

Why We Are Pro-Life at HPBC

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[0:00] Psalm 82, verses 2-4.

How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked? Give justice to the weak and the fatherless. Maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute.

Rescue the weak and the needy. Deliver them from the hand of the wicked. Ephesians 5, 11-13.

Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.

For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible.

And God had a blessing to the reading of his word. Would you please be seated? So this morning is Sanctity of Human Life Sunday in many Southern Baptist churches around the nation.

[1:10] We are doing just what we read. We are seeking to speak for those who do not have a voice. And to expose the darkness of abortion.

I know that I've told you before that in my personal Bible study time, I've been reading through the book of Matthew. Matthew. And it's amazing to me how even though you've read a passage before, and you've read it many times before, that you can come to God's word again and again and read those familiar passages and have different things come out to you or see different things in those passages that you hadn't really seen before or thought about before.

And so when I was reading through Matthew chapters 1 and 2, I was struck by Joseph, the kind of man that he was.

Joseph doesn't take up much space in Scripture, but the information that God's word gives to us about him tells us a lot about the kind of man that he was.

Typically, when Christians talk about Joseph, they focus almost exclusively on what they don't believe about him.

[2:31] And we rightly insist that Joseph was not the biological father of Jesus, that Mary was a virgin when she conceived Jesus, and it was through the power of the Holy Spirit that that happened, and there was no contribution by any man to his conception.

And so it is critical that we maintain that very important doctrine, that we defend the full humanity and the full deity of our Lord Jesus Christ and his sinlessness.

But there is so much more to say about Joseph than this. In his adoption of Jesus, Joseph rightly identified as Jesus' father.

We like to refer to him as Jesus' stepfather. But legally speaking, Joseph was the guardian or the adopted father of Jesus, our Lord.

Matthew and Luke trace Jesus' lineage to Abraham and David. Matthew's genealogy focused on Joseph and how the royal line was passed to him through his legal father.

[3:39] It is through Joseph that Jesus, the legal heir to the covenant promises of the Old Testament, is revealed there. Jesus did not share Joseph's DNA, but he claimed him as his adopted father, obeying Joseph perfectly and even following for a short time in his vocation.

What an amazing responsibility this man was given. Think about it. To raise the Son of God. Could you imagine being entrusted with such a massive and important responsibility?

And so you guys are no doubt familiar with the story when Joseph found out that Mary was with child and that that child was not his, that he had full legal rights in that culture to abandon her and to leave her alone with the child that she bore.

But instead an angel came to him and explained everything to Joseph. And Joseph obeyed God the Father by becoming a father himself.

And I bring that to your attention this morning on Sanctity of Human Life Sunday because I believe that Joseph sets a pattern for us to follow in our day and in our age.

[4:59] When Jesus was an infant, Joseph protected him from King Herod and King Herod's rage to eliminate all threats to his throne, to his power.

If you'll recall, when the wise men did not return to Herod to tell him where Jesus was, that Herod ordered the execution of all male children two years and younger in the town of Bethlehem.

Herod, in many ways, was like the forerunner to Planned Parenthood. In obedience, though, Joseph left everything behind and he took Jesus and he took Mary and he took them to Egypt where they lived in safety from Herod and his desire to kill Jesus.

Joseph, in his obedience, demonstrated what his other son, James, would call pure and undefiled religion in James 1.27. He says, Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this, to visit orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

Unfortunately, though, we live in a society that is more characterized by Herod than it is by Joseph. Killing unborn children as a matter of convenience rather than seeking their protection.

[6:22] And promoting their well-being. And it isn't just our society, but this is true of the rest of the world that we live in.

They embody the character of Herod, not Joseph. As of December 31st, 2018, the World Health Organization reports that there have been nearly 42 million abortions performed over the course of this past year.

By contrast to that, 8.2 million people died last year from cancer. 5 million people died from smoking. And 1.7 million people died from AIDS.

That number is even more staggering when you compare it to the fact that 37 million people were killed during World War I. More children were aborted last year than people were killed in World War I.

