

## Sanctity of Human Life Sunday Jan 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2011

Today (1/23/11) marks "Sanctity of Human Life Sunday". It's a day when Christians give a special thought to the fact that life is sacred. I won't get into the emotions of how we have to have a "Sanctity of Human Life Sunday" here. I'll talk about some thoughts on how Christians appear to be missing the point. Maybe that's a harsh introduction but I hope you'll see what I mean as we go on...

Abortion is something I get really emotional about. All I have to do is listen to a story involving abortion (either a sad story about one happening or a happy story about a change of heart on the part of a mother or worker) and tears well up. Heck today I just broke down while praying on a drive after listening to a Focus on the Family story. The closest this has come to my life was with a family member who experienced rough circumstances surrounding the decision to choose abortion. While I think that affected me somewhat, this really feels like an issue that God has placed as an aching burden on my heart and it's from that perspective that I write this.

As a Christian you don't have to read far into the Bible to find references to the special place of mankind in God's creation (Throughout Genesis 1-11, Psalm 8:5, John 3:16, to name a few). An excerpt from Psalm 139 is often used when talking about life and I'll quote it here:

*13 For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.*

*14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.*

*15 My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.*

*16 Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.*

(Psalm 139:13-16)

**Knit together.** When I imagine the picture the word conjures I see love, thought, design and time poured into something. Two hands intimately close to what they are making. He knit us together in our mothers' wombs. Before we even came into physical being. Before our DNA was even formed, our days were ordained for us. Before we even walked this earth, Christ was appointed to die for us and pay the price of our sins. We didn't enter this world as a pimple on our mother's uterus, but as a complete person from the time of inception. We are referred to as His sheep and He as our Shepherd in a few Scriptures. These references all point to the love we are each created with. If you call yourself a Christian and take the Bible as God's literal truth then there is no escaping the fact that we are loved. That we are cared for. That we are each special creations of a loving God.

Now we can take these verses and sentiments and do a few things with them. When it comes to life we (and I truly am speaking to myself first here and include myself in this and all future we's) often apply these verses to the separate life that is being knit over 9 months. Great use of these verses. Great rally cry to support putting money into pro-life organizations, candidates, etc. and "fighting".

**But...**Is that really where we are most effective? I'm not suggesting we stop supporting organizations that try to educate legislators and the public on these issues. I'm not suggesting we stop voting for candidates who don't share our views on life. I'm not suggesting that organizations like Right To Life and Cornerstone don't continue to look for public policy avenues of change here. We are a part of this world and live by the rules and law of the governments God has ordained. We live in a form of government that allows citizens to impact the agenda of law and we should definitely keep this up.

**But...**Look at the past 38 or so years and 50 million or so US abortions since Roe V. Wade. **Is that really where we are most effective?** Is that even what we are first called to do by Christ? When I look at the great commission, Jesus' response to the woman at the well, his response to sinners or his parables I just can't say we are. Take those same verses about life and think about who else they apply to for a minute.

They apply to the baby, no question. They apply to you. They apply to me. They apply to the doctor performing abortions. They apply to the nurse helping in the abortion clinic. They apply to the woman who feels boxed in, lost and hopeless who sees this "procedure" described so clinically and coldly as her only choice. They apply to the parents who are struggling with their teen daughter that just became pregnant. Those verses apply to all of us.

If you are honest with yourself you ask what you deserve in eternity. If you ask what the wages of your works are, the answer back should be quick. Death. Hell. Well, that makes us no different in terms of worthiness than anyone mentioned above, right? That puts us all in the same spot of needing to lean completely on Christ and His Work on the cross, right? It makes us all in need of forgiveness, mercy and grace.

We saw what the law does and did without Christ. It condemns people. It sentences people for the crime of not living up to a Holy standard. Paul refers to this theme throughout much of his letter to the Romans. That the law condemns us and without the Grace of Christ it leaves us all guilty of sin. Convicted and sentenced to death.

Now here is the part where I think the church publicly seems to be missing the boat. I am not saying there isn't hope, mercy and grace through groups like "Options For Women" or "40 Days For Life" and individuals who love those touched by abortion in some way. What I am saying is that from my point of view the focus of the church (and to be sure we are on the same page about the "church", I mean the worldwide body of people who trust in Christ and see Him as our head, not some specific church or group) seems to be the politics. It seems to be winning arguments. We seem to be throwing out the people for the principle.

What's the result of that? Bickering, anger, resentment, hardening of hearts, hatred and more ruined lives in the process. Is that what you want? Is that what I want? No way. No man. Even just typing this, my heart breaks. My eyes are filling and my heart feels heavy thinking that the effect of focusing on the politics and not the people is more death. More broken lives and hurt people. That isn't what we want. It shouldn't be. It can't be.

We want abortion to stop. We want to take the stress and pressure off the women and families who feel that's their only option. We want to see more people trust Jesus Christ as their Savior. We want to meet these babies and see their mother's lives turned upside down--but this time with the joy of meeting her baby or the joy of helping a family that is desperately seeking to adopt a child of their own. We want wounds fixed by Christ.

