to degrade God and to destroy God's people. Think about it like this. Satan is willing to send millions of millions of millions of millions of millions of millions of millions of men and women in this world. In the Old Testament, Israel was depicted as God's wife. And when they committed idolatry, God said that they were in reality committing adultery against him who was their husband. And just as the last thing a cheating wife would want would be to conceive a child through an adulterous relationship, so too the idolatrous demands of the evil systems of this world desire the elimination of babies for the sake of convenience. To make murderers of mothers and fathers and men and women and devalue human life which was given by God and is created in his image. I believe that you and I should see the children being aborted today as our own children. They are innocent of any crime deserving of death. Their bodies are being torn apart.

And their blood is being shed. And we should understand that behind the abortion industry, behind the attitude that sacrifices children for convenience, behind the attitude that thinks the choice to choose death rather than life, behind the violence committed against the weakest persons in the world who do not have a voice to speak for themselves are demonic forces who delight in the death of unborn children. And they delight in the guilt-ridden mothers and fathers and grandparents who are forever burdened by that irreversible choice.

[31 : 35] John Piper said, In sacrificing our children to the demons of deceit, on the altar of abortion, in the temple of Planned Parenthood, we cheat on God and give our heart to another.

Now that's the downside of Psalm 106 as it relates to child sacrifice, which abortion is. But it's not the main point of the psalm. There is another thread that runs throughout this psalm and it's this, that God is merciful to those who repent of their sin.

There is a thread of divine mercy that runs throughout this entire psalm. This isn't so much a psalm about man's sin, but how great God's mercy is.

And that is what we desperately need, isn't it? Whether you have had one abortion or you have had many abortions, or if you have been indifferent to the issue altogether, let me take you through what the rest of this psalm tells us about God, the giver of life.

In verse 1, we read, Praise the Lord. Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, for His steadfast love endures forever.

[32 : 56] There we see that God's love is steadfast. That's great news for us. Now look at verse 8. Though His people rebelled, because God's love for them was steadfast, we read, Yet He saved them for His name's sake, that He might make known His mighty power.

And then look at verse 10. So He saved them from the hand of the foe, and redeemed them from the power of the enemy. Then down in verse 23, we read that, Therefore He said He would destroy them, had not Moses, His chosen one, stood in the breach before Him to turn away His wrath from destroying them.

So God here, at this point, relented of His righteous judgment when Moses interceded in prayer.

Likewise, in verse 30, we read, Then Phinehas stood up and intervened, and the plague was stayed.

God responded in mercy to Phinehas' zeal for the Lord, and the people were spared as a result.

Then in verses 43 through 46, we read that, Many times He delivered them, but they were rebellious in their purposes, and were brought low through their iniquity.

Nevertheless, He looked upon their distress when He heard their cry. For their sake, He remembered His covenant, and relented according to the abundance of His steadfast love.

[34 : 17] He caused them to be pitied by all those who held them captive. In other words, time and time again, the people deserved to be destroyed.

But God passed over their sins, including their sin of child sacrifice. How could He do that? How could God be so merciful?

Well, look at Romans 3, 23 through 25 with me. The Bible says, All have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God.

That's all of us. Every single one. And are justified by His grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forth as a propitiation by His blood to be received by faith.

This was to show God's righteousness because in His divine forbearance, He had passed over former sins. So the reason God could forgive repentant sinners back then in Old Testament times, and today, for the sin of abortion, for the sin of indifference to it, and for all of our other sins is because of the sacrificial death of His Son, Jesus Christ.

[35 : 51] Jesus' death for sin reveals that God does not just sweep our sin under the rug or take it lightly. Forgiving your sin cost the life of His Son.

And so that was their hope. And that is our hope. By faith in Christ, we receive Him as payment for our sins.

And we are forgiven. And our relationship with our Creator is restored. 1 John 1.9 says this, If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

And so listen, if you've had a role in an abortion, there is hope for you. There is hope for you. If you repent and if you will turn to Christ, the Bible says, we've read, He will forgive you. He will cleanse you of your sin and its guilt.