Abortion has and continues to be a very divisive issue in our country. Statistics say that 58% of Americans think that it should be legal.

[7:37] And while that's a majority, it doesn't make it right. After all, there was a time in our nation's history when the majority believed that it was right to own slaves.

We live in very divisive times. We live in times of identity politics where anyone who holds a different view from you is seen and treated as an enemy.

And so instead of listening to one another and having civil discourse and conversation over the issues that divide us, instead we throw out false accusations against one another.

Much like the Pharisees would do to Jesus saying that he was demon-possessed, which obviously was not true. They couldn't stand to hear what he had to say. I have a pretty good feeling about where most of you stand on this important issue today.

And so it would be easy to come here this morning and preach to the choir. But I don't want to do that today. I want to take a little bit different of an approach.

[8:43] I've heard the arguments presented from those who are pro-choice, as I have no doubt that you probably have too. And so I want to address those arguments.

But I want to do so not by name-calling, but with answers. But first, before we do that, I want to give an explanation for why Highland Park Baptist Church is pro-life and why we take this issue so seriously.

And so during the course of this message, I also, though, want to give hope to those of you who may have had an abortion or who have supported that practice in one shape or form.

And so here's the main idea for this morning's message. At Highland Park Baptist Church, we are pro-life because the Bible says that the unborn are human beings who bear the image of God.

This truth is supported by science and reason. The Bible says that taking the life of an innocent human being is murder, and so abortion must be stopped.

[9:49] You must understand in all of this that the most critical issue in this debate hinges on just one question.

And that question is whether or not the unborn are human beings. The whole argument hinges on that one question. Do you consider the unborn human or not?

If they're not human, there's not need for much reasoning to stop abortion. But, if they are human, then the reasoning behind the pro-choice position falls completely apart.

But first, I want you to see that HBPC, Highland Park Baptist Church, is pro-life because the Bible says that the unborn are human beings who bear the image of God.

This we believe as a church. For the Christian, the Bible is God's word.

[10 : 59] To the Christian, the Bible is the source of all truth. And so, as a result of that, our thoughts, our opinions, and our emotions are never to come before God's word and what God's word has said.

They are never to supersede what God has revealed to us through His word. And so, in the Baptist Faith and Message 2000, this is what we affirm.

This is what we believe about God's word. The Holy Bible was written by men, divinely inspired, and is God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction.

It has God's for its author, salvation for its end, and truth without any mixture of error for its matter.

Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy.

It reveals the principles by which God judges us and therefore is and will remain to the end of the world the center of Christian union and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried.

[12 : 08] All Scripture is a testimony to Christ who is Himself the focus of divine revelation. This we affirm. So, in answering all of life's questions, the Christian must first ask this question of him or herself.

What does the Bible have to say about this? What has the word of God said about this? Now, the objection is sometimes made that the Bible never specifically addresses the issue of abortion.

And while that's technically true, there are, however, many Scriptures that explicitly state that God views the unborn as human beings who bear His image.

Remember that this is what the argument hinges on. Are the human, are the unborn human beings? human beings. And so, I believe that Scripture makes it abundantly clear that God views them as human beings.

On the last day of creation, God said, let us make man in our image, in our likeness. That's so important. In our likeness.

[13 : 22] Thus, He finished His work with a personal touch. The Bible says that God formed Adam, the first man, out of the dust. And then He breathed life into him.

Only with man did God share His own breath. And so, humanity is unique among all of God's creation. Having both a material body and an immaterial soul.

Genesis chapter 1 records the creation of the earth and the living things that are contained within it. If you remember, God creates the vegetation that sprouts out of the dry ground.

Then He creates all the animals that live in the waters and the birds that fly in the air. Then He creates the livestock and the creeping things and the beasts of the earth. And the Bible says that they were all made according to their kinds.

That phrase, according to their kinds, occurs ten times. And it's done intentionally in order to contrast the great difference between those things, those creatures, and human beings.

[14 : 34] After God makes the animal kingdom, He breaks the mold when He makes man. The animals were made according to their kinds. But something very different happens when God creates man.

