

“Abortion and the Gospel”

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Abortion and the gospel. I want to remind you who I am and where we are: I am speaking to you about abortion - not as a politician, not as a political commentator, not as a judge, or a lawyer, or a professor, or a scientist - I speak to you as a pastor of the local church. I'm standing in the midst of a local church. So, that's who I am. And the idea - the reason - why this is important is, I went to the Medford chamber of commerce here, not too long ago, and I guess sportsmanship is kind of rough right now in youth sports. Have you been to a youth sporting event lately? The athletes don't have the best sportsmanship. The parents are all getting riled up in the stands. The refs are doing their thing and they say, you know, one of the ways that we can make it better is this whole idea of “know your role.” So, when you're a parent in the stands, that means that you're not the ref, you're actually not the coach of the team, you're the parent. You need to know what your role is. You can only be one thing at one time. So, my role this morning is that of pastor in the local church. In some ways, it'd be easier to be a lawyer just trying to win a case, or a politician just trying to get elected. In some ways, it'd be easier just speaking to a red state or a blue state, or just trying to rile up the base. But as a pastor in the local church, the Lord has called me (and called us) to teach the Bible and to preach the gospel, not just to red states or blue states, but to all people, everywhere. As we gather, that's what we're thinking about. And there's only one message that's big enough to do all of that: the gospel of Jesus Christ. So, we're going to think about abortion - what the Bible has to say about it - but not just leave us there on some kind of a sin-inspection sort of a thing, because that would be hopeless, but we're going to think about the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. It really does change everything.

My good friends, Paul and Melanie, went to the mission field in an Islamic country. They were planting a church and teaching the Bible and furthering the gospel there in that land, and wouldn't you know, Melanie got pregnant and was going to her regularly scheduled doctor's visit to see how the baby was doing, and while she was in the waiting room, there was another gal, a Muslim gal, in the waiting room there with her. It wasn't a checkup – she was there to get an abortion. As you know, in Islamic society there's tremendous shame and risk in being a single mother. And Melanie - right there on the spot- says to her, “Don't abort your baby. My husband and I will adopt your baby if you bring it forth!” And she agreed, right there on the spot. And sure enough, both moms continued and carried their pregnancies forward, and the two boys were born only days apart. Melanie gave birth to Timothy, and the other baby they named Titus. So, Timothy and Titus, growing up there, and they've since been doing missionary work in Ukraine and all of that. But I wonder what would take a gal like Melanie from to be so pro-life there on the mission field? To take a huge risk like that? Is it because she was so wealthy as a missionary? Ha! That doesn't even exist! Wealthy missionaries, right?! What would move her to that deep of conviction of pro-life? Well, maybe it's that she grew up in a church kind of like this.

In Luke, chapter one, there are two miraculous conceptions. There's old barren Elizabeth. She has wanted a baby, but hasn't been able to get pregnant her entire life. Now she has passed her childbearing years and it's a double whammy. There's no way she's getting pregnant unless God intervenes. And indeed, the angel Gabriel comes and announces to her husband, “Elizabeth is going to conceive and give birth to a son.” And indeed, Elizabeth gets pregnant. She's got a relative named Mary, and the angel Gabriel goes to Mary and says, “Mary, greetings, highly favored one. You have found honor in the sight of God, and you are going to conceive and give birth to a son.”

So, you've got this gal named Mary, a teenager, and this angel is talking about an unplanned pregnancy. Joseph doesn't see this thing coming. And yet Mary said, “How is this going to happen?” And

the angel says, "The Holy Spirit will overshadow you, and the power of the Most High. He's going to be a descendant of David." It's a miraculous, fantastic, amazing prophecy. You know it well. And so, Mary says, "Let it be done unto me, according to your word. I am the hand maiden of the Lord." And so, Mary now is with child, and she goes to visit Elizabeth. Let's pick up in verse 39,

Mary rose and went with haste into the hill country to a town of Judah, and she entered the house of Zacharia and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb.

