

Gospel Texts for Life Sunday - Series A

Christmas 1:

Text: *Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23*

Focus: *We see Jesus' life in danger from King Herod.*

Theme: *Life is in jeopardy!*

- Jesus' life was in jeopardy from King Herod. Jesus was born King of the Jews; Herod felt threatened because he misunderstood the nature of Jesus' kingdom.
- God protected his Son in Egypt like he protected Israel in Egypt.
- God had a deep concern for his Son's mission: the salvation of sinners. So he made sure everything happened just as he said would happen.
- Many other lives were in danger then, too – slaughter of the “innocents”
- Millions of young lives in danger today – abortion, destructive embryonic stem cell research, infanticide.
- There is danger at the other end of life, too: physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia.
- While the salvation of the world is not at stake like it was with Jesus, the salvation of individual souls is at stake. Taking a life means ending that person's time of grace. Protecting someone's life also means providing further opportunity to hear the Gospel and be saved. God wants all people to be saved, and so do we.
- As Christians, what can we do to protect life? We can protect our own lives and the lives of our family members by the way we live, by the decisions we make about medical care; we can speak up to protect life whenever we have the opportunity, whether a private conversation or a public forum or a newspaper editorial; we can support the work of life-affirming organizations, and especially those that are also interested in sharing eternal life with people; we can pray for the government and influential leaders, that they would use wisdom and stand up for what is right.

Epiphany 4:

Text: *Matthew 5:1-12*

Focus: *In contrast to the 'quality of life' that our American culture is obsessed with, Jesus offers us a quality of life that is out of this world. While it seems to offer nothing but hardship and suffering, our Savior gives us blessings that are beyond compare.*

Theme: *Define 'Quality of Life' the way Jesus does*

- The world means: how nice, how comfortable is your life? Is your life free of problems? Or is your life so full of problems that it isn't worth living?!
- Jesus uses a much different definition than the world uses. While the world talks about quality of life, God sees us having absolute value based on the redemption work of His Son.

- The powerful, intelligent, impressive, high-earning, mountain-moving people are impressive in society because of their accomplishments. God, however, is pleased equally with the rich or poor if they put their full trust in Him and realize their need for a Savior.
- Very often it is the broken, needy souls that plead to Jesus for help – this is pleasing to Him, because He loves them and wants to heal them. God loves the crushed and cares for them – He thrives on being merciful and kind to those who need it.
- God Himself became one of these insignificant people when He came to earth as a man and died for the sins of the world. His life and death mean healing, and peace, and righteousness, and life for us.
- Those with physical disabilities and struggles in this life often appreciate their spiritual needs more fully.
- Cherish the times when you have a reduced “quality of life” – when you are sick, when you go through difficult times in relationships, when you near the end of life and your body breaks down and your mind slips away – these times are times when God looks down in mercy and love and shows Himself to you in his gospel.
- Look for ways to point others to this gentle, nurturing Savior-God named Jesus, esp. when their “quality of life” is low: people in nursing homes and hospitals, people suffering loss of their loved ones, their jobs, their health.

Epiphany 5:

Text: *Matthew 5:13-20*

Focus: *Christians have a tremendous blessing from the Lord – we are forgiven and bound for heaven. And in the meantime, we have the opportunity to express our thanks to our Savior by letting our lights shine in the way we live.*

Theme: *Shine, Christian, shine!*

- God has placed us in this world to serve Him. He wants us to live a certain way, not only to glorify and thank Him for our salvation. He also wants us to be living billboards for Him in the world.
- It’s been said that a godly life is often a great way to share Christ’s love. But living a godly life is a preaching of law, as well as gospel. When we do what the world thinks is wrong, or old fashioned, or narrow-minded we are telling the world: it matters how you live. When we avoid the wrongs that the world sees as acceptable, we’re saying: See, this is how God wants you to live.
- So what do people see in us? Are we showing them the light from God that exposes their sin? Are we giving a solid, consistent, careful witness to God’s truths in our lives, so that the world notices how different we are?
- We can’t ever give a perfect witness in the way we live, so we continually need Jesus’ forgiveness. But we never stop trying. Even if our witness isn’t perfect it must still be faithful and our best ability.

- Our shining is a fruit of our faith in Jesus. Let your light shine at home, at church, in school, in the supermarket, on the freeway, in the way you vote, in the way you speak out as a citizen, etc.

Epiphany 6:

Text: *Matthew 5:21-37 (shorten to 21-26)*

Focus: *While the world has its own way of thinking about right and wrong, Jesus explains God's way. God desires love for our neighbor, love from the heart, love that cares and nurtures, love that reflects his love for us.*

Theme: *Jesus teaches us the real issue in life issues*

- Jesus takes the 5th commandment and skips over murder, abortion, euthanasia, assault, and all the other “big” sins, and goes right to the heart: don't hate, mock, or get angry with your brother.
- Jesus focuses on the attitude of a person and points out that He doesn't make the same distinctions that the world makes regarding these sins.
- It's not in our hearts by nature to love someone else, especially someone who isn't able to do things for us in return (sick, dying, disabled, people with special needs).
- Jesus came to earth as our Savior, but he also showed us how to live a sanctified life. He cared for those with physical needs as a reflection of His love for them. He did this without prejudice or discrimination.
- In faith, we live at peace with our brother. We also strive to do what God wants us to do – to love our neighbor from the heart.
- Life issues are not just about protecting unborn lives from murder. God's will is that we love our brother (neighbor) from our heart, and then show that love by respecting and protecting his body and life: caring for sick in nursing home, preserving lives of the helpless – that's all included. And that all flows from the new heart God gives.

Epiphany 8:

Text: *Matt. 6:24-34*

Focus: *Many troubles and worries confront us in life. But the Father holds us safe in His hands. We have every reason to concern ourselves with heavenly things first, and leave the rest to the Lord.*

Theme: *Seek first the Father's kingdom*

- Strive all you want for worldly riches – run after things like pagans do... and gain nothing.
- You won't really solve your problems by striving for earthly treasures. You won't really change things or make yourself feel better by worrying.
- Worrying really tells God: “I know you're in charge, but I'm still nervous about how well it'll turn out for me.” That is mistrust!
- Yet God's promises are sure. He promises forgiveness in Christ, eternity in heaven, blessing on earth. We can count on it, even when tough times come.

- How will we take care of the bills, the insurance, the house, the kids, the meals, the laundry? Should we insert a feeding tube? Should we hook up a ventilator? Should we proceed with the surgery? Should we sell the house? Should I move Mom into a nursing home or in with us? When these issues confront you, remember the first priority is to trust God and to glorify Him in your life. After that is settled, then the other decisions become clearer.
- We make decisions with hearts of faith and guided by God's Word.