The Bible does not say that man is made according to his kinds. Neither is man created according to any other kind among the living creatures. Whatever similarities there are between man and other creatures, they do not belong to the same kind.

Man is completely unlike any other living creature. Why? Because as the Bible says, man is made according to God's kind. He is made in the image of God.

Man, like God, is a personal being. God Himself, as the Bible later reveals, is three persons all sharing one divine essence, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Human persons are created beings and in that regard they are similar and they share those similar characteristics with God but with no other created being. But what is most important about human persons is their likeness to God.

[15 : 53] This likeness is so very special that it sets them apart from all other creations that God had made. Man is not made according to their kinds, he is made according to God's kind.

In other words, man is made in the image and in the likeness of God, His creator. God is made a very special and isn't that very clear to see as you look at the rest of the world, isn't it very clear to see as you observe other creatures in this earth that we are so much different.

We are intellectual beings. We have the ability to reason and to rationalize. We are creative, we are industrious, we are artistic.

When we invent machines, when we write books, when we name animals, when we paint landscapes and calculate sums, what we are doing is proclaiming the fact that we are made in God's image.

We are moral beings. Even though we are fallen beings, we have the law of God written on our hearts. We write laws. We recoil from evil.

[17 : 05] We praise good behavior. We feel guilty when we do something wrong. When we do these things, we are proclaiming that we have been made in the image of God.

We are social beings. We were created for fellowship. We were made for community. And so we reflect the triune God in this way. We are emotional beings.

When a couple gets married, when a family comes together, when we gather for church, we are proclaiming that we have been made in the image of God. Tragically, the first man and woman turned away from God and fell into sin, seeking to become more like God, to be able to choose for themselves what is good and evil.

And the image of God was defaced. Their descendants would likewise bear this defaced image, which is the case for you and I. yet the image of God was not entirely lost.

And what remains is still sufficient to sustain the sanctity of human life that is grounded in the truth that we are made according to God's kind. Genesis 9-6 shows that taking innocent human life is an attack on the image of God, so that it must be punished by death.

[18 : 25] Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed. For God made man in his own image. So according to the Bible, all human beings are image bearers of God, and intentionally killing an innocent human being is forbidden by him.

But again, we must remember that the argument over abortion hinges on the question of whether or not the unborn are human beings. And so we have Jeremiah 1-5 that tells us that God knows us before he forms us in the womb.

Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you. And before you were born, I consecrated you. I appointed you a prophet to the nations. Psalm 139, verses 13-16 speak of God's active role in our creation and formation in our mother's womb.

For you formed me, for you formed me, 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.

[19 : 40] In your book were written every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them. Then in Exodus 21, verses 22-25, we see that there is a death penalty that is prescribed for someone who causes the death of a baby in the womb as for someone who commits murder.

They're held to the same level of humanity, right? Exodus 21, 22-25, when men strive together and hit a pregnant woman so that her children come out, but there is no harm, the one who hit her shall surely be fined as the woman's husband shall impose on him and he shall pay as the judge determines.

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.

So you see that God sees the unborn as human beings and I could go on and on, but I think this is pretty good. I think it's pretty clear, though it's brief, that Christians should be pro-life.

Our church is pro-life because God's word says that the unborn are human beings. Secondly, Highland Park Baptist Church is pro-life because science and reason support the Bible's teaching that the unborn are human beings.

[21 : 12] At the moment when a human sperm penetrates a human ovum or egg, a new identity comes into existence. They call this the zygote.

It's the name of the first cell that is formed from conception or at conception. And again, the question to determine whether abortion is morally right or wrong hinges on whether or not that cell is human.

Scientists define an organism as a complex structure of interdependent elements constituted to carry on the activities of life by separately functioning but mutually dependent organs.

So the human zygote meets this definition with ease. Once formed, it initiates a complex sequence of events to ready it for the continued development and its continued growth.

The zygote acts immediately and decisively to initiate a program of development that will, if unhindered, uninterrupted by accident or disease or external intervention, will proceed seamlessly through formation of the body, then the birth, then childhood, adolescence, maturity, aging, and ending in death.