What leaped in her womb? The baby leaped in her womb. Not a mass of fetal tissue, but actually a baby. Six months along in this pregnancy, the baby leaped in her womb.

When Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, she was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, Mary, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. Why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?"

Notice who she refers to Mary as: 'the mother of my Lord.' Mary is early on in her pregnancy. She has not given birth to a baby boy yet. She has not given birth to the Messiah. She has not yet given birth to the one who is fully God and fully man. And yet she is already, Elizabeth says, the mother of my Lord. She's a mother, because she has baby Jesus on board. Verse 44,

For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.

Here's what happened: the baby, he heard too somehow. He's leaping for joy. Only people leap for joy. There's something very personal, very intimate, very alive, that this baby, John the Baptist, leaps for joy.

So, maybe something that informed Melanie's perspective on the pro-life issue, why she would say, "We'll adopt your baby right now," and follow through with it, maybe it's because part of it was, she read this Christmas after Christmas and saw that that which is in the womb is a baby.

Luke 2:12,

And this will be a sign for you shepherds. You will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.

Whether it's in the womb or outside of the womb, freshly born, this is a baby that we're talking about! Verse 16,

And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the baby lying in a manger.

Isaiah 49. Now we're going from the birth of Jesus about 2000 years ago, to Isaiah talking about beginnings, talking about that which is in the womb, even being called from the womb, maybe seven or 800 years before Christ. Isaiah 49:1,

Listen to me O coastlands, and give attention, you peoples from afar. The Lord called me from the womb, from the body of my mother He named my name. He made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of His hand, He hid me. He made me a polished arrow in His quiver. He hid me away and He said to me, "You are my servant Israel, in whom I will be glorified." But I said, "I have labored in vain. I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity; yet surely my right is with the Lord and my recompense with my God." And now the Lord says, He who formed me from the womb to be His servant, to bring Jacob back to Him; and that Israel might be gathered to Him - for I am honored in the eyes of the Lord and my God has become my strength. He says, "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to

raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”

This ultimately refers to Jesus as not only the light of the nations, but also the light of the world. That His salvation might reach to the ends of the earth, even to Medford, Oregon. So amazing!

Jeremiah 1:4,

Now the word of the Lord came to me, saying,

“Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you. And before you were born, I consecrated you. I appointed you a prophet to the nations.”

That God is the one who formed Jeremiah in the womb. He is the one who knew Jeremiah in the womb. And as I read this, these are verses that also helps me move from being pro-choice to pro-life. The reality is that the Bible doesn't have a verse that says, “Thou shall not have abortions.” Read the Bible from cover to cover. That verse isn't in there. And yet it's not that abortions weren't known in Bible times. They were. But God's people had such a high view of the sanctity of life - that God created life and created people in His image, according to His likeness - that neither the Jewish Hebrews, nor the Christians practiced abortion. You can look at it all throughout history and see the difference that God's people have made regarding this issue.

When does life begin?

What is that in the womb?

What is the nature of the unborn?

That which is in the womb is a baby. That is a child, created in God's image, formed by God, and known by God. And then we also want to think about the gospel, these four words: creation, fall, redemption, consummation.

This is the gospel in four words.

Creation. God created the heavens and the earth, and He looked upon His work and He called it good (Genesis chapter one). Along came Adam and Eve, and Adam sinned and messed everything up in a huge way. These fires that we're seeing? The smoke that we're breathing? All the consequences of the fall. The thorns growing, it's all under a curse. So, sin messed everything up. That's the **fall**, but God didn't leave us there. He didn't turn us over to our own devices and just say up, "You messed it up. I'll go try on another planet." No, God took action. He was moved with compassion. God so loved the world that He sent his only begotten son, Jesus, that which was conceived by the Holy Spirit, in the virgin womb of Mary, to live the perfect life that we have not lived, to die the death that we deserved, to rise again on the third day, to ascend into heaven and to come back soon. **Redemption** and **consummation**.

Creation: life given.

Fall: life taken.

Redemption: life saved.

Consummation: life perfected.

