

# Pray for the Unborn

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, last week, we were talking about our relationship as Christians with our community, with our province, with our country.

We looked together at what God had to say to the Israelites who were living in captivity as exiles in Babylon. God told them that they were to seek the welfare and the prosperity of the people in the cities which they were living.

He told them to pray for them. I ended last Sunday with a plea that we not think of our community like the Titanic, like a sinking ship, but that we think of it as a foreign city in which we are exiles. I urged us to seek the good of our community and to start doing that simply by regularly praying for the people in our community. We don't know when Jesus will return, but it may be that God means to do some wonderful things yet in our community through us and in answer to our prayers.

One of the things I said at the end of my message last week was that there are social evils going on in our country and in our province that God can do something about.

[ 1 : 26 ] This morning we're going to be talking about what I think is the greatest of evils going on in our country today. I'm talking about abortion. If you've been watching the news at all south of the border, you may have noticed that this has been in the headlines.

There's a firestorm of debate going on down there right now. Some of the comments which have been made, I find myself to be shocking.

It sparked all kinds of debate, all kinds of expression. Some states have been working to remove restrictions and requirements for late-term abortions.

Well, some other states are almost doing the exact opposite, and they're seeking to define fetal viability as early as six weeks by introducing heartbeat bills.

I'm not going to weigh in on that debate during my message this morning. If you are interested in what's going on down there, I encourage you to go online. You can find primary sources.

[ 2 : 35 ] You can find copies of those legislation pieces and video clips of what people have said. Kind of come to your own opinion on what's going on down there.

But all of this got me thinking again about our own country and province. What's going on in Canada when it comes to the issue of abortion?

As far as the news goes here in Canada, things seem to be very quiet on this issue. We hear about it here and there as part of the platform of political parties and political candidates.

But on the whole, it seems, at least to me, that things have just been really quiet on this issue. And it got me thinking again, what's the state of affairs in our own country and here in our province, Saskatchewan, when it comes to abortion?

A bit of the legal landscape to refresh your memories. Up until 1969, abortion was illegal in Canada. A woman could be imprisoned for up to two years.

[ 3 : 43 ] And a doctor could get a life sentence in prison for aborting a baby. In 1969, under the government of Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, the criminal code was amended so that women could get an abortion or have an abortion done in cases where the health or life of the mother was threatened.

In 1988, everything changed. The Supreme Court of Canada decided that prohibiting abortion under the criminal code violates a woman's charter right to life, liberty, and the security of the person.

Chief Justice Brian Dixon said this, Since 1988 and that ruling, we have been one of only a few countries in the whole world with no laws

governing abortion. One of the abortion rights groups here in Canada actually has right on their website that we're the only democratic country in the world with no laws governing abortion.

Since 1988, abortion has become a routine, publicly funded procedure that takes place in hospitals and clinics across our country.

[ 5 : 29 ] According to the Canadian Encyclopedia Online, there was a Globe and Mail survey that was done in 2010. And the results of that survey suggested that 52% of Canadians were pro-choice, while 27% were pro-life, and 21% would not affiliate with either.

On the whole, political parties have generally avoided this issue in Parliament. It's a very hotly debated issue. The most recent stats that we have on the number of abortions here in Canada come from 2017.

The Canadian Institute for Health Information collects data that's reported by provincial health ministries about abortions done in hospitals and clinics across the country.

But before I give you these numbers, you should know that there's a bit of an unknown factor in them. It says right on the data sheets, reporting for clinics is voluntary.

It's not a requirement. And so we can't be sure how accurately these numbers reflect what's going on here in Canada. But what we do know is what has been reported.

[ 6 : 51 ] According to the data gathered by the Canadian Institute for Health Information, in Canada, over the past six years, there have been an average each year of 100,000 babies aborted.

In our own province here in Saskatchewan, in both 2016 and 2017, just over 2,000 abortions happened here in Saskatchewan.

Those numbers may seem small to some, especially compared to the 56 million estimated abortions that happen each year globally, according to the Guttmacher Institute.

But every single human life is precious to God. There are many in our world today who support abortion. Their line of thinking goes like this.

What business do legislators and government have over what goes on inside my body? They will tell you that an unwanted pregnancy can be devastating to women.

[ 8 : 08 ] That there are many good reasons for a woman to want to end her pregnancy. It could be a teenage pregnancy. She could be a busy career woman. A mother who already has children.

A person in an abusive relationship. She could be a drug addict. She could have financial difficulties. Babies are expensive. Pregnancy is not easy on the body.

And so, as the Morgenthaler Clinic here in Canada, their website says, we have been providing safe and compassionate abortion services in Canada for over 40 years.

It's a simple procedure which only takes about 5 to 10 minutes during which pregnancy tissue is removed from the uterus. They will tell you that it's not a child or a person or a human being.

Yet, it's just a fetus. It's just a ball of cells. A blob of tissue. So, of course, we're not going to force women to continue their own pregnancies under the threat of criminal prosecution.

[ 9 : 15 ] How absurd is that? Why should we give preference to the rights and freedoms of a blob of tissue over the rights of an actual person, the pregnant woman?

At the heart of all this is a very simple issue, a very simple question. What is the unborn? Because if it really is just a blob of tissue, then they're right.

Everything they say is right. If the unborn is just a blob of tissue and not a human being. But the truth is that the unborn are not just a blob of tissue.

This is something that God tells us, and we're going to look at that in a moment. But even before we get to that, this is something that's obvious from good observational science and from just good logic and reasoning.

Modern science, you can look this up on any baby website online. You could find it in a biology textbook. Modern science will tell you that as early as 21 days after conception, a baby's heart begins to beat.

[ 10 : 35 ] That's five weeks pregnant by gestational weeks. Only two weeks later, the baby's head and hands and eyes can be seen.

