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Life Chain Sunday

Selected Scriptures

Prayer: *Father, we just again, we thank you for who you are, we thank you for the incredible gift of your Son, the gift of the cross, the gift of your word, the gift of this body that is able to meet here still. We are just praising you and thanking you for that gift. And this morning, Lord, this is a time where we're going to speak about this difficult concept, this whole idea of what the Life Chain is all about. I just want to pray this morning, Lord, for the presence of your Holy Spirit, open up eyes and ears and hearts and minds including my own. Give me the presence and the blessing of your Holy Spirit. Give us that same blessing and make it of permanent value, I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, three years ago at this exact same time I gave a message about why we have an annual Life Chain. And I've updated the message but essentially it's the same message because even though our culture is changing and it's changing at breakneck speed, our response to those changes remains the same. And you may remember

back then I spoke about a video that I saw. It was about a rally that took place on a college campus. A group of students had set up a spot where they put up signs with pictures decrying abortion. And their intent, I'm sure, was to engage in some dialogue about the evils of abortion and the alternatives to it. And this video was about ten minutes long but the dialogue that it contained only went for about ten or twenty seconds before it was replaced by literally a screaming mob. They were twerking, they were F-bombing, they were spitting on and physically assaulting the students. This was no longer a discussion of one view versus another. In the eyes of the mob this was a good versus evil confrontation, and clearly the pro-life students were the side that represented evil. And I looked at that video and I just wondered how it is that in a place supposedly dedicated to an exchange of ideas, how is it we've come to this?

I have a friend, a fellow board member at the pregnancy center who's training and is now a doula. A doula is a person who's trained in all the different aspects of childbirth. My friend said much of her training now includes a lot of social justice concepts that have almost nothing to do with obstetrics. She said that one of the classes she recently attended, she got there and there was a group of women and they were weeping, and they were weeping about an evil that had just been unleashed so they thought, by the fact

that a number of southern states had passed heartbeat legislation such as just passed in Texas which prohibits abortion once a baby's heartbeat can be detected. I was incredulous. I asked her, I said, how is it that women who are in training to deliver babies would be weeping over legislation to protect the lives of those babies? She just said this is how far we've come. I thought of a prophesy fulfilled in the book of Matthew. When Herod is seeking to destroy the baby Jesus, he kills all the male children in Bethlehem and *Matthew 2:16* says: *Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: "A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they are no more."* Well our 21st century version is doulas weeping with loud lamentation but now it's at any attempt at curtailing exactly what Herod was doing, and it begs the question: How did we get here?

I think of another prophetic voice, this is now decades old, of Mother Teresa addressing President Clinton and Vice President Al Gore. This is still in my mind the absolute definition of what it really means -- not the fake stuff that you've seen over and over again, but this is what it really means to speak truth to power. Here was this tiny, impoverished, elderly woman addressing the most powerful people in the entire world, and she blistered the president and our culture of abortion. I want to read to you an

account of what took place that morning by the columnist Peggy Noonan, who's an excellent writer. She was in attendance there. It was 28 years ago but it's just as relevant today because it gives us a tiny window into why we are where we are today. This is what she wrote describing the breakfast with Mother Teresa.

She says: "I was applauding at my table, and most of my tablemates were standing, and I turned to look at what the friendly and intelligent woman to my right was doing. We had had a nice conversation before the speaking began. She was a lawyer, the wife of a member of the Clinton administration, a modern and attractive blond-haired woman in her late forties or early fifties. She was not applauding. She was staring straight ahead, impassively, if you can call white lips and a stricken expression impassive. Now, Mother Teresa is not perhaps schooled in the ways of world capitals and perhaps did not know that having said her piece and won the moment she was supposed to go back to the airier, less dramatic assertions on which we all agree. Instead she said this: Abortion is really a war against the child, and I hate the killing of the innocent child, murder by the mother herself. And if we accept that the mother can kill even her own child, how can we tell other people not to kill one another? How do we persuade a woman not to have an abortion? As always, we must persuade her with love. The father of that child, however, must also give until it hurts. By

abortion, the mother does not learn to live, but kills even her own child to solve her problem. And by abortion, the father is taught that he does not have to take any responsibility at all for the child he has brought into that world. So that father is likely to put other women into the same trouble. So abortion just leads to more abortion. Any country that accepts abortion is not teaching its people to love one another but to use any violence to get what they want. This is why the greatest destroyer of love and peace is abortion." Again applause, and I looked once more to the woman on my right. As the applause spread she sat back in her chair and folded her hands on her lap. Then she briskly reached for her purse and took out a notepad. She took out a slim gold pen. It gleamed in the ballroom lights. She started writing down words. I couldn't resist, I peered as un-obviously as I could to see what she was writing. "Shop Rite", it said on the hospital-white pad. "Cleaners." She was making a To Do list. That was how she detached from the moment. She did not like what she had just heard but she couldn't walk out, couldn't boo, so she made a little list of things to do. I looked toward the dais. Hillary Clinton was still staring straight ahead, unmoving. I imagined her looking at my tablemate and yelling over, "Don't forget the Tide."

