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Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York

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Life Chain Sunday 2017

Selected Scriptures

Prayer: *Father, again, I thank you for this day, I thank you for your grace. I just thank you for the fact that we can gather as we do each week in safety, that we can gather not fearing for our lives as so many of our brothers and sisters around the world do. Father, even today we are able to go out and peacefully protest which is something that not many other people in the world can do, and so we're just thankful for the freedoms that you've given to us. And Lord, this day is a day that we set aside to look at your cross, to look at what it is that you've done for us on the cross, and I pray that as we do that today in a kind of unique and different way, that you would give us the grace we need and the presence of your Holy Spirit to make this make sense. And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, it's the first Sunday of the month, and as we always do on the first Sunday of the month, we remember Christ and his cross. And Jesus on the night before he died he met with his disciples and there for the last time he celebrated a Passover supper with them

and Matthew 26 describes it. It says: *Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."* Jesus took bread and he took wine and he offered them up as symbols of his flesh and his blood and then he asked his disciples to eat the bread and drink the cup in order to symbolically eat his flesh and blood. And then he asked them and us to repeat the remembrance of his sacrifice on a regular basis, and this is what we call the Lord's table. And so we do this once a month. We do this by meditating on what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for us on the cross, by examining ourselves, by asking God's Holy Spirit to point out areas in us where he's convicting us of sin, by confessing that sin and then by participating in the elements as they come by. *John 6:53 says: So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you."*

Well, today is communion Sunday but it is also Life Chain Sunday and so we're going to deviate a little bit from our meditation on

the life of Christ in order to present instead an explanation about why we, as a church, are pro-life. Now you might say, well, isn't that political? I mean, isn't that politics? I mean, what's the deal with politics and the gospel? Well see, sometimes the gospel overshadows and even intersects with politics. I mean our presidential election marked a major split among evangelicals about what it means to be pro-life and some said it is important but not any more so than the environment or social justice, and in my view they could not be more mistaken. And so this morning I'd like to explain why being pro-life has everything to do with being a believer in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

You see, the most basic question that anybody can ask about ourselves is, well, why are we here? And that question was asked centuries ago by the authors of the *Westminster Catechism*, and the very first question they asked was: What is the chief end of man? And their answer according to scripture: The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. And that of course begs the next question. Okay, how do we do that? How do we glorify God? Well, God's glory is his character and his attributes made manifest. So glorifying God is manifesting in our own lives who God is and what he does. You see, God created only one creature to expressly demonstrate his character, and we are those creatures. When Jesus commanded us to *let your light so shine before others so*

that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven, he was telling us you are God's living billboards. So human beings in God's eyes are very, very big deals.

And probably the most basic answer to the question of who we are as creatures is found in the very beginning of the book of Genesis. God makes it clear that of all the creatures in all of creation there's only one who bears the "imago dei" and that is the very image of God. This is *Genesis 1:26*. It says: *Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.* I suggest to you that we mostly don't have a clue as to what a privilege we have been given. God says that we are of such an exalted nature due to the fact that we have been made in his image that at some point we are going to judge the world. God says we are going to judge and rule over angels. Paul in his letter to the Corinthians in *1 Corinthians* was astounded that these folks had been caught up in all of these earthly pursuits. They were even suing one another. And so he's writing to the Corinthians and he describes our destiny in that letter. This is what he says. This is *1 Corinthians 6:1*. It says: *If any of you has a dispute with*

another, do you dare to take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the Lord's people? Or do you not know that the Lord's people will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life!"

Now those four words uttered by Paul, *"we will judge angels,"* they may well be the reason behind Satan's rebellion and the fall of mankind. See, you have to understand that Satan was at one time the angel Lucifer. He wasn't just an angel, he was the highest angel. He was the highest created being there ever was. We can only speculate as to why Satan decided to rebel, but suffice it to say he wanted the position of highest authority amongst all of the angels. And perhaps learning that we human beings would be the only creatures created in God's image and that we would one day judge angels proved too much for Satan and perhaps it's what caused the rebellion. We do know that there has never been a greater fall from a higher height to a lower depth than that of the fall of Lucifer from heaven. The prophet Isaiah speaking about the King of Babylon draws an analogy from that king's fall to the fall of Satan, and he describes the five "I wills" of Satan that caused his fall. This is *Isaiah 14*. It says: *How you have fallen from heaven, morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to*

the earth, you who once laid low the nations! You said in your heart, "I will ascend to the heavens; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of Mount Zaphon. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High." Well one thing we do know, we know that God and his angels went to war with Satan and his angels, again perhaps over us. One thing we know for certain is that Satan and his angels lost. This is *Revelation 12:7*, it says: *Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down -- that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.*