Psalm 139, written by king David. If you go to pregnancy care centers, if you're on their mailing lists, Psalm 139 is probably the key passage, the key chapter, for this issue, and something that struck me yesterday for this topic that is so hot, so challenging, so controversial, so hard, is that God speaks to

it in one of the most comforting passages in the entire Bible. If you were to ask pastors, “Hey, what are the five most comforting chapters in the entire Bible?” many of us would turn to Psalm 139.

O Lord, you have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down, and when I rise up. You discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before there is a word on my tongue, behold, o Lord, You know it all together. You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me. It is high; I cannot attain it.

Isn't God amazing? He knows every single person in this room. He knows the page number of the Bible that you're looking at. He knows the thoughts that you're thinking, the cares that you have, and He's intimately and intricately working in your life and my life.

Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from Your presence? If I ascend to heaven, You are there. If I make my bed in Sheol, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me. If I say, “Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night,” even the darkness is not dark to you. The night is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light with You. For You formed my inward parts. You knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works, my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you even when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me. How precious to me are your thoughts, O God. How vast is the sum of them. Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

So, we're thinking about God as creator; that He creates people in His very own image there in the womb. And think about that for yourself. That God is the One who knitted you together. He's the One who formed you. You are fearfully and wonderfully made by this amazing God. Moms think about that process. When you were with child, how God Himself was knitting and forming that little one inside of you, with all of the delicacy and tenderness required. So amazing!

There's a medical doctor by the name of David E. Rockwell. He was an anesthesiologist, and he wrote this back in 1980. "Years ago, while giving an anesthetic for a ruptured tubal pregnancy," (hear this, we're moving now from creation into fall. Why would there ever be a ruptured tubal pregnancy? Because the world is fallen) "I was handed what I believed to be the smallest human being ever seen. The embryo sack was intact and transparent, and within it was a tiny human male, one third of an inch, swimming extremely vigorously in the amniotic fluid, while attached to the wall by the umbilical cord. This tiny human was perfectly developed, with long tapering fingers, feet and toes. Eight weeks. As regards to the skin and the delicate arteries and veins, they were prominent to the ends of the fingers. The baby was extremely alive and did not look at all like the photos and drawings of embryos which I had seen. When the sack was opened, the tiny human immediately lost its life and took on the appearance of what is accepted as the appearance of an embryo at this stage."

The catastrophic result of the fall is that these fearfully and wonderfully made little ones can die in utero. And the wages of sin is death. All of this is a result of a consequence of the fall. How catastrophic is sin? Oh, it is most catastrophic.

2 Samuel chapter 11:2, David is a married man. Bathsheba is a married woman. David's sin was of the sexual nature.

David arose from his couch and was walking on the roof of the King's house, and he saw from the roof, a woman bathing, and the woman was very beautiful. And David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, "Is this not Bathsheba? The daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah, the Hittite?" So, David sent messengers and took her, and she came to him, and he lay with her. Now she had been purifying herself from her uncleanness. And she returned to her house and the woman conceived and she sent and told David, "I am pregnant." So, David sent word to Joab, "Send me Uriah the Hittite." And Joab sent Uriah to David. When Uriah came to him, David asked how Joab was doing and how the people were doing and how the war was going. Then David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house and wash your feet." And Uriah went out of the king's house, and there followed him a present from the king. But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord and did not go down to his house. When they told David, "Uriah did not go down to his house," David said to Uriah, "Have you not come from a journey? Why did you not go down to your house?" Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah dwell in booths, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field. Shall I then go to my house, to eat and to drink and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do this thing." Then David said to Uriah, "Remain here today also, and tomorrow I will send you back." So, Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next. And David invited him, and he ate in his presence and drank, so that he made him drunk. And in the evening, he went out to lie on his couch with the servants of his lord, but he did not go down to his house. In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it by the hand of Uriah. In the letter he wrote, "Set Uriah in the forefront of the hardest fighting, and then draw back from him, that he may be struck down, and die." And as Joab was besieging the city, he assigned Uriah to the place where he knew there were valiant men. And the men of the city came out and fought with Joab, and some of the servants of David among the people fell. Uriah the Hittite also died.