I tried to imagine what would happen if Mother Teresa tried to give that speech on a college campus today. I mean in 28 years we've

gone from writing grocery lists to push away the discomfort of truth to screaming, spitting, twerking, and cursing those who still try to speak that same truth. This is how far we have come. And this is how: Our souls get stolen incrementally, one tiny piece at a time. They get stolen in increments so small and so subtle we don't even notice them. And abortion has stolen our nation's soul. On the one hand I have to admire the cleverness of the enemy. I also have to admire his patience. You see, the enemy of our souls has all the time in the world and so he goes about his business using as a tactic designed to destroy us without us ever even knowing it.

And so this Life Chain morning I want to revisit our explanation about why we as a church are pro-life. Now you might object, you might say, you know, that's politics, that's not the gospel. I say sometimes the gospel overshadows and intersects with politics. I mean our presidential election marked a major split among evangelicals about what it means to be pro-life. Some said it's important, yeah, but not any more so than the environment and social justice. In my view they could not be more mistaken. This morning I'd like to explain how this happens, how the Bible can prevent it, and why being pro-life has everything to do with being a believer in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I want to start with the most basic question we could possibly ask ourselves, and that question is: Why are you here? Why are we here? I mean that question was asked centuries ago by the authors of the *Westminster Catechism*. The very first question they asked was: What is the chief end of man? Well the answer according to the catechism and scripture is: The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever. That begs the question, okay, how do we glorify God? Answer to that is God's glory is his character and his attributes made manifest. And that's just fancy language for saying glorifying God is manifesting or displaying in our lives who God is and what he does. You see God treated only one creature to expressly demonstrate his character and we are those creatures. When Jesus commanded us to *let your light shine before others so they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven*, he was telling us essentially we are God's billboards, we display God's works and God's ways. So human beings in God's eyes are very big deals. God tells us why at the very beginning in the book of Genesis. God makes it clear that of all the creatures in all of creation, there's only one creature who bears the *imago Dei*, that is the very image of God. *Genesis 1:26* 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. We mostly don't have a clue what privileges we have been given. I mean God says we are such of an exalted nature due to the fact that we are created in his image that at some point he says we are going to judge the world, we are going to rule over angels. Paul made that point in 1 Corinthians. He was astounded that the Corinthian church had gotten caught up in such earthly pursuits as suing one another in court. And in the course of that discussion he had these statements to make about our destiny as human beings. This is what he said. He said: *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!**

Well those four words uttered by Paul, "we will judge angels," I mean they may well have been the reason behind Satan's rebellion and the fall of mankind. I mean you have to understand that Satan is not a person's name, it's a title. It's describing the angel Lucifer who was the highest created being ever. We can only speculate as to why Satan decided to rebel but suffice it to say he coveted the position of highest authority among all the angels.

And perhaps and it's just perhaps, perhaps learning that we human beings were the only creatures created in God's own image and that we would one day judge angels proved too much to Satan and perhaps caused his rebellion. We do know that God and his angels went to war with Satan and his angels perhaps over us and we also know that Satan and his angels lost. *Revelation 12 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.*

Just picture yourself as the devil. I want you to picture yourself seething with rage at having lost the most important battle you've ever undertaken. You had determined that as the highest created being you, too, were worthy of worship like God. And for that act of ultimate pride and arrogance, you were cast out. 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 give you only a brief taste of victory. I mean you can't attack the victor -- that's God himself, I mean he's clearly superior to having created you. And so you go for the next best thing. You go for the

creatures who bear the image of God. And so you take on the form of a serpent. And you enter into the very Garden of Eden where the first man and woman to bear the image of God have been created and there you tempt them into defiling their image by defying their creator and eating the forbidden fruit causing their perfection to ultimately collapse. It was Satan's greatest victory. In one fell swoop God's image was defiled and man's perfection was shattered. We all know that the rest is history. I think what we don't realize is how specifically Satan still targets the image of God that we bear and how he goes about that attack and what our solution is. Our solution is the Bible.

