

Life is Precious

02/03/2013

0 Comments



Some of you may have heard the legendary story of Vince Lombardi and the Green Bay Packers. The Packers franchise had been a losing team for almost ten straight years. They were at the bottom of the standings, and morale was sagging.

Vince Lombardi was called in to turn the team around. He began leading practices, inspiring, training, motivating. But the team was horrible.

Genesis 9:1-7

At one point in a practice he got so frustrated that he blew the whistle and stopped everything.

"Everybody stop and gather around," he said. Then he knelt down, picked up the pigskin, and said, "Let's start at the beginning. This is a football. These are the yard markers. I'm the coach. You are the players." He went on, in the most elementary of ways, to explain the basics of football.^[1]

There sometimes comes a point where you have to come back to the basics. Whenever things have been completely fouled up and the blunders are excessive, you have to stop. Before you can go on or make any sort of headway you have to go back and review the fundamental principles

LISTEN TO SERMONS

Doctrine on Fire

Audio recordings
of history's greatest sermons



Heaven is a World of Love, by
Jonathan Edwards



The Mental Agonies of Hell, by
Robert Murray M'Cheyne

I believe that is exactly what is occurring in the passage that is before us this morning. In our passage, the Lord is taking us back to something that we saw in Genesis 1. In this passage the Lord reiterates the principle of how sacred human life really is.

You remember that prior to the flood, man's evil was in excess. Violence had escalated to the point where it had become the "in thing" and a commonplace reality. You might say that men, by their wicked acts, had ravaged the world almost as badly as the flood had.

Because there was such little regard for life—because things had been completely fouled up, God sent the flood. He stopped everything. And here in this passage we see him starting all over. He goes back to the basics and reiterates the fact that life is precious. In this new creation our Lord reaffirms the sanctity of human life.

I believe that there could not be a better word for us to hear this morning. For we are living in a time of excessive savagery and bloodshed (and that might be putting it mildly!). Our culture has a blasphemous regard for human life. In most cities in America you can hire a hitman for \$300, and he will go in and terminate the life of your baby in an abortion. Then there are the mass shootings that seem to be occurring on a weekly basis. For that matter, we can tune it in on our televisions or have it streamed over our computers. We can watch movies where people are gunned down at will and we cheer for it. Hollywood is pretty much synonymous with the frivolous treatment of life.

Because we are immersed in this kind of culture, it is good that we hear what the Lord says here. We need to blow the whistle and have the Lord reiterate to us just how precious human life is.

In this passage the Lord highlights the sanctity of life in three ways. The first way he does this is by commanding us to procreate.

I. Commanding us to procreate [1, 7]



The World Ripe To Harvest: Reap or It Perishes



The Danger of a Life of Pleasure



How Shall We Escape If We Neglect So Great a Salvation?



Judgments, A Call to Repentance

As a matter of fact, it is so important that he states it twice, once at the outset of the passage and once at the end. He begins this passage by saying, "And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.'" And then he repeats it in verse 7, "And you, be fruitful and multiply, teem on the earth and multiply in it."

Now, you remember that the Bible usually repeats things for the purpose of emphasis. There is a sense in which this is an important message for Noah and his family. Of course, there is a practical reason for this. The world has just been wiped and it needs to be repopulated.

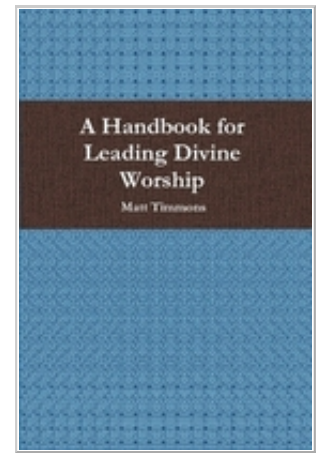
But I do think that there is more to it than that. God is concerned with more than just numbers. The Lord is making a pro-life statement. He's saying, "Hey Noah. Don't get the idea that life is insignificant. Life is precious! So have children!"