David takes his own solution. Takes matters into his own hands. He tries to cover it. He tries to hide it. David takes matters into his own hands when there's an unplanned pregnancy, and he sheds the blood of another.

Bathsheba lamented over her husband. And when the morning was over, David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. So now it's covered. The son's been born. Everything's gonna be okay! No scandal.

But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord.

And so, here we sit amid a fallen world, as a fallen people; who among us has escaped some kind of sexual sin here in the fall? We are easily tempted. And so we reflect, I've been so wonderfully created by God. And yet, I too have fallen. I have done wrong things. I have blown it. I have made mistakes. I have done that which was displeasing in the sight of the Lord. And if God left us there, we'd be doomed. But He sends His prophet, Nathan, to go to David and to call him to repentance. And God does the same thing to me and you, he doesn't leave us in our sin no matter how heinous, how hideous, how horrible it is. God is mighty to save. And He saves through the proclamation of His gospel.

Nathan tells this parable about a man with just one little lamb, and this other rich guy who had a whole flock of sheep. And the guy with the whole flock goes and takes the one little lamb and takes it for himself. And, David says, "Why does he need to steal the one sheep from the poor guy?" And Nathan says to him, "David, you're the man."

David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord." And Nathan said to David, "The Lord also has put away your sin. You shall not die."

God rescues David through his confession of sin. He's restored to fellowship and relationship with the Lord. And that's right where we need to be in the midst of our sin, too. When God's word comes to us and we realize, oh, I've done that which was wrong, we don't minimize the sin. We don't sweep it under the carpet. We don't try to cover it up. It's been said like this: **to the degree that you minimize the seriousness of sin, you minimize the value of the blood of Christ.** How come? Because if sin is not a very big deal, then Jesus didn't really need to shed His blood. But if sin is a very big deal, then only the precious and invaluable blood of Jesus Christ can cleanse us from our sin and make us whiter than snow.

And so, David here is forgiven. He's not minimizing his sin anymore. And yet Bathsheba gives birth to the child and the child is sick. The child is not doing well. David fasts and prays for a period of time.

Do you see verse 15: *the Lord afflicted the child of Uriah's wife.* She's still Uriah's wife! *And he became sick. David therefore sought God on behalf of the child and David fasted and went in and lay all night on the ground. And the elders of his house stood beside him to raise him from the ground, but he would not, nor did he eat food with them.*

I think it's right at this moment when he is right on his face, maybe in the temple of the Lord, that he writes Psalm 51.

To the choirmaster, a Psalm of David when Nathan the prophet went to him after he had gone to Bathsheba.

Have mercy on me, O God, according to Your steadfast love. According to your abundant mercy, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin, for I know my transgressions and my sin is ever before me. Against you and you only, have I sinned and done

what is evil in Your sight, so that You may be justified in Your words and blameless in Your judgment.

Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me.

Don't misunderstand that. He's not saying that it was sin for my mother to conceive me, but when my mother conceived me, I was in sin. As a descendant of Adam, from the moment of conception, David says, I was in sin. Verse five, verse six,

Behold, You delight in truth in the inward being, and You teach me wisdom in the secret heart. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean. Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that You have broken, rejoice. Hide Your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Your presence and take not Your -Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation. Uphold me with a willing spirit. Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to You. Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of Your righteousness. Open my lips and my mouth will declare Your praise. For You will not delight in sacrifice or I would give it. You will not be pleased with burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.

