

Jesus and Justice and the Unborn

Luke 18 and other Gospel references

Pastor/Elder Phil Layton, GCBC: October 25, 2020

[Start by thanking the Lord for SGC, those who served, blessings of weekend]

Last Sunday we had some stay through visiting from SF, their churches still can't gather outdoors even (as of September, legally 12 outside or 6 if you eat or drink communion). 1 Bay Area church said *enough is enough* and met indoors. The city fined the church \$15K a week, now over \$115K, forced them to only do parking lot services. That's not about public health, that's about politics and power and profits. Others have had parking lots evicted.

Most church bodies in CA cities can't meet outside on campus like we did. It's not easy for many to meet in a park. If you do a Bible study in a park, CA guidance Oct. 9 for gatherings in a public park, 3 households is max, and if you sing outside, cover your mouth and be sure to sing at or quieter than a normal talking voice! I'm not kidding—use your inside voice—keep it lower if you sing outside. If you know me, I'm singing loud! We obey God rather than man. This is God's house, worship is His domain. His guidance: '*sing aloud...shout for joy...Praise God in the sanctuary*' (Ps 81 and 150).

But that's not what this sermon is about. It grieves me many won't come to worship and fellowship in person today. For months it's concerned me, but there's other concerns out there, too. PTL deaths *with* a virus are down, but deaths *from* alcohol are up (and alcoholism). Substance abuse and addiction are at an all-time high, related to the economy and society shutdowns mid-March. World Health Organization warns against lockdown effects and they estimate 3 million alcohol-deaths in a year.¹ But in 2020 U.S. liquor stores stayed open as churches had to close their doors to the struggling or hurting.

Churches couldn't meet in parking lots to seek the Lord, but you could meet in parking lots to seek liquor because our government said that's 'essential.' As America sold beer in person, church services couldn't give the Bible in person. Drinking isn't a sin, drunkenness is, but that's not the point of this sermon. The inconsistency of society and its backwards values is what many pointed out. In EDC this spring, many could gather in a park and party, but a church couldn't gather in the same park to praise the God who created it!

But that's not what this sermon is on. During the lockdown, the same WHO wrote of another greater 'epidemic...one of the biggest public health threats the world has ever faced, killing more than 8 million people a year around the world.' Mortality rate for this is 50%. WHO calls it 'tobacco epidemic' (smoking).² That actually *could be* shut down instead of church and State.

But that's not what this message is about. No lock down with the 3 million deaths by alcohol or 8 million by smoking in past years, but a far deadlier killer causes 40 million+ annual deaths worldwide.³ 40 million live in CA, this week dozens daily die *with* COVID, most from multiple co-morbidities (many had other diseases already dying from). But in this State many times more will die today *from* something else directly. Media doesn't report it, its mortality rate is 100% and those who die from it are the most vulnerable.

This Lord's Day, 3,000 American babies will be killed in the womb

Abortion is what this sermon message is about. The most 'at risk' people in the world are in the womb. CA is the deadliest State for the unborn, more abortions than even NY. As our government restricts church life in Christ, it hasn't restricted abortion. And CA kept its death clinics open when church and hospital services couldn't be. In 2020 over 40 million have recovered from COVID but over 40 million will be aborted around the world this year.

WHO says 125,000 today globally (thousands this hour)⁴

In CA hundreds of babies will die. Dozens will die as I preach, some just an hour of here. 1 of 4 pregnancies in CA terminate. It affects church families. Abortion isn't a scarlet A or unpardonable—there's grace in Jesus. Families here are affected more than you know, the gospel says more than you know

If you're uncomfortable—don't worry, so am I! This *should* give discomfort. For you kids here, I won't be graphic, but abortion is the killing of a baby in a mommy. For you adults uneasy with my intro, this won't be political, but it's painful and needful. I have to be faithful to give God's whole counsel.

It was hard this week just reading notes/numbers without weeping

What does the gospel have to say to this? Please turn in the gospel of Luke to chapter 18. I'd honesty rather just preach the next text in Col 3, but I feel compelled and convicted to do a topical message on this horrific pandemic. Abortion does connect to next week back in Col 3 on sexual sin, coveting, idolatry (root sins abortion is fruit of) and telling lies (pro-choice language).