You know what? Christ wants that also. He wants to wipe away tears. He wants to show these hurting people some of the names He is referred to in the Bible. Names like Advocate, Prince of Peace, The Great Physician, Counselor or The Good Shepherd. His will is for each of the people I mentioned above to be in a relationship with Him. He longs for them to seek Him and be forever changed by Him. Christian friend, He wants to use you to do that. He wants to use me to do that. We can't if we don't get out of His way first. We can't if we let our healthy emotions turn into anger. We can't let pride of winning an argument take over. I guess one way to look at this is we can't forget where Christ first found us, beloved. We can't forget the definition of grace or mercy includes "undeserving". We can't forget our places.

Today's Focus on the Family with 40 days for life really hit that home some more. I just gave you a list of "we can't's" but how about some "we should's"? We should be praying for our crisis pregnancy centers that make positive outreaches to women who are feeling stuck and hopeless. We should be praying for those women going to abortion clinics. That they would have a change of heart, that they would open their hearts to God. We should be praying for those performing abortions that they would see what they are doing in plain and simple terms and seek a change in life. We should be praying for our communities to reach out to those less fortunate.

Finally, we need to change ourselves. We should be humbling ourselves before the Lord. Laying each sin at His feet. Laying our plans at His altar. We should be dying to self daily and asking Christ to live through us more and more each day. We should sincerely be asking Him to show us people as He sees them and asking ourselves how we can be used by Him and allow Him to work for His glory through us, in spite of us. We need to be salt and light. We need to show love. I don't mean a mamby-pamby permissive, dismissive of sin type of love. I mean we need to love people like Christ loved us--love *them* where they are but not necessarily love *where they are* and let that love motivate us to help them find the exit from their present way. Let that love motivate us to tell them about the changes Christ wrought in our own life.

We need to be sacrificially giving when we can, to places like Crisis Pregnancy Centers and allowing them to have a positive outreach. We need to leave our judgment hats at home and look in someone's eyes and be Christ for that person. Show His love, His accepting and real love. A love they won't ever experience apart from Him.

I've rambled long enough. Suffice it to say that this Sanctity of Human Life Sunday I'll be praying for all those lives touched by abortion--not just those babies who face the risk of joining the 50 million in Heaven but even more this year for those women walking around the grocery store with me or driving on the highway with me while they feel like they are being torn apart inside.

If you've read this far, won't you join me in a quick prayer? It doesn't matter when you read this, God's timing is different than ours. It will be like you prayed with me even if you're reading this a couple days from now. For some, perhaps you were on the other side. Maybe you were feeling stuck and led with cold terminology and semantics down the path of an abortion. Maybe you've worked at an abortion clinic. I trust you now have seen God's plan and will join our prayer.

“Oh God. Oh Heavenly Father. You are a gracious and loving Lord. You are good and pure and deserve our adoration. You deserve our praises and we lift them up to You. Thank You for creating us. Thank You for sending Jesus to pay our way into Heaven. We come to You with abortion heavy on our hearts and minds. We live in a time and place where it still astonishes me that we have this to pray about. It boggles my mind that we even are in a position to have to pray about this but we do, Lord. We do. Father, we ask that you would work to stop this blight in our society, that somehow it would become an act that isn't seen again. Until that day, we ask for Your guidance, Your wisdom in being Christ to those going through abortions. We think of the pregnant women, many who feel so scared, so boxed in and pressured that abortion actually becomes the easy choice in this society. We ask that You would surround them with Christian witnesses who love You and love them accordingly. We ask that they would find pregnancy resource centers and look at an ultrasound, listen to advice and consider options other than abortion. That we can be salt and light to this world and that we can have this same love to those performing abortions. Oh Father, many of them are probably torn apart or undergoing stress of their own. Many are perhaps even numb to what they are doing after spending 9-5 each day doing this. Lord let us love them with the same love that You loved us before we knew You. Let us listen to them, have opportunities to pray with and for them and be witnesses to them of what You've done in our own lives.

Father, we ask that You show us all that You are a God of second chances. That You are a God who forgives and loves. That You are a God who radically changes lives every day and that everyone's lives are just as changeable as Paul's or the fishermen who put down their nets and followed your Son. Lord, I pray that if others don't know You that they will seek You, that they will realize that the pit in their heart is You tugging at their heart, asking to come in.

Father, let hearts be open this year. Let lives be changed this year and let Your adopted children work your will this year and show love and compassion so strongly that abortion just decreases on its own from a decreasing interest. It's in the name of Your Son, my savior, Jesus Christ that I pray to You and praise Your Name today. Amen.”

**A thought to really leave you with** - Wouldn't it be amazing if all of the political bickering and litmus tests just stopped one day because abortion stopped becoming such a lucrative business or because more Christians stepped up to the plate and showed Christ's love to those struggling?

Written in Christian love and through much prayer,

*Mike Walsh*