These are words that ought to ring in our ears too. A few weeks ago we talked about abortion and how that is a blight on our nation. It is good to have that discussion and affirm our stance on that issue. But we also need to realize that God calls us to do more than stand against the murder of children. He calls us to proactively have children. He wants us to procreate and multiply and build whole societies with the passing of every generation.

I mentioned a couple of weeks ago that the size of the average family in America today. The average family in America has 1.9 children. That is definitely not being fruitful and multiplying. That is being barren and imploding. But we would be fools if we thought that this only because of abortion. A lot of it has to do with ordinary couples who are intentionally not having children. A lot of this has to do with our free and liberal use of contraception.

I believe a passage like this should make us think seriously about our use of birth control and whether or not we should go about limiting the number of children we have.

We Americans have a natural distaste for having multiple children. Even among those who have not had an abortion there is oftentimes a shared mentality with those who have. Even though we might not have had an abortion, many of us still consider children to be an



A Handbook for Leading Divine
Worship

Matt's Sermons

[All](#)

[1 Corinthians](#)

[1 John](#)

[1 Peter](#)

[1 Thessalonians](#)

[1 Timothy](#)

[Acts](#)

[Deuteronomy](#)

[Genesis](#)

[Isaiah](#)

[John](#)

[Luke](#)

[Malachi](#)

[Matthew](#)

[Numbers](#)

[Proverbs](#)

[Psalms](#)

[Revelation](#)

inconvenience.

Now there is some truth to that. Children are an inconvenience to a life of pleasure. And a lot of times people have used contraception much like an abortion. They just want to keep from having children so that they can continue pursuing the bigger house and more toys.

Don't get me wrong. I'm not condemning bigger houses and having some nice things in life. That is not the issue here. The issue is whether or not we are really seeking to carry out God's command to "be fruitful and multiply." And that has implications for the use of contraception.

In 1936 the Christian Reformed Church adopted a statement on Christian family planning and the use of birth control. This statement continues to be an up-to-date word regarding the subject. In that document they said this, "In the light of the Scriptural principle...there can be no doubt that it is the duty, as well as the privilege, of normally endowed married people to produce as large a number of children as is compatible with the physical, mental, and spiritual well-being of the wife and mother on the one hand, and of the children on the other."

I believe that this is a good summation of how we as Christians ought to think about the use of birth control. You will notice that it does not expressly reject the use of contraception. We should not think that birth control is absolutely forbidden. There may be occasions where we ought to refrain from having children. As the CRC statement said, we need to think about the physical, mental, and spiritual well-being of the mother and the children. If mom's wellness is unstable, then that probably wouldn't be a good time to add another child to the mix. There may be some other contexts where you find yourself needing to refrain from having children for a season—such as a lack of gainful employment.

Yet, while there may be some allowances, we ought to recognize that limiting the size of our family for selfish reasons is simply unlawful.

God wants us to procreate. And he wants us to do so because life is precious. That is the real result of a truly pro-life position. If we really do recognize how sacred human life is, then we

Romans

Archives

[February 2013](#)

[January 2013](#)

[December 2012](#)

[November 2012](#)

[October 2012](#)

[September 2012](#)

[August 2012](#)

[July 2012](#)

[June 2012](#)

[May 2012](#)

[April 2012](#)

[March 2012](#)

[February 2012](#)

[January 2012](#)

[December 2011](#)

[November 2011](#)

[October 2011](#)

[September 2011](#)

[August 2011](#)

[July 2011](#)

[June 2011](#)

[May 2011](#)

[April 2011](#)

[February 2011](#)

will understand why God commands us to reproduce. And the sanctity of life we will fertility as a holy calling and a most glorious thing.

As I said before, God's command to procreate is perhaps the most important way we recognize the sanctity of human life. But you'll notice that it is not the only way God highlights how precious life is. In verses 2-4 the Lord affirms our dominion over the animals.

