

Matthew 2: “16 Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old & under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men. 17 Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying: 18 "A voice was heard in Ramah, Lamentation, weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, Refusing to be comforted, Because they are no more."”

'Herod's Evil Choice'

This morning we are going to discuss an evil in our land which came about in part because of the very bad use of the word ‘choice.’ Everyone down to our youngest members know that it is important to have and to make choices, right? That wonderful sound when you go into your favorite ice cream parlor and you hear your parents say, “what flavor would you like to have?”

- **We know there are also very important choices, like choosing to follow Jesus or to obey our parents, right?**

With that said, we all know that there are wise choices and foolish choices... There are good choices and evil choices and those values are not determined by our ability to choose, but rather what choices are made. SO, when we hear someone today defending a ‘women’s right to choose’ or a politician saying he or she is always going to defend ‘choice,’ we should always ask the simply question:

- **What choice are they making?**
- **What choice are they defending?**

Today, as we do each year here at Church of the King, we are focusing on the sin of abortion in our nation as we approach the anniversary of the Roe v. Wade Supreme Court decision that legalized abortion-on-demand. What the secular world & the popular press calls ‘a woman’s right to choose.’

- **Now that decision by seven men on the US Supreme Court was made many years ago in 1973, so some of the history is long forgotten.**

The fact is that by 1973 almost a million children were already losing their lives at the hands of ‘legal’ abortionists because of the laws changed in states like New York , Illinois and sadly here in California.

However, this was not enough for those who love death and so they took the case of a woman they called Roe to the highest court in the land and with the Roe v. Wade decision we learned sadly again why such human courts should not be making law: These unelected men overturned the abortion laws of ALL fifty states, including even the liberal laws in states like California that at least stopped abortions at 20 weeks of pregnancy. Under the new rulings a woman could legally have an abortion throughout the entire nine months of pregnancy, and that remains the law of the land right up until today.

- **Something by the way that is still only supported by only about 14% of the US population.**

Such is the power of words like ‘choice’ or ‘rights’ which keep the other 86% largely covered in silence.

Well since the Roe decision in 1973, one third of our children have been lost and it is very appropriate to ask... Who is to blame and who is impacted?

- **Certainly the abortionist who carries out the procedure is at fault.**
- **The women share the blame and carry the burden the rest of their lives.**
- **What about the father or the extended family?**

- Because of recent investigations we know there are even some who profit from the sales of baby body parts!
- What about the judges & elected officials who made all of this ‘legal’?

Yes, they all are responsible and will face God’s just judgment, but if we know our Bibles well, we would also know that it is God’s people, the Church, who bear the ultimate responsibility in a nation which has covenanted with God!

- And it is the Church that must now show the way back!

We see the principles of God’s judgments clearly in the Old Testament with the reign of King Manasseh... The King held responsible for bringing the practice of child sacrifice to Jerusalem. [*explain Moloch*] They were more open with what they were doing, but the reasons were the same... Personal peace & affluence! King Manasseh was judged individually: Captured and led off to Babylon where he repented and was restored, which gives us great hope!

- There is NO sin beyond the reach of God’s grace: Even abortion!

However, we must remember that God’s covenant people were also held responsible for these grave sins:

Many years later when it came time for the judgment of Judah, we read in II Kings 23:26 these chilling words: “Still Jehovah did not turn from the burning of His great wrath, by which his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations with which Manasseh had provoked Him.”

We should also note how rapidly God’s people can move from faithfulness to such depravity... From the golden age of King Solomon to the Babylonian exile was less than four hundred years...

- About the same time that has elapsed since the signing of the Mayflower Compact & other covenants on the American continent!

So is all blackness & despair? Has the sin of abortion blotted out the hope of the Gospel in America?

- God forbid!

As we saw with the life of King Manasseh himself there is always a way back...

- And I want to suggest this morning that those who desire to be faithful in an unfaithful age should focus on prayer and action:

When it comes to action, the Bible is clear that we are to help those in need, especially those in danger of death and have no voice of their own to raise: Proverbs 24 tells us at verse ten:

“If you faint in the day of adversity, Your strength is small. 11 Deliver those who are drawn toward death, and hold back those stumbling to the slaughter. 12 If you say, "Surely we did not know this," Does not He who weighs the hearts consider it? He who keeps your soul, does He not know it?

- We are not to hide our heads in the sand and we are not to fear being involved & even being a bit confrontational.

We see the application of these verses in the life of Jesus as He healed the sick & cast out demons, while ministering to the woman at the well, the woman caught in adultery, & giving His famous parable of the Good Samaritan.

This is why we support as a church the ministries that not only confront the sin of abortion in the public square, but those who give women a loving alternative and help those in need and certainly those who are now suffering from past actions and choices.