[37 : 08] He wants to. And so I ask you, will you turn to Him? Will you receive His mercy today? The psalm also reminds those of us who have received God's mercy through faith in Christ and who are recipients of His steadfast love and who have eternal life which was secured by the blood of Jesus Christ, that it is our duty to stand up for what is right.

And so we must be resolved to preserve justice by acting righteously. In the case of abortion, you as a Christian are commanded to stand for the weak.

you as a Christian are commanded to speak for the voiceless. You as a Christian are commanded to promote justice and righteousness.

And like God, you as a Christian are commanded to show mercy and grace to those who repent of their sins. In these things, we must pray for God's help and we also must be people of action.

And so the main point of application is that you and I, we must speak the truth, we must seek restoration, and we must act to put an end to abortion.

[38 : 45] Be a person who speaks the truth, be a person who seeks restoration, and be a person who acts to put an end to child sacrifice in our nation and in our world.

And so there are three application questions, things that I encourage you to do, not just now, not just for time, but always.

First of all, I ask, will you commit to pray for the unborn? Will you pray for the Supreme Court's upcoming decision? I'm sure many of you have been tracking that, and I ask that you would be praying for each one of those justices, and that they would do justice in regard to this issue, and that they would not be afraid of what man might do to them or say about them for doing the right thing.

second, will you take action by volunteering for a pro-life organization? Will you take action to encourage young mothers to have their children, no matter the circumstances surrounding their pregnancy?

Will you share the gospel, and will you be merciful to those who have aborted their children? Mothers and fathers and those who have played a role in abortion are not our enemy.

[40 : 16] It's the evil system of this world. It's our job to declare the truth to them, to speak it to them in love, to share the gospel with them in hopes that they will know Christ as we have come to know him, and that they, like we have, will be forgiven of their sins.

And so we must not malign them, but care about them and speak the truth of God to them in a loving way, that they would be turned from their sin and repent.

And then finally, will you consider adoption and fostering children in your home? You know, one of the things that we hear from those who are pro-choice is that they ridicule the church for saying how much they care about the lives of the unborn, but then they will say that we're not doing much for lives right now, the orphan or the foster child who is in a difficult situation.

And so I encourage you, the Bible says that we, as God's people, must care for orphans and widows. And so I encourage you to think about adopting a child, to think about opening up room in your house, a safe place to bring in a foster child who is in a difficult situation and let the light of Christ shine through you to them.

And in this way, we will testify to the world that yes, we truly care about those who are weak. We desire to speak for those who do not have a voice and we will act on behalf of those who are unable

to take action for themselves.

[42 : 00] This is a big issue. This is a major thing that we cannot lose sight of and so please, I encourage you to not just ask yourself these questions and then tuck away those application questions away and forget about them.

Be a person who prays, not just about this issue, but all the time. Be a person who volunteers to do the work of a Christian, no matter what that might be and be a person who stands up for those who are weak and who takes a stance against wrong and who seeks to right it by speaking the truth in love but doing so boldly and courageously that people would know that life is sacred and to kill children is to spit in the image of God.

Let's take this seriously. Will you pray with me? Heavenly Father, we pray that we would be people of the word. Lord, I pray that we would take seriously what your word says about the unborn.

God, we know that they don't have a voice to be able to speak for themselves. They aren't able to take action against what is happening to them in abortion clinics throughout the world.

And so, God, I pray that we would be their voice and I pray that we would take action for them.

Lord, we pray for our Supreme Court justices in the matter that they are reviewing.

[43 : 34] God, we pray that the result of their decision would mean the end of abortion in our country. Lord, we pray for mothers and fathers, those who have taken a role in having or participating or encouraging an abortion.

Lord, I pray that they would know that you are a merciful, kind, and gracious heavenly father and that the guilt that they feel, Lord, if they would just turn to you and repent would be taken away as you would clothe them in the righteousness of your son and that they would be justified before you not just of that sin but of all sin.

And so, Lord, we pray that we would be people, again, of the word and that we would do and we would say what needs to be said no matter what, the personal cost might be that, Lord, we would be people who fear God and not man.

In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.