II. Affirming our dominion over the animals [2-4]

In verse 2 the Lord says that "the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth." Then, in verse 3, we find that God grants us the permission to eat meat. Up until this point we had not been granted that right.

You remember that in Genesis one God told Adam to "rule over the birds of the heavens and the beasts of the earth." Here we see that that role of ruling and having dominion is being reiterated (and you might say that it is being expanded to some degree).

But what we should see is that this is another way of emphasizing just how precious the life of man is. Man's life is so sacred that he has a place above the animals. The animal kingdom is under our dominion because we are endowed with a dignity and honor that exceeds theirs.

Keep in mind, man has shown himself to be rather base. Prior to the flood all we heard about was how sinful man had become. The violence that he is capable of really reveals how degenerate man can become.

Perhaps you have heard people talk like this after the last school shooting out in Connecticut. People will say things like, "What kind of animal would do such a thing?" Or, someone might say, "Animals don't even do that to one another!"

I remember hearing John Gerstner talking about the depravity of man. Someone was questioning him on just how sinful man was, and they said, "Do you really believe man is a worm?" He responded by saying, "No. I would never insult the worms like that."

[January 2011](#)

[December 2010](#)

[November 2010](#)

[October 2010](#)

[July 2010](#)

[June 2010](#)

[May 2010](#)

[April 2010](#)

[March 2010](#)

[February 2010](#)

It is true. With all the wickedness of man, one may wonder if he has lost his exalted position in the world that God originally gave him, and descended to a place below that of the animals. And with that the thought may be, “Well, man is expendable because he is no greater than the toads or the beasts of the earth.”

But here he shows that man has not lost his place as God’s co-regent. Because of the sanctity of life, no matter how brutish a man may become or beast like he may seem in his sin, man is still the highest creature in God’s creation—and his life is to be cherished.

You will notice that the only restriction that God gives is that man is not allowed to eat meat with blood still in it. And it explains that this is because the blood is its “life.” I personally believe that this also has to do with the sanctity of life.

The commentaries that I read said that this restriction is given for the purpose of restraining man’s cruelty. To eat an animal with its blood still in it means that there is little time in between the slaying and the eating. To eat something without the blood, you have to go through the process of draining the carcass and preparing the meat sufficiently. But if you eat it with the blood still in it, then you don’t have that discipline. There is little time between the violence of killing and eating.

The commentaries suggest that this prohibition was to help to keep us from acting like savages. It is mean to keep us from disrespecting all forms of life, most especially man’s. First of all, the animals were still to be seen as God’s animals, and—thought they can be used for food and nourishment—they are not to be scornfully treated. What’s more, if you treat animals with such flippancy, then what restraint will you have when it comes to your fellow man? If you just rip open an animal and devour its flesh raw, then you are likely acting out of passion. And those same passions will cause you to denigrate your fellow man.

All this is to say, we continue to have dominion over the animals. And this only serves to highlight how much we must esteem the life of man and view it as precious in the sight of God.

This, of course, is further explained in the next portion of our text. In verses 5-6 we see that God not only forbids the unlawful taking of life, but he institutes the death penalty as a means of dealing with those people who would.

III. Institutes capital punishment [5-6]

He says, "For your lifeblood I will require a reckoning: from every beast I will require it and from man. From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man. 6 'Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image.'"

Now this may come as a surprise to you. It may even seem contrary to the argument at first glance. We've been talking about how precious life is and how it is to be respected. Now we are talking about capital punishment. God tells us that there are occasions when life needs to be ended. If there is a murder, then God says this is an appropriate time to take that person's life.

And this is why many people today argue against capital punishment. They use this line of reasoning and say, "If life is so precious, then how is it you can require the death penalty? If it is so valuable, how is it that you can take a life in any circumstance—even if it be in the case of a murderer?"