This should extend to our individual lives as well: God will often bring those in need across your path and there are always opportunities to serve:

- **AGAIN, our covenant children will learn by our example.**

I hope and pray that we will all have a new resolve for this New Year: Such service can include donations of time or material goods to the Pregnancy Crisis centers who minister to those in need at a critical time. It can include joining those on the front lines occasionally at one of the local abortion mills in Sacramento or Roseville. I would rejoice to see each of us participating in at least one of the campus outreach efforts this year. We need to be ready to minister the Gospel to those who have made, directly or indirectly, such bad choices in the past... We know the agony that comes with losing a child or even a miscarriage and the loss of a child in an abortion adds guilt to the sorrow. We have a new opportunity here with the Unborn Child Memorial Garden!

- **We need to be those beautiful feet who bring the Good News of forgiveness & comfort to those in need.**

Our action must also include being properly informed: Read good books and subscribe to newsletters and action updates so we know what is going on!

- **As we pray for protection and provide practical help, we must never fear to preach the Gospel and present all of God's truth!**

In times such as ours this should include the singing and praying of the imprecatory Psalms as we are doing this week as a congregation. Our proper response to grave sin is to cry out for God's justice...

- **Remembering it is God's responsibility to determine how that justice will be carried out, and NOT ours.**
- **When we understand this and truly believe that God does all things well, then we can have that peace that surpasses understanding even in the midst of such grave sin and the resulting consequences.**

Praying those Imprecatory prayers not only calls down God's judgment but also give us peace as we remember Who is truly in control. When we studied the Book of Acts we saw how the early Church had two fierce enemies: Saul of Tarsus and King Herod!

- **Both were persecuting and even killing the Saints so I am sure some of the very imprecatory prayers we are praying today as a congregation were lifted up against both men.**

I have often reminded us that in both cases God answered those prayers by slaying the wicked... The proud King Herod fell before lowly worms, dying a miserable death, facing an eternity in the Lake of Fire. Saul of Tarsus was also slain before the Lord Jesus on the road to Damascus and then resurrected as Paul the Apostle to the Gentiles.

- **BOTH ceased to be enemies of God's Church in answer to the prayers of those early Saints!**

One went to hell & the other went on to serve the King of Kings.

- **We should and must pray for many such victories to be visited upon the enemies of God today!**

Such will be our great prayer today and as we did last week with the Lord's Prayer, I want to take a few minutes to review how we will be using Psalm 10 as the basis for this important prayer.

It is a prayer that we have used each year and credit for this work goes to the Saints in Oregon City who drafted it many years ago.

Unlike most of our great prayers it is a responsive prayer which should help us focus on the fact that we are ALL lifting up our prayer at this point of the service.

We should remember that as we are praying through Psalm 10 we are calling for the Lord's Judgment on the Sin of Abortion: And it is amazing how relevant this Psalm is for today!

Psalm 10:1 “Why, O Jehovah, do you stand afar off? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?” In response Birkin will ask our Gracious Heavenly Father, to remember how for 45 long years our nation has sanctioned the execution of the innocent whose only 'crime' was their inconvenience as pre-born human beings. We tell God how hard it is for us to imagine that tens of millions have been slain in this holocaust as our civil leaders have sanctioned our nation's descent into moral darkness. As the Psalmist did we plead for God's mercy upon us and that He would deliver us from this great evil.

Psalm 10:2-4 “In arrogance the wicked hotly pursue the poor; let them be caught in the schemes that they have devised. For the wicked boasts of the desires of his soul, and the one greedy for gain curses and renounces Jehovah. In the pride of his face the wicked does not seek him; all his thoughts are, "There is no God."

Next, we pray about how today's leaders have stepped outside the Lord's boundaries. How they have exercised power which the Lord had not given them. We mention their greed and exploitation of the weak and how they market their very lives and as we have discovered recently even selling their body parts for profit. It is God's Law they have subverted and we thus again ask for mercy.

Psalm 10:5-7 “His ways prosper at all times; your judgments are on high, out of his sight; as for all his foes, he puffs at them. He says in his heart, "I shall not be moved; throughout all generations I shall not meet adversity." His mouth is filled with cursing and deceit and oppression; under his tongue are mischief and iniquity.”

Our prayer then mentions the immeasurable amount of money that has been made trafficking in unborn lives. We call out those who profited - the hospitals, the clinics, the doctors, the pharmaceutical companies and the politicians who have built their careers standing against God's Holy Law.

Again, we ask for mercy and that God take not His Holy Spirit from us, Rather let Him destroy their power & deliver their wealth unto the righteous!

Psalm 10:8-11 “He sits in ambush in the villages; in chiding places he murders the innocent. His eyes stealthily watch for the helpless; he lurks in ambush like a lion in his thicket; he lurks that he may seize the poor; he seizes the poor when he draws him into his net. The helpless are crushed, sink down, and fall by his might. He says in his heart, "God has forgotten, he has hidden his face, he will never see it.”