Today let's see what Jesus sees and says from His perspective in the gospel. Look at Lk 18:15 *Now they were bringing even **infants** to him that he might touch them. And when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them.* ¹⁶ **But Jesus called them to him, saying, "Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God.** ¹⁷ *Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it."*

The context of this chapter starts with justice. In v. 3 Jesus tells a story of a widow who keeps coming to a sinful judge pleading for justice. Look at v. 6

And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge says. ⁷ And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? ⁸ I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily..."

Title: Jesus and Justice and the Unborn (Luke 18 and other gospel passages)

1. Why do we need to talk about justice?
2. What is the Lord's Word on babies, born and unborn?
3. How can we respond to the injustice of abortion?

#1. Why should we [Christians/the church] talk about justice?

We start where ch.18 starts. Justice is a front and center issue in our world as it was in the NT. A new U.S. Supreme Court Justice is this week's news.

For months we've seen on the news people cry out for justice day and night, sometimes in unrighteous ways, and some cry out about unrighteous judges. A sense of *injustice* has been building for a long time. Justice seems delayed

Justice is a word dominating the media, especially as George Floyd's death brought *racial social* justice to the forefront, and *institutional or systemic* injustice are terms liberals are hijacking. The Bible emphasizes individual sin, but abortion is also a *system* and a sin by *institutions*. A black pastor said rightly we need to be headlights on justice, not the world's tail lights. Christians of all people must care about justice for all people, any skin or size. I care about injustice, but be careful with the world's terms. 'Justice' is turned on its head when calls for 'reproductive justice' mean a right to abort

The world defines justice un-biblically and politically, but it's a Bible word.

Why should Christians care about or talk about justice? Because Christ does.

He cares for those who've experienced injustice or racism like we haven't. He hear their cries for justice. Their lives matter to Him and must matter to us. Hear their heart cries, and let our hearts cry for justice to little ones, too.

Unborn black lives matter, too (and brown, in fact we're all of one blood, God's Word says). Defenseless minorities are killed most by abortionists. If we're for the rights of women, let's start with rights of pre-born women.

Jesus cares for justice more than any protestor or politician. Go back to Lk 11. Justice is where ch 18 starts, Lk 11 is where it started for me weeks ago.

11:42 *But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and every herb, and neglect justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done without neglecting the others.* Tithing, giving 10% isn't what this sermon is on.

But these religious leaders who gave a tenth of all their produce to the Lord weren't giving attention to justice. Maybe you religiously give 10% or more of your income to the Lord, but what percent of your prayer and care goes to justice for the unborn?

Maybe you never neglect your check in the offering box, but do you neglect justice and the love of God? I'm guilty of neglect on this subject, and the love of God compels me to compel us not to neglect it.

Matthew's gospel adds some key words '*neglected the **weightier matters of the law: justice and **mercy and faithfulness.*****'⁵ Another text says '*what does the Lord require ...? ...do justice and love mercy.*'⁶ Followers of Jesus can't close their eyes to this weighty matter of injustice. Faithfulness calls us to turn our eyes upon Jesus and His cross 'where *justice and mercy* embrace, where the Son of God gave His life for us, our [massive sin] debt is erased'⁷

Turn back to Lk 18. As Jesus turns His eyes on infants, what does He see?

That takes us to

#2 What is the Lord's Word on babies, born and unborn?

Lk 18:16 *But Jesus called them to him, saying, "Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God."*

Jesus is indignant at those who would keep the babies from coming. Jesus rebukes those who would hinder infant children. Jesus loves children of all ages and stages, and in ch 21 He'll share His care for those in pregnancy.⁸ And He made welcoming little children a kingdom issue. In Lk 9 and v. 48, He said '*Whoever welcomes this little child in my name welcomes me...*'⁹

This isn't a government issue, **this is a gospel issue** in that sense. Those who welcome little children for the sake of Christ's name are welcoming Christ. Christians receive children and v. 17 says we need to receive the kingdom like little children to enter. Just like the infants in v. 15 brought to the Lord who couldn't bring themselves. Hopeless helpless infants are a picture of how we come to Christ spiritually. Babies come from the womb, no clothes, no accomplishments, no ability to live on our own, that's how salvation is.