But the Biblical answer is that the murder must die. And if you think about it for a moment, the logic is clear. When someone commits murder, they have disregarded the life of their victim. Now, because that life was so precious, the life of this murderer must be taken.

Or think about it this way: If we allow a murderer to live we cheapen the life that was lost. It essentially says that this life was not all that valuable. If there are no significant consequences, then the life that was lost is deemed to be rather trivial.

You see, God puts the focus on the victim and not the perpetrator of the crime. And the only

way to truly compensate for the loss of that life is to have the perpetrator put to death himself.

Of course, this is not to be taken into our own hands. It is not our individual duty to be the judge, jury and executioner. We understand that the Lord is also instituting the lawful role of a governing body here. We read in Romans 13 a clearer and fuller statement of what we have here. There we find that the Lord has given to the state the power of the sword. And you know what swords are for. The state is to act as God's minister; he is to act as God's avenger by punishing the evil doer.

But the principle that we find here in Genesis 9 is clear enough even though it be in seed form: those who commit murder ought to be put to death. Those who perform abortions, the state should be rounding them up and seeing to it that they are put to death. Those who are convicted of homicide— ought to be given some brief spiritual counsel and then they ought to put to death.

Someone may object here and say, "Well, the death penalty doesn't act as a deterrence to crime." There has been a great deal of chatter about that in recent years. There have been a number of studies that been in the news, and these say that the death penalty does not act as a deterrence to crime.

There are a number of things that I would say in response to this. The first is this: I agree. Putting a man to death in a back room where no one can see or hear will most certainly not prevent others from committing the same crime. Perhaps if we had public hangings like they did in previous years, then we might see some different results.

I can say with 100% confidence that it does act as a deterrence because there is at least one person who will never have a chance to commit another crime. All you hear about in the prison system is the "recidivism rate." But I have a great plan to reduce the number of reoffenders! If he is put to death, he will never lift his hand again to defy someone's life. So, yes, it does deter crime to some degree.

The last thing I would say is, "I don't care." I don't care if capital punishment does not act as a deterrence to crime. We don't execute criminals because of its effects on society at large. We execute them because the Bible tells us to do so. God has said in his word that life is precious. And he says here that if you violate that sacred creation by means of homicide, then you must die.

Conclusion:

I recognize that some of what has been said today may not sit well with some people. However, I hope you see how it all points to how much esteem God places on the life of man.

What's more, I hope that by this message you see the significance of the birth, life and death of God's own Son. You know, Jesus reiterated how precious life is by virtue of his birth. He could have left us to our sin. But he didn't. He became man and took on flesh to redeem man.

He also, during his life, affirmed the dignity of man in perhaps the most stunning terms. He said, "If you say to someone Raca (i.e. a dumbhead), then you are in danger of hell fire." Jesus reminded us that if you even go so far as to denigrate a man by calling him a name, then that is a high crime against heaven. And God will bring you to judgment.

Here is a man who so valued the life of man that it was said of him that "a bruised reed he would not break; a faintly burning wick he would not snuff out." That is to say, he so valued man that he acted in the most tender and gentle way toward man.

But this man, who never offended any man so long as he lived, was put to death. And his death was in the form of capital punishment! Crucifixion was reserved for capital offenses. And this was all part of God's plan. His sacred life ended that he might take the punishment that each and every one of us deserves.

He died the death so that we might learn to regard the life of man as we should. As we read here today of how precious life is, let us remember that Jesus is precious too. And because he

has given his life for ours, may we now heed his calling to esteem our fellow man as we ought.

[1] Adapted from John Hunt’s [This is a football](#).

Tweet

1

Like

4

Comments

Your comment will be posted after it is approved.

Leave a Reply

Name (required)

Email (not published)

Website

Comments

☐ Notify me of new comments to this post by email

Submit

Photo used under Creative Commons from [UENOJURI PTT](#)