

The Rev. David Wilson Sermon SOHLS preached January 24, 2021

Today commemorates Sanctity of Human Life Sunday. Sanctity of Human Life Sunday is a day for Americans to focus on the value of each and every human life. It is celebrated every year on the Sunday closest to the anniversary of the 1973 U.S. Supreme Court decisions *Roe v. Wade*, which legalized abortion in every state for any reason through all nine months of pregnancy. President Ronald Reagan issued a proclamation creating the first National Sanctity of Human Life Day in January 1984, and it included these words:

*"We have been given the precious gift of human life, made more precious still by our births in or pilgrimages to a land of freedom. It is fitting, then, on the anniversary of the Supreme Court decision in *Roe v. Wade* that struck down State anti-abortion laws, that we reflect anew on these blessings, and on our corresponding responsibility to guard with care the lives and freedoms of even the weakest of our fellow human beings."*

Even though these words came from one of our Presidents, I want you to understand the sermon I am about to preach is not a political message, it is a spiritual message based on God's Word. I would like to preach this morning on the sanctity of all human life and especially reflect on the appointed Psalm for this day Psalm 139 which can be found on the left inside page of your bulletin.

We place a high value on life--especially when it is our own lives. We seek jobs with good health benefits. We spend thousands of dollars on surgeries and treatments to make our lives longer and more comfortable. Some of you exercise, watch your weight, and do other things to make your life better.

However, we live in a world that is having less and less regard for human life. Assisted suicide and euthanasia are becoming more and more common in this country and in Western Society. Assisted suicide is legal in Oregon, Washington Vermont and New Mexico and the courts in Montana have found no public policy against assisting suicide, so consent may be raised as a defense at trial. Assisted suicide and euthanasia are sometimes combined under the umbrella term "assisted dying", an example of a trend by advocates to replace the word "suicide" with "death" or ideally, "dying". Other euphemisms in common use are "physician-assisted dying", "physician-assisted death", "aid in dying", "death with dignity", "dying with dignity", "right to die" "compassionate death", "compassionate dying", "end-o-life choice", and "medical assistance at the end of life". While there is a side of us that can understand wanting to bring someone's life to an end when they are going through a great deal of distress and pain, it is not our place to play God.

And there are a growing number of people who would support killing babies that are born with birth defects. With the ability of amniocentesis, it is now possible to find out a lot of information about the baby before birth. Babies that have birth defects are being aborted. Babies of the wrong sex are being aborted. Who is to decide who is to live or die? Genesis 1:27 says, *"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."* In Ephesians 2:10 we read, *"For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."* God is the one that has given life. He has not given us the right to take it away.

We have been made by God and that makes us special. We have been created in His image. His desire is that all of us become His sons and daughters and join Him in heaven for eternity. In God's eyes we all have importance. In God's eyes we are precious and valuable.

I have a few points and the first is this:

I>WE ARE VALUABLE BECAUSE GOD KNOWS US

God knows everything about us. Even the number of hairs on our head, and in my case the number that have fallen out. (Luke 12:7) *Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God. 7 Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not; you are of more value than many sparrows.*

The thought that God knows everything there is to know may at first make us uncomfortable.

Look at our Psalm 139:1-6.

VS 1 - when I sit and rise - What I am doing every minute of every day.

VS 1 - discern my thoughts from afar - Our feelings of dislike or hatred toward another person when we hold a grudge. Our fantasies and our good thoughts.

VS 3 – not a word on my lips – when I’m about to let a 4 letter word slip or jokes we are about to tell that we shouldn’t. That’s a big one for me!

God knows us.

Each week we pray. “to you all hearts are open all desires known and from you no secrets are hid”. God knows everything about us – the good, the bad and the ugly. We try and hide. We are ashamed -like Adam and Eve in the garden. We cover up. We wear masks with each other. We are uncomfortable because we are a little leery about letting people know what we are really like. We are afraid. We don’t let people see “the real me.” Some twenty years ago I read a life changing book that truly helped understand transparency. It is called, “*Why Am I Afraid to Tell You Who I Am? Insights into Personal Growth*” by Father John Powell, a Jesuit priest. This book considers the consequences our real self faces if no one else ever finds out ... The courage to be our real selves can be developed, and then we can begin to grow when we remove the masks.

God knows what is under the last mask and He still holds you up as valuable. He still loves you. And He desires to be loved by you in return. Since we are valuable in God's eyes, He is always with us. We cannot escape His presence. Look at Psalm 139, verses 7 through 10. When you are happy, God is there to rejoice with you. When tragedy strikes, God is there to bring comfort. When troubles arise, God is there to help.

