

*Pleading for the Defenseless*

*Prov. 31:8 Open your mouth for the speechless, In the cause of all who are appointed to die.*

There are many anniversaries that are observed with fond memories, weddings, graduations, there are some anniversaries that while they involved loss are observed with pride, the anniversary of D-Day for instance. Some anniversaries are observed with sorrow, but are accompanied with renewed resolve and a determination that their like not be repeated – 9/11 for instance.

There are however in history a few events that should be a cause for national shame. August 24, 1572 for instance. On that day throughout the nation of France, without warning French soldiers and Roman Catholic mobs fell upon unarmed French Protestants, and slaughtered over 100,000 men, women, and children. It was said that the rivers were so choked with bodies that no one ate fish for many months. The St. Bartholomew's day Massacre as it came to be called was greeted with jubilation in Rome and the Pope Gregory XIII had a medal struck to honor the occasion of the massacre of French Christians.

But as terrible as the anniversary of St. Bartholomew's day is, it actually pales in comparison with one our nation just observed. Yesterday, January 22<sup>nd</sup>, was the 32<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary of the Roe v. Wade decision, in which the Supreme Court of the United States in a 7-2 decision officially removed all legal protection from babies in the womb. As of January 22, 1973 the person-hood of the unborn was legally revoked, and their killing for whatever reason was sanctioned.

Now perhaps you think I am overstating the case, that what I just said was hyperbole and exaggeration. Friends, I wish it was, however that is the plain truth. William Rehnquist in his dissent at the time, made the point that would be the practical implication of the courts over-reaching and unconstitutional decision. The Senate Judiciary Committee officially put it this way in 1982:

***"As a result of the Roe decision, a right to abortion was effectively established for the entire term of pregnancy for virtually any reason, whether for sake of personal finances, social convenience, or individual lifestyle...Thus, the Committee observes that no significant legal barriers of any kind whatsoever exist in the United States for a woman to obtain an abortion for any reason during any stage of her pregnancy."***

Since that fateful decision 32 years ago, over 45 million legal abortions have been performed in the United States with less than 1 10<sup>th</sup> of 1%, that is less than 0.01% being for any medical reason at all. At present 1 in 3 pregnancies in the USA ends in abortion. As I said in a recent email: to put this in a different perspective, every 4 months there are more abortions than the total number of American casualties in World War Two. This year alone, more American lives will be ended by abortion than died in all of America's wars since the founding of this nation. The war on the unborn truly has been America's longest and costliest war.

Now why would we dwell on this? Its such an awful subject, why make people feel bad about it? Why not just turn a blind eye? Why not just preach the Gospel and go on? Because friends, the Gospel call does not just involve *indicatives*, it also has God given *imperatives*. It is not merely things to be known, it is also things to be done. Those things to be done, those Gospel imperatives, flow from what we know.

For instance, my calling as a gospel preacher is not merely to declare to you the good news from Luke 2:11 that ***"For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord"*** I have not fulfilled my commission unless I then follow that wonderful news up with the Gospel command:

***"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."*** (Mark 1:15)

God's does not call his people to merely know things, to only be hearers of the word, true Christians, as James put it are also *doers of the word*. We are called to act on the truth that is delivered to us.

In the scripture we read, the king is being told that it is his calling to be an advocate for the defenseless, that because of his position he is called to speak on behalf of those who are not able to defend themselves, especially in the case of all those who are potentially under sentence of death, because in that case there is no possibility for restitution. A death sentence cannot be reversed, therefore in capital cases justice must be exercised at that very highest and most impartial level.

Charles Bridges put it this way: ***"Thus our law makes the judge the counsel for the prisoner, who is unable to plead for himself – opening his mouth for the dumb. Thus should magistrates more carefully consider that no one should lose his just right from want of ability to defend it."***

The bible is full of examples of that principle of this in authority acting for those under threat of death.