Now I want you to picture yourself this morning as the devil. For some of you that's easier than for others, I suppose. I just want you to picture yourself and you're seething with rage and you're just enraged at having lost the most important battle you've ever undertaken. You have determined as the highest created being that you, too, were worthy of worship like God, and for that act of utmost pride and arrogance, you were cast out. Again, speaking of the King of Babylon, God describes the fate that awaits Satan. This is *Isaiah 14:9-11*. He says: *"Hell from beneath is excited*

about you, to meet you at your coming; it stirs up the dead for you, all the chief ones of the earth; it has raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. They all shall speak and say to you: 'Have you also become as weak as we? Have you become like us? Your pomp is brought down to Sheol and the sound of your stringed instruments; the maggot is spread under you, and worms cover you.' You see, as Satan, you see your fate described. I mean, you will go from the height of glory as the morning star to the very depths of degradation as this weak, broken prisoner of hell welcomed to a mattress of maggots with a cover of worms. And it's entirely possible that you hold us humans responsible for your fate.

So if you're Satan, what do you do? I mean, you've already lost the war. All that's left is a series of battles that can only give you the brief little taste of victory. You can't attack the victor, God himself, directly, and so you go for the very next best thing. You go for the creatures who bear the image of that God. You first take the form of a serpent and you enter into the very garden of Eden where the very first man and women to bear the image of God have been created and you tempt them to give up their perfection by denying their creator and eating the forbidden fruit. Well, we all know the rest is history. What I don't think we realize is how specifically Satan targets the image of God that we

bear and how he goes about his attacks. Jesus gave us real insight into how Satan operates in the description he gave us of him in *John 8:44*. This is how he describes Satan. He says: "*He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.*" Now according to Jesus, Satan is the polar opposite of truth.

Everything about him and his kingdom is a lie, and that lie gets promulgated as truth to any and all who are not protected by God's truth. You know, one of the most popular and I should say highly abused scriptures in all of the Bible is *Proverbs 29:18*. You probably all heard it, it says: *Where there is no vision, the people perish*. Can I tell you that that scripture is not talking about a plan or a goal or a vision or something that you have in your life and in your future. Instead God is speaking about the truth that is contained in scripture, and what he is telling us is if you go outside of that vision, outside of that truth, you will perish. I mean just as there are two separate kingdoms, the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness, there are also two separate groundings. One is in the truth and the other is in a lie. And if you don't capture the vision of truth in scripture, God is warning us you will perish, and he says that because we live on this earth which is under the rule of the very same angel who was thrown out of heaven and cast down to earth. You know we don't

realize it often but Satan is the ruler of planet earth. Jesus himself just before going to the cross referred to Satan in *John 12:31*, saying: *"Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out."* Well the ruler of the world is the lord of lies. And the lie is his primary weapon. And God is telling us that we are no match for his cleverness and we need to cling to God's vision as opposed to his lie. I mean the entire verse that we're talking about, *Proverbs 29* says: *Where there is no vision, the people perish: But he that keepeth the law, happy is he.* You see, the law is the word of God. It is the only truth that can expose the attacks of the rulers of this world on the image of God that we bear. And this morning I want to look at three different ways that the ruler of this world, at the way that he attacks the image of God. He attacks the image of God in its design, in its diversity and in its development.

And the first area of attack is in the area of design. And I think we all know the battlefield today. The battlefield today is gender. You see, God made man with a unique and complimentary design. Again *Genesis 1:26*: *Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in His own image; in the*

image of God He created him; male and female He created them. One of the most basic elements of God's design for us as his image-bearers is the complimentarity of maleness and femaleness. Each is incomplete without the other. And God made that clear in the words that we often speak at marriage ceremonies. *Ephesians 5:31* says: *For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.* You know, those words were originally spoken by God in the garden to Adam and Eve. So you know, if I'm Satan, I'm going to attack the image of God at its most basic level. And so I would begin the attack at the design level. And I would use my primary weapon which is the lie and I would attack the notion of maleness and femaleness and the beauty of the way they go together on every level, physically, mentally and spiritually. I would attack that as an idea that spawns patriarchy, misogyny and oppression, and I would describe gender differences as merely an artificial mental construct, one that needs to be overthrown by the power of Hollywood's persuasion along with the music industry and reality TV and you add to that the Supreme Court's re-interpretation of the law and what was once obviously a lie now becomes a truth, and it's a truth swallowed by millions. Because *where there is no vision, the people perish.* So now instead of male and female, if you're in Australia there's 33 different gender descriptions; Facebook has 51; ABC now defines 58. Gender is no longer biological and fixed.