One of the most popular and highly misunderstood scriptures in all of the Bible is *Proverbs 29:18*. It says: *Where there is no vision, the people perish*. Can I tell you that that scripture is not speaking about a plan or a goal or a vision for your life and your future. That's not what God is saying. Instead God is speaking about the truth that is contained in scripture, that in itself is the vision. I mean folks spend thousands consulting psychiatrists, gurus, and teachers to try to find the secrets of life when all they have to do is open up a Bible, because inside that book lies the secret of life. And God says if you go outside the boundaries of that vision, that truth, you will perish. I mean just as there are two separate kingdoms, there's the kingdom of

light and the kingdom of darkness, there are two separate visions and 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 saying you will perish. And he says that because the only thing that's outside the truth is by definition a lie. And Jesus tells us that lying is Satan's native language.

Jesus in scripture gives us real insight into how Satan operates in the description he gave us of him in *John 8*. He says this of 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.* 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. I mean Satan and his native tongue the lie is the vision that most of the world thinks of as truth. I mean we live on this earth literally under the rule of the king of liars. It's the very same angel who was thrown out of heaven and cast down to earth. The Bible tells us very clearly that Satan was and is the ruler of planet earth. Jesus himself just before going to the cross referred to Satan in *John 12* saying: *Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out.* For most of this world he's still in charge because he's able to operate

unseen and unknown. *2 Corinthians 4* says: *The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.* So what God is telling us, he says you're no match for Satan's lies. He says you need to cling to God's vision as opposed to his. Listen to what the entire verse says. It says: *Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keeps the law, happy is he.* Now the law is the word of God. It's the only truth that can expose the attacks of the ruler of this world on the image of God that we bear.

And so this morning I want to revisit three different ways that the ruler of this earth is attacking the image of God and how having the vision of God's truth helps us respond to those attacks. And the three ways that Satan attacks God's image bearers is: One, through their design; two, through their diversity; and three, through their development.

The very first area of attack is in the area of design. Where would that battlefield be today? Well, that battlefield is essentially gender. See, the battle is really between two different visions of what is truth. And so now we have on one hand we have gender fluidity versus binary complementarity. Binary complementarity is a fifty-cent phrase. It just refers to the way

God has organized the entire world. Binary means two; two sides, two parts, two halves of one whole. And all of biological life is divided in two. God made them male and female with unique and complimentary design. *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 complementarity of maleness and femaleness. It's just incomplete without the other. And God made it clear in the words that we speak at marriage ceremonies. In *Ephesians 5*, it 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."* Those words were originally spoken by God, they were spoken in the garden to the very first male and the very first female, Adam and Eve. And so if I was Satan and I wanted to attack the image of God at its most basic level, I would attack it at the design level, and I would use as my primary weapon the lie. I would attack the notion that maleness and femaleness and the beauty of the way they go together on every level, physically, mentally and spiritually as an idea that now spawns patriarchy, misogyny, and oppression. And

since I traffic in lies, I would describe gender differences as fluid and changing, 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. Add to that the Supreme Court's re-interpretation of the law, what was once obviously a lie, will become truth now swallowed by millions. Folks now reject the truth of binary complementarity for the lie of gender fluidity because *where there is no vision, the people perish*. Hey, if I was Satan I would be extremely pleased. I mean I'd measure my success by noting that instead of male and female there are now over seventy -- seventy genders. In New York City, the original fine was \$125,000 for using the improper non-binary pronoun -- I reported this three years ago, the fines have since been doubled to \$250,000. I mean if I was Satan I would relish the fact that gender is no longer biological and fixed, it's now attitudinal, it's now 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.

See, because we no longer have that vision of truth we actually believe that we can successfully burst the bonds of biology apart.

But the truth shouts otherwise and it's inescapable. You see, each of us have hundreds of billions of copies of who we are in our DNA. And every single cell tells us we are XY male or XX female. And how that biological truth is considered the lie. And the inventions of man wired to gender are the new truth, and to say otherwise, that makes you a bigot because *where there is no vision, the people perish.*

God tells us that when we reject God's vision of truth we actually wind up standing truth on its head. In *Isaiah 5:20*, he 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!* Is that not an accurate description of where our culture is today? Satan has successfully attacked the image of God that we bear by attacking its design. But you know, God still has the ultimate weapon. It's how he rescues and redeems his sheep and who will always be his ultimate weapon: It's the cross. *Romans 5:8* says: *But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