DeYoung: Jesus welcomed children when others wanted to push them away (Mk 10:13-16). He said the measure of our love for him would be measured by our love for children (Mk 9:36-37). He took the children in his arms as if to say, "Honor these little ones, and you honor me. [But if you don't receive them he says] because they are weak, socially insignificant, and bothersome ... you've demonstrated you don't understand the values of the kingdom." ... Red, brown, yellow, black and white, they are precious in his sight. Jesus loves the little children of the world. Even the ones with an umbilical cord.¹⁰

In v. 15 the word **infants** is the same word for those with an umbilical cord.

The Greek for **infant** here is the same word used in Acts 7 for the Egyptian ‘Planned Parenthood.’ It says Pharaoh’s government would ‘*throw out their ...babies so they would die*’¹¹-same word for baby brought to Jesus in Lk 18

Turn back to Lk 1 where the same word is used for unborn babies. An angel tells the virgin Mary the Holy Spirit will conceive a baby in her womb.

1:36 *And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month...* [so she’s 6 months pregnant, not with some cells, but a son. The angel says you’ll conceive a son too by God’s miracle]

³⁹ *In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah,* ⁴⁰ *and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.* ⁴¹ *And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the **baby** leaped in her womb...* same word in Lk 18 for infants they brought to Jesus. Whether in a womb or not, God’s Word uses the same Grk word for babies.

Now remember this is days after the virgin conceived and hurried to come, so at best it’s embryo stage in Mary. Elizabeth is starting her 3rd trimester and by God’s Spirit Elizabeth and her unborn son sense the new life in Mary

⁴² *and she exclaimed with a loud cry, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is **the fruit of your womb!*** [Not the fetus, the fruit of your womb, that’s the Jewish way to say ‘life in the womb.’ Life begins at conception! In the very earliest days, the Spirit-inspired word is this embryo is a life]

⁴³ *And why is this granted to me that the **mother of my Lord** should come to me?* [God reveals to her Mary is already a mother just days after conception and this isn’t just a little tissue, this is the Lord Jesus in her womb!] ⁴⁴ *For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, **the baby in my womb leaped for joy*** [this isn’t just a part of her body, persons leap for joy]

That’s not a potential life in her womb, that’s a person, God’s Word says

Again that’s the same word baby used in Lk 18 for babies outside a womb being brought to Jesus. In Lk 2, v. 5, **the Christmas story**, it says as Joseph came to Bethlehem, Mary was ‘*with child.*’ A *child* is in His pregnant wife. And the word for *baby* lying in a manger is the word for the unborn in ch 1.

- What the world calls a blob of tissue, the Word of God calls a baby
- What the world calls a choice, the Word of God calls a child
- What the world calls cells, the Word of God calls sons or daughters
- What the world calls a fetus, the Word calls fruit / life of the womb
- What our society rejects, our Savior receives as precious in His sight

3rdly and finally: How can we respond to the injustice of abortion?

You can go back to Lk 18 but I want to start with the precious kids here: Children (11 and under, credit to OPC church):

Who made you? 3 questions

1. When babies are in mommies' tummies do their lives matter to God?
2. Should God's people do all they can to keep all babies safe and tell all people that Jesus loves and saves?
3. Will you pray with your family today for justice for unborn babies?

Lk 18:1 *And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. ² He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. ³ And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'Give me justice...' She was persistent, and even this unsaved judge was eventually moved to bring about justice. I read earlier v. 7 where Jesus encourages us that God hears cries for justice from His elect (that's just the word for those God chooses and saves). God will give justice as His people pray day and night, He says don't lose heart.*

We should pray more than ever as a new Supreme Court justice is sworn in and pray even unrighteous judges fulfill their daily pledge 'justice for all.'

We'll pray at the end, but kids, remind your parents to pray with you later.

For **question #1** we see babies matter to the Lord because v. 15-16 says He welcomed and wanted them and didn't want any to stop babies from coming

There's no unwanted children to the Lord. There's no unplanned pregnancy in His sovereign plan. The Lord loves babies in mommies tummies, Ps 139 says He fearfully and wonderfully makes them, forms their tiny baby parts and knits them together in their mother's womb. Ps 127 says the fruit of the womb is His gift, children are a blessing from the Lord to receive from Him.