[22 : 32] This coordinated behavior is the hallmark of an organism. Thus, the scientific evidence is quite plain that at the moment of conception, a new entity is formed with its own unique DNA unlike anybody alive in the world, unlike anybody who's ever lived in this world.

It is human. It is alive. Dr. Maureen Kondik is a professor of neurobiology at the University of Utah and she says, embryos are not merely collections of human cells but living creatures distinct from a group of cells.

Embryos are capable of growing, maturing, maintaining a physiological balance between various other organ systems, adapting to changing circumstances, and repairing injury.

Mere groups of human cells do nothing like this under any circumstances, she concludes. Some defenders of abortion will concede this point but then they'll make the argument that the entity in the womb is not yet a person.

But you've got to understand that science cannot determine that. Personhood has nothing to do with science.

[23 : 56] It has everything to do with politics and philosophy. To deny personhood to the embryo is to say in effect that it is property of another which means that it doesn't have equal rights.

And to me that sounds a lot like slavery. When other human beings were treated as property and they were denied equal rights, at the moment of conception a human life is formed.

That human life bears the image of God. It's a person not property. It has a right to life and taking its life is murder.

So I want to spend the rest of my time answering the questions, the objections that often are brought against those who are pro-life. And the first one we often hear is, well, only women can speak on this issue.

And this is often hurled at a male pro-life advocate, someone like myself, because the discussion touches on issues that affect women's bodies and not men's bodies.

[25 : 19] That's the argument that they make. But again, the issue centers on whether or not the unborn are human and whether or not it is right or wrong to intentionally kill them.

Arguments don't have gender, and so it makes no difference what the gender of the person is who is making the argument. Additionally to this, there are millions of women who are pro-life.

In fact, women don't share the same view on abortion. And in fact, statistics show that women are more pro-life than men. So if only women can speak on this issue, then let's listen to the majority of what women have to say about this issue.

It's not a good argument to make. Secondly, abortion, they'll say, needs to be legal so that it's safe for mothers. The argument for this is based upon a narrative that goes something like this.

Well, back in the 1970s, women were dying by the thousands during abortions that had to be performed in some back alley. Then Roe versus Wade happened, and now women are much safer than they were back then.

[26 : 33] The truth of the matter, though, is that maternal death rates had been steadily declining from 7,267 to 780 in the years between 1942 and 1972.

And of those 780 deaths in 1972, 140 of them were related to abortion, but they also throw miscarriage into that number at that time. So the idea that abortion was overwhelmingly common back then and dangerous is false.

Next, you'll often hear the argument made, well, I have a right to my own body. And no one is arguing against that. But the question is, does your right to your body include taking the life of another for the sake of your convenience?

Aren't there competing rights at stake if that's the case? What about the rights of the unborn child? If you remember, advocates of slavery doubled down on it based upon similar reasonings in the Dred Scott decision of 1857.

In that decision, they admitted that slaves had a right to freedom, but they argued that the slave owners had a greater right to their own property. The Supreme Court justices in the Dred Scott case reasoned tragically that the right to properly supersede the rights of the slaves to their freedom was okay.

[28:07] Treating them as less than human. In the question of abortion, we also have competing rights at stake. That of the mother's right to privacy and that of the child's right to live.

Are we going to follow the Dred Scott ruling and reduce people to property that can so easily be disposed of? The rights and safety of women are important, but so are the rights and safety of the unborn.

Finally, and there's many others, but I don't have time to tackle them all, but this is a common one. They say, well, what about situations of rape and incest?

And I'll tell you that many Christians are split over this one, but I don't think that they should be.

having said that, we must understand that this is a very, extremely painful situation.

situation. We should grieve with those who have been raped and with those who have to face this gut-wrenching decision of what to do with the child that has resulted from this interaction.

[29:32] abortion. Before I continue, I think that those who use these situations to advocate for abortion should be ashamed of themselves.

Over 90% of abortions performed today involve women who simply don't want to be pregnant anymore. And at the heart of the question, I believe, is how do we respond to pain and tragedy?