Next, if I was Satan, having attacked God's design I would then attack its diversity, and at its core that's precisely what racism is. It's an attack on the image of God. I mean if I were Satan I would see racism as one of my greatest assets. Red and yellow,

black, and white, they are precious in his sight, but I would use race and nationality as key elements to divide and separate us into competing groups who fear and mistrust each other. If I was Satan I'd be pretty proud of my efforts. I believe this is the greatest country in the world but even great countries are made up of sinful people. And every single person who came to this country came because we knew this was a place where by the grace of God freedom still found its greatest expression. But only one group of people, that is African Americans, were brought here chained and sold like animals. That was one of Satan's greatest victories. And it's effects on both sides have continued for centuries. There are folks in our 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 wonder if their sacrifice is worth the risk. And I know exactly who delights in pitting one group against the other. And again, it's been three years since I gave this message and just look what's happened in those three years. We got George Floyd, we got Black Lives Matter, we got critical race theory, all driving us even farther apart. I mean it is true we are centuries from slavery and we've made tremendous progress, but understand, there's a reason why racism after hundreds of years is still a big problem in our country. It's because it's an assault on the imago Dei, and that's just what Satan wants. The enemy

attacks the image of God in us because it doesn't look or act exactly like we do. He delights when the bearers of God's own image turn on each other based on nothing more than physical, cultural, or ethnic differences, because *where there is no vision, the people perish.*

If we only looked to God's word, we would see racism for the lie that it is. In Acts 10 it says: *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. 1 Samuel 16: *For the LORD sees not as man sees: Man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.* Galatians 3:28: *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 both sins have been around since the fall of Adam. And until we see racism as a demonic attack, we will not give it the attention it deserves. Heck, if I was Satan I'd be pretty happy with how well my attacks on the design and diversity of God's image have gone, but I would still fear God's weapon of choice. Again, *God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

Well we've looked at two of the three ways that Satan attacks the image of God in us, we've looked at his attacks through gender fluidity on our design, we've examined how successfully he's used racism to attack our diversity, and now let's examine Satan's attack on the image of God in its development. Now I am not a huge fan of bumper stickers. I like to read them on other cars. And perhaps because I make very fast snap judgments on the occupants of those cars based on their bumper stickers, I try to avoid them on my own car. But I was at a pro-life dinner one time a ways back and I saw a bumper sticker. I said, I got to have that on my car. It was a very short and simple quote from President Ronald Reagan and it said, "I have noticed everyone who is for abortion has been born." That's all it says. And over the years I've given you many different arguments against abortion. This morning I just want to give you yet another pro-life argument based on that statement by President Reagan.

You see 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 arguments have already been born and they're clearly alive. I almost think right off the bat that I need say nothing further than to point out the obvious fact that should end the argument before it starts. And what I want to argue is that if you're making any argument whatsoever, you're alive,

you're breathing. That means that you've passed whatever fiscal, sociological or philosophical gauntlet that was there during your mother's gestation of you and you somehow made it alive to that nine-month finish line. And it's just striking to me that having made it safely in your own personal lifeboat to the destination of birth, aren't you there as someone who was pro-choice caught up in the process 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 once were in doesn't have the opportunity at life that you clearly and obviously had. You can name a thousand different reasons why life is difficult for single moms and 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 circumstances you want to imagine, what would have happened if she had listened to the pro-choice argument in your case? You wouldn't be here to make your case against life. So how can you argue to remove the chance of another human being to have what you've already had without the very argument seeming like the height of selfishness. "I got my life, 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 are talking about the right to exist. It seems to me to be pro-choice is to deny for others what I've already

received for myself, it's simply the right to be born. And it's a right that obviously trumps every other right. 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. I mean, concerns about education, opportunity, racism and health care, they don't mean a thing to someone who's already dead. I have a hard time hearing arguments that put those issues over the issue of life itself. But once again we see the ruler of this world doing what he does best. Again this is what Jesus said about him: *"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."*

So if I was Satan I'd use the lie when it came to attacking the image of God in its design and diversity. I would do my best to make sure the people perish due to a lack of vision. But when it comes to abortion, I would combine the lie with my other defining characteristic. Again, as Jesus put it, *"He was a murderer from the beginning."* I would kill God's image bearers while they're still in their mother's womb by giving them my vision that choice is all that matters here. And then I would overwhelm the woman that I caught in that trap with guilt. I would then seek to cut them off from the only resource that can restore them to life and

that is the grace of God. I'd keep them from the one weapon I fear the most, and that is the cross. Because *God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* And if I could just keep people from getting that vision, from understanding the truth that God extends absolute forgiveness to any and all who would seek it through repentance, then I could overwhelm them with guilt. If you've had an abortion, then the cross is the place where that guilt can be taken care of. God in heaven came to earth and he took on flesh and he lived out a perfect life and he took that perfect life to the cross so that he could offer it up to pay for all of our sins including the sin of abortion. So know this: In Christ the sin of abortion is completely and fully paid for and yes, while we were still sinners, even the sin of abortion, Christ paid for. Well, the enemy thought if I could blind people to the grace that is offered them through the cross, I could kill God's image and then destroy them with guilt because *where there is no vision, the people perish.*

