

More than Just a Cause

~ Genesis 4:1 ~

I'll never quite forget the summer of 1992. It had been long advertised that Milwaukee was going to be targeted as a major abortion protest area. Hundreds of pro-life and pro-abortion groups were gearing up for all-out ideological war. I remember going out to one of the clinics that first Saturday morning and being literally astounded by the thousands of people on both sides. Pro-abortion people linked arm-in-arm creating a human barricade to those who wanted to block the clinic doors. Pro-life people were engaged in a variety of militant and peaceful protest activities. Some were screaming in the faces of the pro-abortion people, some were innocently holding protest signs, some were engaged in prayer groups, some were singing spiritual songs. And during this time pro-abortion escorts were walking prospective clients past the protest lines and into the clinics.

But here's the interesting thing: the next week I showed up and noticed that the crowds, on both sides, were a little smaller than the week before. And the week after that they were probably 50% of what they were the previous week. And by the end of the 8-week protest campaign the crowds were only a scattering of maybe 50 or so people who protested for maybe an hour or so. Something that started out gigantic had just fizzled out.

Sometimes though, that's what happens with causes. You get emotional, you get geared up, you put your "game-face" on, you psyche yourself up for a major confrontation...but you can only sustain that for so long, can't you? It's not that people's belief systems change, it's simply that causes, over time, tend to get old and tired and worn out, and maybe what we're willing to put ourselves on the line for today isn't quite as motivating as it used to be.

Friends, that's why I need to remind you something very important about today: sanctity of life is more than just a cause. It goes way beyond a service and a free-will basket, it goes way beyond the local WELS Lutherans for Life pregnancy counseling center, Teens For Life group, or Christian Life Resources. It goes way beyond pamphlets and parish nursing, and durable powers of attorney. It goes way beyond Supreme Court justices and keeping track of the latest developments on stem cell research. Life is more than just a cause to nod our head at. Life affects every aspect of our life, every fiber of our being. Whether you realize it or not, life affects our every attitude. Life affects our every activity.

If you're a parent let me ask you a question: Do you remember the first time you held your child in your arms? Moms, remember when the doctor placed a baby, your baby, on you for the very first time? That bowling ball you carried around for nine months is now, "My son!" or "My daughter!" Dads, remember when you finally got around to putting the video camera down and they cleaned and bundled your little infant. You held your son or your daughter, and you thought to yourself, "Man, I'm glad I didn't have to deliver that!" – No – You thought, "What a miracle!" "I can't believe it, this is my child, my child!"

Do you ever wonder what it must have been like for the world's first mom to have the world's first baby? The Bible gives us a little glimpse: ***“With the help of the LORD I have brought forth a man!”*** Can you just picture Eve: “This is incredible! I can't believe this, Woah! God has allowed me to participate in the creation of another human being! Can't you just picture Eve's overwhelmed gaze at little Cain? I mean this is old news for you and me, we've seen this before, but this was the world's very first birth. Eve didn't have a mom who told her about the birds and the bees. It's just an incredible, overwhelming experience for her, “With God's help I've just brought a new human life into the world. What a miracle! What a miracle!”

Here's the question I have for you: Do you see human life the way Eve did? I'm not just talking about the lives of your kids or your grandkids or your spouse, the people nearest and dearest to you. I'm talking about every single human life that's ever existed from conception to death as an incredible miracle and gift from a gracious God? Author Dorothy Williams, I think, captured the incredible miracle of human life when she wrote:

“...No two people laugh at all the exact same things you laugh at, they don't sneeze the same way you do, no one prays the exact same concerns as you pray for, no one is loved by the same combination of people as you are loved by, no one ever before, no one ever to come, you are unique...No where ever in all of history, will there be going on in one's soul, mind, and spirit, the same exact things as are going on in yours right now. If you did not exist there would be a hole in creation, a gap in history, something missing from God's plan. No one can reach out to others the same way that you can, no one can speak your words, no one can convey your meanings, no one can comfort with your kind of comfort, no one can bring the same kind of understanding to another person, no one can smile your smile, no one can bring the entire uniqueness of you to another human being...And so dear, special, irreplaceable person, receive the gift of yourself and others. Notice the gift, enjoy it, celebrate it, and be very, very thankful.”