I have a friend and she has had not one abortion, not two abortions, but three abortions. And she is a believer now, and she has experienced all of the weight of that. But she has been cleansed from it. She's been forgiven of it. She's been robed in the very righteousness of Christ, and she now helps other women to be forgiven and set free. She leads worship regularly in her local church. Hey, wherever you're at, no matter how great the weight, there is a grace that is greater still. God doesn't despise the contrite in spirit or the brokenhearted. He draws near. He heals. He redeems. There's hope for people like us. Let's go back to 2 Samuel and see what happens with this baby. David is on his face, confessing

his sin to the Lord, fasting, praying. Now we're moving from redemption to consummation. What happens to the little ones? Where is all of this leading? What's God doing? 2 Samuel 12:18,

On the seventh day, the child died. And the servants of David were afraid to tell him that the child was dead, for they said, "Behold, while the child was yet alive, we spoke to him, and he did not listen to us. How then can we say to him, 'the child is dead?' He may do himself some harm." But when David saw that his servants were whispering together, David understood that the child was dead. Then David arose from the earth and washed and anointed himself and changed his clothes. And he went into the house to the Lord and worshiped. He then went to his own house, and when he asked, they set food before him, and he ate. Then his servant said to him, "What is this thing that you have done? You fasted and wept for the child while it was alive, but when the child died, you arose and ate food." David said, "While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept, for I said, 'who knows whether the Lord will be gracious to me that the child may live?' But now he is dead. Why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me."

David says that the child more than going into the grave, this child is now at home with the Lord. *I shall go to him.* I will one day be in his presence and God's presence. Hey, what happens when babies die? They are safe in the arms of heaven. God brings them all the way to glory. Little babies that die in the first week or two of life, just like David's? Yes. What about little babies that die at eight weeks like the doctor Rockwell referred to? Little babies there too, safe in the arms of Jesus. God brings them all the way home. He is merciful and gracious. God's consummation reminds us that heaven is real and so is hell. As we think about this reality of abortion - because sometimes we get so mad, so angry, so fired up that we want to take vengeance into our own hands - God says, vengeance is mine. I will repay. As surely as the crystal sea is real in heaven, the lake of fire is real in hell. The lake of fire helps us with this

whole issue of vengeance. Hop back over to Isaiah chapter 65:13. As we think about consummation, there will be a separation between the righteous - those who trust Christ - and the wicked.

Therefore, thus says the Lord, behold, my servants shall eat, but you, those who reject God, those who sin against Him, are unrepentant. But you shall be hungry. Behold, my servants shall drink, but you shall be thirsty. Behold, my servants shall rejoice, but you shall be put to shame. Behold, my servants shall sing for gladness of heart, but you shall cry out for pain of heart, and shall wail for breaking of spirit. You shall leave your name to my chosen for a curse, and the Lord God will put you to death, but his servants he will call by another name, so that he who blesses himself and the land shall bless himself by the God of truth, and he who takes an oath in the land, shall swear by the God of truth; because the former troubles are forgotten and hidden from their eyes.

There was someone who did something terrible to a loved one of mine. When I found out about this, when I was a 16 year old unsaved kid, I wanted to take it out. I wanted to go after that person. I hated him like nobody I had ever hated in my life. And I imagined all the terrible things that I would do to them. And that hatred stuck. And I got saved and I started reading passages like this and the horrors of hell. And you know, where I came to, where the Lord brought me by His grace, was realizing, oh wow, that person who did that terrible thing to my loved one? I still wouldn't want 'em to go to hell. I want 'em to be locked up forever and like throw away the key in this life, but I don't want 'em to go to hell. And I started praying for their salvation. Vengeance is God's. He will repay. Final justice is real. I don't need to take matters into my own hands. I can pray for those who spitefully use me. God transforms our lives. It's so important.

Look at this hope of heaven in verse 17,

For behold, I create new heavens and new earth and the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind.

Isn't that nice? All of our regrets, all of our heartaches, those former things shall not be remembered or come to mind.

“But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create, for behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy and her people to be a gladness. I will rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in my people. No more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping, and the cry of distress. No more shall there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not fill out his days. For the young man shall die a hundred years old, and a sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed. They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant in another eat. For like the days of a tree shall be the days of my people be. And my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain or bear children for calamity, for they shall be the offspring of the blessed of the Lord, and their descendants with them. Before they call, I will answer. While they are yet speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall graze together. The lion shall eat straw like the ox, and dust shall be the serpent’s food. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain,” says the Lord.

Jesus is mighty to save.