Now gender confusion and racism are awful sins but the victims of those sins, they still have a chance to escape. Not so with abortion. *Proverbs 24* says: *Rescue those who are being taken away to death; hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter.* Well it's the next part of that verse that shows us why the Life Chain taking place today really matters. This is what it says next. 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?* It's interesting how apropos this is. Just last week someone asked me what's the point of you holding up a poster for an hour and a half, I mean, you really think you're going to change somebody's mind? No, I don't really think that. I rather doubt that anybody's mind is going to be changed by something like that but the reasons for doing it, I believe, are not necessarily to change someone's mind. They are to do three separate things: Number one, to bear public witness; number two, to encourage one another; and number three, to encourage myself.

The first is to bear public witness. You see I, me, myself, I need to make a public declaration. In some ways it's like a baptism. It's publicly declaring I'm on this side; I'm not on that side. Taking a public stand by holding a sign clearly puts me on one side or the other and here's why I think it really matters. This goes back in history. After World War II President Eisenhower did something extraordinary to the German citizens who lived in and around the concentration camps where millions of Jews were exterminated. He took his soldiers and he went into those towns and he forcibly marched the citizens -- not the enemy combatants -- the citizens, he marched them into the camps to force them to see

what they had studiously avoided seeing. 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 avoid having to make a difficult moral choice. Their lack of choice was a choice, and Eisenhower was determined to hold them responsible for it. It's the exact same 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 that you could ask someone who is pro-choice is this: Can you describe for me exactly what takes place during an abortion? And if the person says, "No," wouldn't you have a right to say to them, "How is it that you're supporting something you know nothing 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. They're terribly busy writing grocery lists for Shop Rite. And once again the word of God exposes the truth. *Proverbs 24* again 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? "Behold, we did not know this."* God says your ignorance is by design. How else can you explain the livid reaction that people have when they see these explicit photographic evidence of abortion does. I mean, folks get outraged and they don't get outraged about the photos themselves, they get outraged

about the tastelessness of the photos.

I pointed out that I recently watched the Ken Burns documentary about the Vietnam War. It was a documentary filled with awful pictures of broken, dead bodies. But you know no one complained about the tastelessness of that 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 anyone who actually witnessed what really takes place in an abortion, that is the forcible dismemberment of a living human being while he or she is still in their mother's womb, if they actually witnessed one, they would be so traumatized by what they saw taking place they would likely have a change of heart. 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. I mean the word "encourage" literally means to stimulate or grow courage in each other or somebody else. And our presence is an encouragement to one another. Our absence is a discouragement. When the Life Chain first started years ago, there were upwards of thousands of people in attendance. It's now down to a handful, and that is a great

discouragement.

And finally, the third point is to encourage myself. I mean for many of you this has been an annual event that you've attended for years, even decades. You have publicly stood against the ruler of this world. And because we have the vision of God's word this much we know: *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.* And we've watched as those lies and murders have hardened the heart, seared the conscience and wounded the spirit of an entire nation. We are eye witnesses to the theft of the American soul. And in one tiny way through the Life Chain we have publicly declared whose side we're on. And we do that while displaying God's ultimate weapon: *God shows his love for us that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

So I don't know that I've ever heard that a single mind or heart has been changed by this event but I also know that that knowledge is way beyond my scope. I only know that God changed my heart and my mind by the power of his Holy Spirit and that God showed his love for me while I was still a sinner, and that gives me all the hope and the encouragement that I need. And what God asks of us is not that we do what only he can do but that we speak the truth in

love. And today in a very small way, we have that opportunity.
Let's pray.

Father, I thank you for the faithfulness of people who are still insisting on making a public statement that this is the ultimate evil, this is the taking of life, this is the destroying of your image. And Lord, I want to be on the side that publicly says I stood up, and I made that clear. I don't want twenty years from now, thirty years from now, forty years from now like the citizens from Germany struggling with their ambivalence during a time of moral crisis, I want to be able to say in the middle of that crisis I let people know where I was. I pray that you would give us that courage and I pray that you would bless us this afternoon. And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.