It's attitudinal and fluid. God says in *Psalm 2: Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his anointed saying, "Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us."* He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision. You see because we no longer have the vision of truth, we have successfully burst the bonds of biology apart. It's a fact that each of us has millions and millions of copies of who we are in our DNA and every single cell tells us whether we are XY male or XX female. Now that truth itself is considered the lie, and the inventions of man with regard to gender is the new truth, and to say otherwise makes you a bigot.

I got a phone call just yesterday -- just yesterday afternoon from a man who used to attend our church who is now in another state, who's a teacher, and he teaches 14-year-olds. He teaches first -- I guess first year high school, and he's in a terrific quandary because he had a young man in his class named Eric who one day just showed up with a wig and a skirt and said, "I'm no longer Eric, I'm Gail." And so he also was informed that the laws of his state say you must treat Eric now as Gail. And so he's a believer and he's a Christian and he said, I don't know what to do. He said for me to say to this person who is obviously a boy wearing a dress and a wig

that you are now female is to lie not just to him and to my class but to myself, he said, and here's the problem. So far I've just referred to him by his last name, but eventually this is going to get to a point where either I get fired or I resign. If I get fired, I lose my pension. So this is not just something that's abstract and kind of out there and not -- nothing to be worried about. This is a man who's genuinely concerned as a believer in Christ, how do I do this? What do I do? These are real issues. God says: *Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!* See, Satan has successfully attacked the image of God we bear by attacking it at its design. But you know, God still has the ultimate weapon. It's the ultimate "but." It's *Romans 5:8: But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

Now next if I was Satan, I would also attack the image of God born by us humans in its diversity. And at its core, that is precisely what racism is, it is an attack on the image of God. Speaking of the racial divide between Jew and Gentile, God says this in *Ephesians 2:13*, he says: *But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law*

of commandments, expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. See, Jesus went to the cross to make us one new people, one new man instead of two, no longer subject to the demands of perfection because Christ himself has borne the cost of our imperfection by becoming our sin at the cross. Well, how dare we in any way try to divide that one man in terms of the color of his skin? I know you'd have to be hiding under a rock for the last few weeks to not know about what's going on in the NFL. You know it started a year ago when an NFL quarterback refused to stand for the national anthem, citing what he perceived as a climate of oppression against black people. And what followed and is continuing this year is a huge debate over the issues of racism, patriotism, and what is an appropriate form of protest. I know personally for me, I hate the fact that professional sports which was one of the few remaining areas in our country that used to not care if you were liberal or conservative, if you were Republican or Democrat, it's now been dragged into the political arena and at the center of all of this is Satan and his lie. You know, you go back to one of his greatest victories and that was slavery. Slavery was one of his greatest assets. I mean it was a sin, blatantly and directly against the image of God, and it's a sin whose consequences are still being felt even today. I mean I believe

this still is the greatest country in the world, but even the greatest country in the world is made up of sinful people. And every single person who has come to this country, whether you're European, whether you're Scandinavian or Asian, you all have one thing in common. We all came to this place, at least our ancestors did, because by the grace of God it was the place where freedom found its greatest expression. There is only one group of people: African Americans, who had no choice, who were brought here chained and sold like animals. That was a national sin of cosmic proportions, and it was demonically aimed at the image of God, and its affects on both sides have continued for centuries. There are folks in this church who still have to instruct their children how to dress and act if they ever get pulled over because they fear for their lives. And I clearly know cops who put their lives on the line every single day and they wonder if their sacrifice is worth the risk. And I know exactly who delights in pitting one group against the other. I mean, it's true, we are centuries from slavery, we've made tremendous progress, but understand, the reason why racism after hundreds of years is still a big problem in this country is because of what the enemy's about. It has more to do with who we are than many of us think we realize, because racism is inherently an assault on the imago dei. The enemy attacks the image of God in us because it doesn't look or act exactly like we do. You know, red and yellow, black and white, they're supposed to