The Lord says in Lk 9 whoever welcomes little ones in my name actually welcome me. Some will say on the last day '*Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty...and welcome you, or naked and clothe you?*'...*And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'* Least includes littlest

Q. #2, not just for kids: should we do all we can to keep all babies safe?

- Support those who adopt and foster (God calls some of you to)
- Vote for people or platforms that are for life and justice for unborn
- Speak on these things to others (even this week from this Sunday)
- Help ministries that support mothers and their unborn babies

My wife has helped a bit with **Pregnancy Counseling Services** in Placerville and Judy Dixon serves with them. I know Judy would love to talk after if you're interested in helping out (mailings, cards, address newsletters 4x a year, need volunteer receptionist 1-2 days a week during their office hours).

They have financial needs that help them save babies in our community and this Friday they have a fundraising event (flyers at back table or see Judy).

They have a new office, ultrasound access, counsel life, try to share Christ. Their purpose and mission says '**Christianity is central to the purpose and mission of Pregnancy Counseling Services. For this reason, all Center affairs are to be conducted in full accordance with the Bible... We believe that for the salvation of lost and sinful man, regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential and that this salvation is received through faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and not as a result of good works.**'

Jesus rescues the perishing, cares for the dying. He's merciful, He will save. **2nd part of question #2.** Should we tell all people that Jesus loves and saves?

Yes! Jesus like all people He became an unborn baby to live and die for us.

JESUS BECAME AN UNPLANNED PREGNANCY TO MARY

JESUS BECAME AN UNWANTED CHILD TO JOSEPH

He came into this world to identify with the weak, vulnerable, and helpless. And He says in Lk 18:17 we must come to His kingdom that way spiritually

Like a baby crying for help, v. 13 says the way to have life in Jesus is to cry '*God, be merciful to me, a sinner!*' v. 14 says that's the one God justifies or saves. Be like the one in v. 38, it says '*he cried out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"*'³⁹ *And those who were in front rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"*⁴⁰ *And Jesus stopped and commanded him to be brought to him.*

Jesus has mercy on murderers as well as moral people who think they're ok. If you recognize you're a sinner and beg God for mercy in Jesus the Son of David, He stops and hears you and will bring you to Him. He has mercy for sins and stains and shame in your past. Even the abortion doctor can find grace if he turns to Jesus the Great Physician. A boyfriend or parent who strong-armed a girlfriend or daughter to an abortion still has the open arms of Jesus stretched out on the cross. Jesus became a baby to live a life that satisfied God's justice, dying for all the sins of all who repent and trust in Him. We don't get justice, we get mercy and grace greater than all our sin.

Let's pray and I'm using **prayer points by Kevin DeYoung** I quoted before:

- We pray for our society to change its mind regarding the smallest and most helpless of its citizens.

- We pray for the church to lead the way in protecting, honoring, and caring for children—not matter how unborn or unwanted.
- We pray that every judge, politician, and doctor becomes convinced of the sanctity of unborn life and acts accordingly.
- We pray for the flourishing of pregnancy centers and women’s clinics that provide an alternative to abortion.
- We pray for the women contemplating such a tragic choice, and for the family members encouraging them in the wrong direction.
- We pray for men to be men, to stop fooling around and to stop fleeing when they have.
- We pray that hundreds of politicians, thousands of pastors, millions of would-be moms and dads, and 300 million hearts are gripped by a Jesus-inspired view of children.

Footnotes:

¹ Source from who.int

² Source from who.int

³ <https://www.lifenews.com/2019/12/31/abortion-was-the-leading-cause-of-death-worldwide-in-2019-killing-42-million-people/>

⁴ <https://www.worldometers.info/abortions/>

⁵ Matthew 23:23.

⁶ Micah 6:8.

⁷ Adapted from new lyrics to “Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus” by Sovereign Grace Music.

⁸ 21:23: *‘Alas for women who are pregnant and those nursing infants in those days...’*

⁹ NIV.

¹⁰ <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/jesus-loves-the-little-children/>

¹¹ Acts 7:19 NIV.