A woman in this situation might be saying, this baby came to me through the most horrific event in my life. Why should I be forced to bear the burden of something that only reminds me of that pain?

But I would say, when faced with tragedy, and I'll ask you, is the most healing path forward to push away all evidence of that pain?

Does that truly heal? Does that truly help? Is the child at fault for how it was conceived? is it right to impose capital punishment on the innocent child for the acts of its father?

[30:56] Is that where as a society we want to go? And then how do we as a civil society treat innocent human beings who remind us of painful events?

Is the answer to eliminate them altogether? You've got to understand when we answer this question that the issue isn't over whether or not rape is right or wrong because obviously rape is horrendous. And those who commit those heinous acts should be punished. And we certainly as a church, as Christians, stand on the side of women who have endured that kind of horrific physical, mental, and spiritual abuse.

Rape is never okay. It is never right. But again, that isn't the question. The question hinges on whether or not the unborn are human.

And if they are, do we punish our children for the sins of their parents? Is that right? You see, I don't believe that two wrongs make a right.

[32:09] So where do we go from here? first of all, I want to say to those of you who have had an abortion in the past or have supported that in the past that we serve a Savior who died so that He could cleanse us from our sins and make us whiter than snow.

And certainly it would be tragic if we tried to use this day to make things harder for you than they already are. And that is not the point. I want you to know with certainty that your baby is in heaven. And if you are a believer in Jesus Christ, then the Bible says you've been cleansed from all unrighteousness. pray. What else can we do?

Pray? How much or how often have you spent in prayer for the unborn, for our lawmakers, for the families who face these very difficult decisions and who are hearing from a world that it's okay.

If it's inconveniencing you, just get rid of it. Pray. Pray. Speak. Ephesians 5, 11, as we read at the beginning, we are called by God to expose lies and to combat that with the truth.

[33:41] And we're to speak the truth in love. But we cannot remain silent. That is not an option for Christians. Also, maybe consider that this is your calling.

God is wanting you to have a more active role in taking a stance against abortion and speaking out more against it.

And so maybe he's calling you to volunteer more of your time, more of your talents, more of your treasures to this cause. And so that goes along with the next thing, which is to join with others who are engaged in this conflict.

I think it's February 6th, there's a handout in your bulletin, there's going to be a rose day at the Capitol. I encourage you to go and be a part of that. Don't just speak, but show up.

Make your presence known and your voice heard. And here's one that I think that we need to do a much better job at. How about fostering and adopting children?

[34 : 45] children? We see that pure religion is this, right? To take care of orphans and widows. And I know that they do not have enough parents in the fostering system.

And I know that there are many children who would love to have a mom and dad. Maybe God is calling you to take them into your home.

And to be the type of parents that they didn't have. You know, the pro-life movement, the motto is don't kill them.

But I think the cry of the Christian goes one step further. Don't kill them. We want them. And if we start practicing what we preach in that way, the world will take notice.

And they'll take our arguments much more seriously. And then lastly, let's promote the family. 85% of women who have had an abortion in the U.S.

[35 : 57] are unmarried. So maybe one of the best things that I think that we can do to fight abortion is to fight for our families. Encourage our men to be the type of men that God has called them to be in their households.

Supporting our mothers and our fathers and our children. Doing all that we can to make sure that we are promoting the good of the family. There are many things that we can do, but I think the best place to start is to pray.

Maybe God is leading you to foster or to adopt. The place to begin would be to pray. Maybe God is calling you to speak out more in support of pro-life.

The best place to begin with that is to pray. Maybe this is your calling. You should begin pursuing that with prayer. And so I encourage you, if you would like, to come forward during our time of invitation and pray.

Pray for whatever God would have you do. Pray for the mothers right now and the unborn and their fathers who are contemplating an abortion. Pray for them.

[37 : 07] Pray that more Christians would stand up. That we would say, not only do we not want you to kill them, but we want those children. We will raise those children. We will be their mothers.

We will be their fathers. We will be