be precious in his sight. But race and nationality are key elements the enemy uses to divide and separate us. There's a war between the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness and the prince of darkness wars against the image of God in us by falsely dividing us by race. He delights when the bearers of God's own image turn on each other based on nothing more than physical, cultural or ethnic differences. Listen to what Peter said in Acts 10:34. He said: *So Peter opened his mouth and said, "Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him."* Anyone means anyone. In 1 Samuel 16 it says: *For the LORD sees not as man sees: Man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart. Galatians 3:28 says: There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female for you are all one in Christ Jesus.* So how many ways does God have to say it? Racism is an attack on the imago dei. As gender confusion attacks its design, so racism attacks its diversity. And you know, both of these sins have been around since Adam. And until we see racism as a demonic attack, we will not give it the attention it deserves and we will continue to wallow in this sin. But again there's a "but." *But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

As the elders begin to distribute the bread, I would like us to

take just a couple of minutes as the bread is being distributed to consider the privilege, the privilege that we have been given. You bear the image of God. Also consider the responsibility that that privilege entails. I'd like you to also consider the warning that God gives about communion itself. It's contained in *1 Corinthians 11*. It says this: *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.* You know, I give this warning out each month as we go through communion service because it's so incredibly important. To enter into communion in an unworthy manner is to literally court disaster. And I tell folks all the time, if you're not absolutely convinced that you're a child of God, if you're not absolutely convinced you're part of the King's kingdom, if you haven't by faith trusted in Christ as your personal Savior, if you first need to be reconciled to your brother or sister before you bring your sacrifice to the altar, just pass the elements on. I say, you know, no one's going to look at you and no one's going to think you're strange or odd. They may in fact think you're wise. But on the other hand we make oftentimes the opposite mistake of thinking that somehow or other

we have to be spotlessly perfect in order to be worthy enough to receive communion. The enemy loves that mistake just as well. You see, being a child of the King doesn't mean that you don't sin and it doesn't mean that you never fail. It means that you recognize that the salvation that you have is a gift that God has given to you that no one is capable of earning by their behavior. I repeat this quote every month but it's worth repeating until everybody's got it stuck in their heads. It's Dane Ortlund who says: "In the kingdom of God the one thing that qualifies you is knowing that you don't qualify, and the one thing that disqualifies you is thinking that you do." It also means that when we fail we know that we have sinned and the reason why we know we've sinned is because God lives inside us, his Holy Spirit is convicting us and he grieves us, and we know as his children that we have a father who longs to forgive and cleanse us. God says in *1 John 1:9*: *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* So being a child of the King doesn't mean that we are spotless or sinless. It means that we understand that when we sin, we have an advocate with the Father, we have someone in heaven speaking out on our behalf. *1 John 2:1* says: *My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father -- Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.* And so we are able to take communion not because of our own righteousness but because we have his

foreign alien righteousness in us. It's not ours, it's his. But because we have his righteousness, we are now free to eat from his table. So if you love your Lord, don't deny yourself the privilege that Jesus purchased for you at the cost of his own blood. As I say, he lived the life we were supposed to live and then he died the death we all deserved to die in our place in order that we could be made worthy of heaven. So ask yourself this morning, am I a child of God? Am I saved by his blood and not my efforts? And do I give God the glory that he is due? Do I celebrate his design? Do I celebrate his diversity in the image that I bear? Take a moment to think on that.

1 Corinthians, the 11th chapter says: *For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you." Do this in remembrance of me. So take, and eat.*

Would the elders begin distributing the cup. I'm not a real big fan of bumper stickers. I mean I like to read them on other cars but I also make very quick snap judgments about the people in those cars when I read them. So I don't really want one on my car because I don't want people doing the same thing to me. I was at a pro-life dinner a ways back and I saw a bumper sticker that for the

first time I said I need to have that on my car. It was a very short and simple quote, and it was from President Ronald Reagan and it said, "I have noticed everyone who is for abortion has been born." That's all it says. And I thought if anybody objected to that, I could say is that true or is that not true, I mean, you can't debate it. Over the years I've given many, many different arguments against abortion, and this morning I want to give you yet another pro-life argument based on President Reagan's statement.