We then pray to Almighty God with regard to the poor, the weak, the unprotected who have so often in our own time been ambushed in the name of 'rights' and 'privacy' and of course 'choice.'

We acknowledge that the Lord knows both these evil men and their victims by name. We ask God to have mercy upon us, in the name of Jesus, and to stop the unrestrained assault upon children. Knowing that God does see the acts of the wicked we ask that He destroy all those who murder in secret and to exalt the righteous as the Psalmist goes on to do...

Psalm 10:12-15: Arise, O Jehovah; O God, lift up your hand; forget not the afflicted. Why does the wicked renounce God and say in his heart, "You will not call to account"? But you do see, for you note mischief and vexation, that you may take it into your hands; to you the helpless commits himself; you have been the helper of the fatherless. Break the arm of the wicked and evildoer; call his wickedness to account till you find none.”

In our prayer we turn to the mercy of God, who desires not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live! God has revealed Himself as pardoning iniquity through His only Son; so we ask Him to have mercy upon the impenitent and unbelieving, again naming those involved: We ask that He especially have mercy upon all the abortion doctors and suppliers and staff who work in our country's abortion mills. We ask that He awaken in them by His Holy Spirit a deep sense of

their sinfulness and peril. To take from them all ignorance, hardness of heart, and contempt of God's Word. We ask God to make them know and feel that there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby they must be saved, but only the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. We ask this so God may bring them home and number them among His children that they may be His forever; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end."

Psalm 10:16-18: "Jehovah is king forever and ever; the nations perish from his land. O Jehovah, you hear the desire of the afflicted; you will strengthen their heart; you will incline your ear to do justice to the fatherless and the oppressed, so that man who is of the earth may strike terror no more."

Here we pray that God would protect those who, through their own frailty or through the temptations which encompass them, might be drawn into the council of evil men and tempted to participate in the heinous sin of abortion. We ask God to give them the direction and assistance of His Holy Spirit, that they may live not unto themselves, but unto Him that loves us and gave Himself for us. Our desire is for God to give them repentance and better minds. We ask God to be merciful to all who are in such trouble; and that the God of pity, might minister to them according to their several necessities; for His sake who went about doing good, your Son our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

- So as we work to rescue those being led away to slaughter & faithfully preach the Gospel which includes imprecatory prayers...

The Bible gives us instructions about how we who are faithful should live when we face a time of great trouble.

[And I will give you a hint: It is NOT wringing our hands & hoping for the rapture!]

We cannot know for sure what God will do with America in the future...

- But we do know that the blood of those 60 million children cries out to Him from the ground as it did when Judah sacrificed His children to Moloch.

The Prophet Jeremiah gave those sent off to captivity in Babylon some basic commands on how they were to live in the new place God had put them and they apply in any tough times... Even for those of us here in California!

Jeremiah 29:4 "Thus says Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, to all who were carried away captive, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem to Babylon: [yes, even the exile was part of God working all things out for the good of His people!]

- Build houses and dwell in them;
- Plant gardens and eat their fruit.
- Take wives & beget sons & daughters;
- And take wives for your sons & give your daughters to husbands, so that they may bear sons and daughters--that you may be increased there & not diminished.

[and here is the really tough one for us]

- "And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive,
 - And pray to Jehovah for it;
- for in its peace you will have peace."

[Note: This is how & why we pray for our civil magistrates here each week, despite their abundant wickedness!]

- The Prophet goes on to show that this WAS God's plan and that they were NOT to doubt that it was a good plan!

The bottom-line is that we are to trust that God knows what He is doing...

And the way we demonstrate that trust is to be faithful:

- Faithful in helping those in need and rescuing those facing death.
- Faithful in preaching the Gospel!
- Faithful in lifting up our voices in prayer
- And faithfully living peaceful and productive lives, even in the midst of sin and judgment.
- May we be those who trust only in the Lord our helper!

Communion Meditation: Psalm 73:

“For I *was* envious of the boastful,
When I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

¹¹ And they say, “How does God know?
And is there knowledge in the Most High?”

¹² Behold, these *are* the ungodly,
Who are always at ease;
They increase *in* riches.

¹³ Surely I have cleansed my heart *in* vain,
And washed my hands in innocence.

¹⁴ For all day long I have been plagued,
And chastened every morning.

¹⁶ When I thought *how* to understand this,
It *was* too painful for me—

¹⁷ Until I went into the sanctuary of God;
Then I understood their end.

¹⁸ Surely You set them in slippery places;
You cast them down to destruction.

²⁸ But *it is* good for me to draw near to God;
I have put my trust in Jehovah GOD,
That I may declare all Your works.”