The second point is this:

II> WE ARE VALUABLE EVEN BEFORE WE ARE BORN

When we were created, God was there. Look at Psalm 139, verses 13-16.

*For you formed my inward parts;
you knitted me together in my mother's womb.
14 I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.^[a]
Wonderful are your works;
my soul knows it very well.
15 My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.
16 Your eyes saw my unformed substance;
in your book were written, every one of them,
the days that were formed for me,
when as yet there was none of them.*

Then in Jeremiah 1:4-5 it says, "*The word of the LORD came to me, saying, [5] Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you*

apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."

The question of when a person becomes a person is a heated one in our world today. With modern neo-natal medicine, we have been able to really pinpoint growth in the womb "Within 21 days the baby's backbone, spinal cord, and nervous system are forming. A small heart is present and beating. At one-month arms and legs are present. There is ahead with rudimentary eyes, ears, mouth, and brain. The digestive system has begun. The baby is still only one-fourth of an inch long, but he is ten thousand times larger than when he began. At eight weeks the baby is fully formed. He or she reacts to stimuli such as tickling. He or she will try to grasp a tiny instrument with their tiny hands. He or she "swims" or moves about in the amniotic fluid. They have fingerprints. By the end of the third month, as one observer notes, "he can kick his legs, turn his feet, curl and fan his toes, makes a fist, move his thumb, bend his wrist, turn his head, squint, frown, open his mouth," swallow, and breathe (that is, fluid, of course). Fingernails are forming.

. Abortion has become a way of life and is accepted by many people. However, I believe that the verses we read from Psalm 139 make it clear that we have value as humans from the moment of conception.

But as I said at the start of this message, we live in a world that has a growing disregard for human life. If we would add up all the American War Casualties since the Revolutionary war 250 years ago it would not begin to match the number of babies aborted since Roe v. Wade made abortion legal in 1973. 31 million lives lost that is six times the number of war dead. Abortion not only takes a life – it denies the world the potential of human achievement which enriches the world we live in! Think about this. Let me end by posing these few questions. Would you consider abortion in the following situations?

(1) There's a preacher and wife who are very, very, poor. They already have 14 kids. Now she finds out she's pregnant with number 15. They're living in tremendous poverty. Considering their poverty and the excessive world population, would you consider recommending she get an abortion?

• *If so, we would not have experienced the ministry of John Wesley, one of the great evangelists in the 19th century.*

(2) The father is sick with sniffles, the mother has TB. They have four children. The first is blind, the second is dead, the third is deaf, and the fourth has TB. She finds she's pregnant again. Given the extreme situation, would you consider recommending abortion?

• *If so, Ludwig Von Beethoven, one of the world's greatest composers, would not have lived.*

(3) A teenage girl is pregnant. She's not married. Her fiancé is not the father of the baby, and they live in an occupied country dominated by a foreign power. Would you consider recommending abortion?

• *If you said yes to the third case, Jesus Christ would not have been born*

God is with us from the start; He is there watching us grow. God values everyone and not only that, He wants to heal their lives as well. For those that have experienced an abortion there is forgiveness and healing. See me if you have never dealt with the abortion, you might have had –even if it was many, many, years ago. For many who have had abortions, trusting in Christ's forgiveness and accepting themselves becomes a stumbling block in the process of healing. It's not easy and it's often painful but it is so needed and the result is deliverance from guilt and shame and life anew in freedom.

Let me end with a prayer I received from Anglicans for Life

Lord God,

THANK YOU FOR CREATING HUMAN LIFE IN YOUR IMAGE.

THANK YOU FOR MY LIFE AND THE LIVES OF THOSE I LOVE.

THANK YOU FOR TEACHING US THROUGH SCRIPTURE THE VALUE
YOU PLACE ON LIFE.

HELP ME TO UPHOLD THE SANCTITY OF LIFE IN MY CHURCH AND
COMMUNITY.

GIVE ME THE STRENGTH TO STAND UP TO THOSE FORCES
THAT SEEK TO DESTROY THE LIVES OF THOSE MOST VULNERABLE,
THE UNBORN, THE INFIRM AND THE ELDERLY.

TODAY I COMMIT MYSELF NEVER TO BE SILENT, NEVER TO BE
PASSIVE,

NEVER TO BE FORGETFUL OF RESPECTING LIFE.

I COMMIT MYSELF TO PROTECTING AND DEFENDING THE
SACREDNESS OF LIFE

ACCORDING TO YOUR WILL, THROUGH CHRIST OUR LORD.

Amen.