One thing that is inarguable in any discussion between those with a pro-life position and those who are pro-choice is that both participants in the argument are clearly alive. I mean I almost think right off the bat that I need to say nothing further than to point out the obvious fact that should end the argument before it ends -- before it begins. And what I want to argue is that if you're making any argument whatsoever, then clearly you're alive and that means that you have passed whatever fiscal, sociological or philosophical gauntlet there was during your mother's gestation and you somehow or other made it to that nine-month finish line. It's just striking to me that having made it safely in your own personal lifeboat to that destination of birth, aren't you then, if you're pro-choice, caught up in the process of kind of pulling up the gang plank, pulling in the life savers and making sure the ladders are up in order to make sure that somebody else in the

exact same position you were once in doesn't have the opportunity that you clearly and obviously had? I mean you can tell me a thousand different reasons why life is difficult for single moms and I understand that and sometimes it's extraordinarily difficult, and it's tough for women who want a career, for women who are struggling with a potential of some kind of birth defect but let me ask you, if this was your own mother facing whatever socioeconomic circumstance you could imagine, just consider for a minute what would have happened had she listened to the pro-choice argument in your case? You wouldn't be here. You wouldn't be here to make the case against life. So how can you argue to remove the chance of another human being to have what you already have without the very argument itself seeming like the height of selfishness? I got mine, now it's incumbent on me to make sure you don't get yours? We're not talking about money, we're not talking about property, we're not talking about opportunity. We're talking about life itself. It seems to me to be pro-choice is to deny for others what I've already received myself and that is simply the right to be born. It is the right that obviously trumps all other rights. I find it stunning that so many on the evangelical left seem so concerned about social justice and not as concerned about abortion when the ultimate social injustice is taking someone's life. Concerns about education and opportunity and racism and health, they really don't mean a thing to someone who's already dead. And

I have a hard time hearing arguments that put those issues over the issue of life itself. Once again we see the ruler of this world doing what he does best. Let me remind you what Jesus said. This is again *John 8:44* describing Satan: *"He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies."* You see, when it comes to attacking the image of God in his design and diversity, the enemy is quite happy to use the lie. And we see that we need to look to God's word for the truth to counter that lie. But when it comes to abortion, we find that the enemy combines the lie with his other defining characteristic. Again Jesus made it clear in *John 8:44*: *"He was a murderer from the beginning."* And murder is his answer to the developing image of God. I mean gender confusion and racism are awful sins but the victims of those sins still have a chance to escape. Not so with abortion. Listen to what *Proverbs 24* has to say about this. It says: *Rescue those who are being taken away to death. Hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter.* Now it's the next part of that verse that shows us why the Life Chain really matters. Let me give you very carefully this next part of that same verse, verse 12. It says: *If you say, "Behold, we did not know this," does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who keeps watch over your soul know it, and will he not repay man according to his work?* Some folks ask

what is the point of just standing around for an hour and a half holding up poster, I mean, do you really think you're going to change somebody's mind? I rather doubt that anybody's mind is going to be changed by something like that, and the reasons for doing that I believe are not to change somebody's mind necessarily. They are to do three specific things: Number one, bear public witness; number two, encourage one another; and number three, encourage myself.

The first one, the first, to bear public witness, I feel myself, I need to make a public declaration almost like a baptism. It's on the same kind of line. It's publicly declaring that I'm on the pro-life side and I am definitely not on the pro-choice side. Taking a public stand by holding a sign clearly puts me on one side and not the other, and here's why I think it really matters. After World War II, President Eisenhower did something extraordinary to the German citizens who lived around the concentration camps where millions of Jews were executed. He marched his soldiers directly into those towns and then he forcibly marched the citizens -- not the soldiers, the citizens of those towns into the camps to force them to see what they had studiously avoided seeing. See, Eisenhower understood that these people's ignorance was an ignorance of choice, one that they were solely responsible for and one that they had cultivated in order to make having any type of difficult