You know, how do we tend to value other people? Isn't it usually based on personality and how it meshes with our own? Isn't it usually based on lifestyle and how similar it is to mine? Isn't it usually based on relationship, how close they are to me? Certainly I'm not implying that those factors are evil in and of themselves. But what those factors tend to do to people like us that have a sinful nature is they give us built in excuses to value some and devalue others. That if they don't measure up in my personal value equation, I can just cast them aside as just a person, a homo sapien taking up space, just another cog in a mass of humanity. We get so wrapped up in what bugs us about other people that we fail to see others the way God sees them, the way Eve saw baby Cain – unique, valuable, miracles of a gracious God. The Bible says, ***“Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer.”*** Think about that statement. The sinful attitudes I possess in my heart towards any human being, expressed in my loveless actions to them, God uses the same word in this passage that we use for the abortionists, and the Jack Kevorkians, and NARAL and NOW and the ACLU, and liberal politicians. Think very seriously what you think about other people, at your work, in your family, the person who's driving too slow in front of you, your fellow members here at church. Do you value the miracle of every single life simply because it's a

life created by God to have eternal significance?

You know, it's interesting that translators have a hard time with this verse, because there's a preposition in the Hebrew text that you're really not sure how to take. In fact Martin Luther translated the verse another way, "***I have brought forth a man – the LORD.***" Luther had Eve thinking that she had just given birth to the head crusher God promised in chapter 3 (You know, "And I will put..."). You see, Eve remembered how she and her husband had been duped by the Serpent. How she hid with Adam in the bushes scantily clad with fig leaves. How the sweet fruit of that Tree quickly turned into the bitter taste of guilt. Imagine what must have been running through her mind when she found out that this man she called, the LORD, was actually the cold-blooded killer of her other son Abel? Can you picture Eve crying at Abel's funeral as she convinced herself, "It's all my fault! It's all my fault!"?

Friends, why is there abortion and active euthanasia and suicide and kids left in garbage bags and hatred and gossip? It's not just "other people's fault." It's my fault, it's your fault, because each of us perpetuates the same sinful nature that produces all that stuff.

But here's what's so incredible: Eve's sin didn't stop God's activity of grace, because "***When the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under Law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.***" And you know something: your sin and my sin can't stop God's activity of grace either. Whether you've murdered life through your thoughts, your words, or your actions, the Lord of life points you to a cross, a cross that cries out, "It is finished!" Guilt is finished! Dealing with a hurtful past is finished! Words that I wish I could take back are finished! Thinking the worst about those I don't like -- finished! Instead, a God who is infatuated with every single human conception says in that tender, inviting voice that only a heavenly Father could have, "***I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more!***"

And you know, the more you focus on God's activity of grace you can't help but contemplate your own activity of grace. What can I do to uphold the sanctity of life in my own personal life? The list is endless, but allow me to share two thoughts: **Pray** and **Pay**.

Pray. That seems like such a religious cliché at times doesn't it? But if you really believe what the Bible says about God empowering prayer offered in the blood of Jesus is there really a better place to start? How about praying for the single mom who made the Godly choice to honor human life and keep her baby, but now is struggling to make ends meet. Pray for the countless number of women that have bought into the abortion lie and now live a life of guilt, pray that Jesus' blood is powerful enough to cover even our worst mistakes. Pray for hospice workers, those angels of mercy who hold the hands of the God-valued terminally-ill. Pray that God would strengthen them to show grace to those that most people have written off as insignificant. Pray for our judges whose judgments shape the culture of life in our country. How about this: Pray for the opponents of life, NARAL, ACLU, NOW. See even these people as valuable souls whose hearts can only be changed by being confronted with grace. Pray for yourself that grace would describe your every thought, word, and deed for every single human being.

Secondly, **Pay**. I know personal budgets are tight but can you find a few dollars to support the agencies of life? Not just to perpetuate the existence of Christian Life Resources for another year. But you see, your few dollars joined with other like-minded Christians support the men and women who serve you on the front lines of life. It allows a counselor to keep a scared teenage girl from making a life-altering choice. It allows another family dealing with end-of-life issues to make a God-honoring choice. It keeps just one more hurting person from pulling the trigger or popping a pill that will end it all.

Friends, it's more than just a cause. We're talking about life. Every life at every stage matters to God, the cross proves it. So shouldn't it matter to us too? That's not a trick question.

By Pastor Mark Walters

Christian Life Resources, January 2006