***You have Jonathan, the prince regent of Israel, interceding with his father Saul on behalf of David, who is not able to plead his own case before the blood thirsty king.***

1 Samuel 19:4 ***Thus Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul his father, and said to him, "Let not the king sin against his servant, against David, because he has not sinned against you, and because his works have been very good toward you.***

***5 "For he took his life in his hands and killed the Philistine, and the LORD brought about a great deliverance for all Israel. You saw it and rejoiced. Why then will you sin against innocent blood, to kill David without a cause?"***

***6 So Saul heeded the voice of Jonathan, and Saul swore, "As the LORD lives, he shall not be killed."***

Queen Esther pleading for her people before the king, appointed by the malice of Haman for destruction. In both cases they plead the case of the defenseless even at the risk of endangering their own lives.

And then of course the greatest example, Jesus pleading not on behalf of the innocent, but interceding at the cost of his own life for those justly appointed for destruction. Interceding for you, when you were guilty and your mouth was rightly closed: Romans 5:8-10

***8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.***

***9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.***

***10 For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.***

*You, brothers and sisters, have received your salvation, your life through the effectual pleading of another.*

And yet there are millions appointed to die this very year who cannot open their mouths to plead for themselves, who cannot make their pleas known, who cannot even be heard in the midst of the most terrible pain.

On January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1973 Seven out of Nine Judges did not open their mouths for them, they were without earthly advocates in that day and so the fate of millions of babies was sealed.

Perhaps, yet your heart may still be somewhat hardened against them, you may be thinking to yourself "You're going to far preacher, those *foetuses* are not fully human beings you can't treat them as such."

I am convinced, that no one not irrecoverably hardened could say that if they have looked, as I have, at ultrasound images of little fingers and tiny toes, or watched a child sucking his thumb in the womb, or getting visibly irritated because someone is "*going like this*" with an ultrasound device all over his head and interrupting his nap. No one not lying to themselves that is.

But there is a higher standard even than that, even if we will deny the evidence of our eyes, God knows all of those children, they are all as much people to Him as you are. And He tells us that in his word, in the very words we sang in Psalm 139: "***13 For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb.***

***14 I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well.***

***15 My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.***

***16 Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When as yet there were none of them.***"

Perhaps even now though, you are saying "***Well maybe so, but still, abortion isn't as bad as murder***" That's true. Do you know what John Calvin said? He said it was *worse*. In commenting on Exodus 21:22 which deals with the judicial punishment for causing harm to a pregnant woman and her unborn child he wrote:

***"the foetus, though enclosed in the womb of its mother, is already a human being, (homo,) and it is almost a monstrous crime to rob it of the life which it has not yet begun to enjoy. If it seems more horrible to kill a man in his own house than in a field, because a man's house is his place of most secure refuge, it ought surely to be deemed more atrocious to destroy a foetus in the womb before it has come to light. On these grounds I am led to conclude, without hesitation, that the words, "if death should follow," must be applied to the foetus as well as to the mother. Besides, it would be by no means reasonable that a father should sell for a set sum the life of his son or daughter. Wherefore this, in my opinion, is the meaning of the law, that it would be a crime punishable with death, not only when the mother died from the effects of the abortion, but also if the infant should be killed; whether it should die from the wound abortively, or soon after its birth."***

The really sad thing is that the ethics of our society are so messed up, that while we now have a law on the books that agrees with Calvin's estimate, and as a result Scott Peterson was found to be guilty of murder for killing his unborn child, it would have been almost totally impossible for Laci Peterson to have been found guilty of the same crime. Even if it denies the right to fathers, our society has enshrined an absolute right of mothers to kill their unborn children.

Now I will not go on to discuss where this has caused our ethics to slip, how we have moved inexorably from abortion to euthanasia. Instead let us consider some applications.

1) ***First let me speak to the children.*** Kids, we have been discussing some scary truths today, and these things should make you think but *not* make you scared.

You have mommies and daddies who love you, who want to protect you, and who know you are the Lord's gift, His heritage, His treasure he gave to them, and that makes you very precious. Your mommies and your daddies are loving and serving God by bringing you into this world and then raising you to love him. The fact that you are in here on the Lord's day, is a testimony to that, because it isn't easy. My hope is that you will grow up to be like them in those ways.