moral choice at all. Their lack of choice was a choice. And Eisenhower was determined to hold them responsible for it. And it is the exact type of ignorance that allows the vast majority of pro-choice folks to think that the only issue in abortion is the freedom to choose. One of the most appropriate questions you could ask somebody who is pro-choice is this: Can you describe for me exactly what takes place during an abortion? Well, if the person says, "No," wouldn't you have the right to say: "Then how can you support something that you don't even know about?" See, the vast majority of folks who don't know what an abortion is really about don't know because they don't want to know. And once again you look at the word of God and it's exposing the lie. Listen to what it says: *If you say, "Behold, we did not know this," does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who keeps watch over your soul know it, and will he not repay man according to his work?* We say behold, we did not know this. God says your ignorance is by design. I mean how else can you explain the livid reaction that people have to explicit photographic evidence of the barbarity of abortion? Folks get outraged. But they don't get outraged about the procedure itself, they get outraged about the tastelessness of the photos. I just watched the Ken Burns documentary. I don't know how many of you did, he had a huge documentary about the Vietnam War. It was filled with awful pictures of dead, broken bodies, but no one complained about the tastelessness of the

presentation because no one still clings to a moral ambivalence and a contrived ignorance when it comes to that war. When it comes to the war on the unborn it's a completely different story. Folks demand the right to stay ignorant. I submit to you that anybody who actually witnessed what really takes place during an abortion, which is the forcible dismemberment of a living human being while he or she is still within his mother's womb, if they actually witnessed one, they would be so traumatized by what they saw taking place that they would have almost an instant change of opinion. But the point is to remain ignorant. Bearing public witness is simply an attempt to push back against that ignorance.

The second reason is to encourage each other. You know the word "encourage" simply means to stimulate or grow courage in another. Our presence is an encouragement to one another. Our absence is a discouragement. You know when the Life Chain first started years and years ago there were upwards of 2,000 people in attendance. Last year there was a little over 300, and 55 of those people were from this church. We were a great encouragement.

And finally the third point is to encourage myself. You know for many of us this has been an annual event that we've attended for years, even decades. And you have publicly stood against the ruler of this world and remind us -- let me remind you once again: *He*

was a murderer from the beginning, and he doesn't stand in the truth, because there's no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

And we've watched as those lies and murders have hardened the heart, seared the conscience and wounded the spirit of an entire nation. And in one tiny way we have publicly declared whose side we are on. I pray every single day, as my wife is my witness, I pray every single day that we would this day be able to still bask in God's mercy rather than in the justice we so definitely deserve. But there's still a "but," and that "but" is: *But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* I don't know that there's a single heart or mind that's ever been changed by this event but I also know that that knowledge is way beyond my scope. I only know this, I know that my heart and my mind and my soul was changed by the power of the Holy Spirit and that God showed his love for me while I was still a sinner. And that gives me all the hope and encouragement that I need. You see, what God asks of us is not that we do what only he can do but simply that we speak the truth in love. And today in a very small way we have that opportunity. So I would like us just to take a moment this morning to thank God for his mercy. 53 million babies have been murdered by the one who was a murderer from the beginning, and he's covered up that murder with lies, and we have an opportunity to bear witness to that lie and to point to it as a

lie. So I just pray as we think through the mercy that we have been given by God instead of the justice, that we could thank him for that mercy.

1 Corinthians 11:25 says: In the same manner he also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." So take, and drink.

Now's the time where we normally call heads, heart and feet, and it's where we talk about a practical application of what it means to be remembering Christ. And obviously the practical one is the Life Chain today. There's going to be a life chain two weeks from now. If you can't make it today, perhaps you could make it to that one as well. You know if you can't make it today and again, I just I ask that you would be praying for all of those that are there. You know, we did this, I think this is over 20 years we've been doing this and I distinctly remember the first couple of years there were people throwing sodas at us, flipping the bird at us. For the last three or four years almost everybody that comes by has got a thumb up and is honking their horn and I just believe that people are just sick to death of the lies and the murder and that there's more people that you would think who are in favor of somebody standing up and saying this is wrong. So if you can make

it, that would be wonderful. If you can't, please keep us in prayer. And we're going to be meeting out by the Texas Roadhouse on 211 at 2:00 to 3:30. Let's pray.

Father God, I do thank you for, first of all, your truth. I thank you for your scripture: Without a vision, the people perish. And Lord, the vision is your word. We are thankful that up against the lies of the enemy we have your truth. And so I pray this morning, Lord, that we would cling to that truth, that we would understand that it is where life is and the enemy is where death and murder and lies are. Father, give us this day the ability to still bask in your mercy as opposed to the justice we so definitely deserve, and I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.