***So let me tell you an important way you can do that:*** How many times when you have done something wrong have you tried to cover it up or hide it? When I was your age, sometimes when I was playing with something I shouldn't have been, when I broke it, I would try to hide it and if I couldn't hide it, I would try to put it back together, so that it looked like it wasn't broken. Now until my parents found the thing I broke, I was always afraid, I would feel guilty, and terrible.

And then when my parents finally picked the thing up it would fall apart, and then I would say "How'd that happen?" and pretend I hadn't broken it. Which was a lie. I took one sin, *breaking something I wasn't supposed to be playing with* and made it much worse by lying. And I didn't feel any better, I felt worse. Two wrongs don't make a right. Never. Remember, when you do something wrong, your parents are happy when you just tell them. They will be proud of you for telling the truth and doing the right thing even when it is difficult. And you may get a little punishment, but they are going to forgive you, and you will feel much better.

Remember that rule as you grow up. ***Because you might be tempted someday to do something much, much, worse to cover up for a sin.*** Don't ever do that. Remember your father in heaven is waiting to forgive you. **"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."** (1 John 1:9)

2) ***Now what do you do about all this?*** Obey the imperative to "Open your mouth for the speechless, in the cause of all who are appointed to die" in the cause of the unborn. Brothers and Sisters, do not leave this world without once having plead for those who are most defenseless. If you ask, but what can I do? ***Speak the truth in Love!*** Do not close your mouth about abortion for fear of offending or being thought mean, or weird, and intolerant. Remember God's standard **not mens**, the men, and weird, and intolerant position is the one that says that the weakest and most defenseless members of society may be put to death ***for virtually any reason, whether for sake of personal finances, social convenience, or individual lifestyle.***

John Calvin wrote his great Institutes of Christian Religion because saw himself standing as it were between two rivers of blood, those in France who had died for the Reformed faith, and those who were appointed to die, so he wrote his great work as a defense of the faith of those who could not plead for themselves.

***"If I do not oppose it righteously and to the best of my ability,' said Calvin, 'I shall fairly be called cowardly and disloyal on account of my silence.' He will speak, he will rush between the executioners and their victims. A heavenly word rang through his soul: Open thy mouth for the dumb in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction. (Proverbs 31:8) He therefore formed one of those resolutions which, in a character such as his, are unalterable. 'I will obey Him who speaks to me from on high,' he said. 'I will reply to the wicked tales that are circulated against my brethren; and as similar cruelties may be practiced against many other believers, I will endeavor to touch foreign nations with some compassion in their favor. Such was the reason,'***

Only God knows how many men, who would have become murderers of the Saints instead became their defenders because of it!

Write, speak, advocate and if the Lord puts it on your heart, consider going even further, working in a crisis pregnancy center, or adopting and making one of those "unwanted" children.

- 3) *Lastly one of the things that we are constantly warned of is that we mustn't speak of this subject, or preach about it, because there may be someone who has already gotten an abortion listening to us.* This logic is so flawed, I hardly know where to begin. It is like saying, don't speak about lying, because you might have liars in the congregation. *Don't speak about sin, because someone might have sinned? Friends, those are directions from the pit of hell, not the lover of men's souls.* The gospel is precisely about forgiveness of sins! I simply will not speak and preach to men and women and not offer them the true forgiveness that Christ freely offers. Every Sunday, I stand here and preach as a forgiven murderer, sent to give assurance to other forgiven murderers and imploring others no better or worse than I to come to Christ. Friends, you may have had no part in the sin of abortion, but sure it is that your sins had a hand in putting Christ on the cross as surely as if you had driven in the nails with your own hand.

*And if you have had a part in the sin of abortion, take heart, there is no sin that so great that God's grace is not greater still. Christ's compassion for his children, the ones whom he redeemed by His blood, is greater than ours ever will be, and He has never left or forsaken a one of them:*

**Is 49:13 Sing, O heavens! Be joyful, O earth! And break out in singing, O mountains! For the LORD has comforted His people, And will have mercy on His afflicted.**

**14 But Zion said, "The LORD has forsaken me, And my Lord has forgotten me."**

**15 "Can a woman forget her nursing child, And not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, Yet I will not forget you.**

**16 See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands; Your walls are continually before Me.**