Only three weeks after that, the baby has all of his or her body parts in place. Arms, legs, fingers, toes, eyes, ears, mouth, and nose.

Each of these parts still needs to grow and develop, but they're all there. Only eight weeks from the moment of conception. Or ten weeks pregnant, according to gestational weeks.

The American College of Pediatricians said this in a paper on when human life begins. The American College of Pediatricians concurs with the body of scientific evidence that human life begins at conception, fertilization.

Scientific and medical discoveries over the past three decades have only verified this. At the completion of the process of fertilization, the human creature emerges as a whole, genetically distinct, individuated, zygotic living human organism, a member of the species *Homo sapiens*, needing only the proper environment in order to grow and develop.

[ 11 : 56 ] In other words, when you put the observations of science together with good logic and reasoning, you began at conception.

At the earliest moments of your existence, you may not have looked anything like you do today. You're more like something in a box, just waiting to be unpacked and assembled.

The blueprints and the instructions were all there, though. The living micro-building blocks were all there. And even from the moment of conception, you were already in the process of being put together and assembled.

And only eight weeks after that moment of conception, you were unmistakably human by outward appearances to anyone who could have seen you. You had all the major parts that you do now. You had a heart that was pumping blood throughout your little body. This is at 10 weeks pregnant by gestational weeks. And abortions are being done as late as 20 weeks pregnant here in Canada.

[ 13 : 11 ] In fact, there are fully functioning toddlers alive today who were born premature at 21 to 23 weeks. And they survived.

The humanity of the unborn is not determined by their size, by their level of development, by their environment, or by their degree of dependency.

Just because you, when you began, were very small and were far less developed than you are today and were tucked away in the darkness of your mother's womb and were dependent on your mother's body does not make you any less human.

An adult isn't any more human than the toddler just because they're bigger and more developed or more intelligent. A man in a coma or on life support isn't any less human because he's dependent on others for his survival or on technology.

The only remaining factor is the location or the environment of the unborn. Does being inside the womb or outside the womb change whether or not you're a human being?

[ 14 : 31 ] Because it's a difference of about seven inches through the birth canal. Does that make you more or less human? Good observational science and good logical thinking is enough to know that the unborn baby in the womb is a human being is one of us.

But this wouldn't be a sermon without hearing what God has to say about this matter. So let's go to the word. If you have your Bibles with you please open them up to Psalm 139.

Psalm 139. Psalm 139. Psalm 139.

Verse 13. This is David under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit praying to the Lord. He said this for you Lord created my inmost being.

You knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Your works are wonderful.

[ 15 : 53 ] I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth.

Your eyes saw saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

Even David 3,000 years ago knew that he was a special creation of God. That as he grew in his mother's womb he wasn't just developing he was actually being made woven formed by God.

Even today with all our technology it's difficult to see a clear picture of what a baby looks like at the earliest stages in the first weeks of pregnancy.

We have artists renderings. We have various kinds of imaging. We have 3D ultrasound now and all of these give us a better picture. But even with our tech it's difficult to see exactly what's going on at those earliest stages.

[ 17 : 10 ] Yet David says that God sees us your eyes saw my unformed body. Even before our bodies take shape and are formed we are alive in his sight.

Not only that but he knows the exact number of days that are ordained for us to live. Some will say well this is poetry David's not writing a science textbook.

I agree. But often times we reach for metaphor and poetic words because to just say it in the ordinary way doesn't communicate enough of what we really mean.

Often times in poetic expression it doesn't really lessen the point that the person's making. It actually intensifies it and I think that's the case here.

What David is saying is that we are a special work and creation of God from start to finish. His overall point, one of the things that he's been marveling at in this passage is that there's nowhere that he can hide from God.

[ 18 : 33 ] Not even in the womb. That secret place where nobody can get in there and see. Not even back to the moment that we came to be.

David's point is that he was there. He saw us. He had his plan for our lives even then. Science and good reasoning and conscience have their place in this discussion, but at the end of the day they only serve to confirm what God has said long ago.

God's word speaks consistently of the unborn, not as a blob of tissue, but as a human being. As not just someone who is people who are like us, but people who are us, made in the image of God.

The clearest examples of this are found in Luke's gospel. Would you turn there if you're following along in your Bibles? Luke 1. Luke 1.

Verse 15. The angel of the Lord is talking to Zachariah and telling him about who his son will be. And he says this in verse 15. For he will be great in the sight of the Lord.

[ 20 : 02 ] He is never to take wine or other fermented drink and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born. How can the Holy Spirit fill a person even before they're born if they're not a person?

If they're just a blob of tissue? The Holy Spirit doesn't fill and indwell blobs of tissue. He fills and indwells people. Moving on to verse 31.

The angel is visiting Mary and the angel says this to her, you will conceive and give birth to a son and you are to call him Jesus.

Notice that there's two words used there to describe what will happen. You will conceive and you will bear a son. You will conceive a son and you will bear a son and you are to give him the name Jesus.

In other words, the male child that you will name Jesus your son, you will conceive him and give birth to him.

[ 21 : 25 ] These two are linked and in case there's any doubt about that, we can continue on. Mary says, how will this be? I'm a virgin. How's that even possible? And as evidence of how that's possible, the angel tells Mary about Elizabeth in verse 36, which I'm going to read in the New American Standard.

And behold, even your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son. Same word, conceived, a son in her old age.

And she who was called barren is now in her sixth month. The NIV, the reason why I switched is because it does a bit of a no-no here. The NIV says, Elizabeth, your relative is going to have a child. First of all, child, in the original Greek, it's not the word child. There's two other words for child. It's the word son. In the interest of trying to make the Bible more gender-neutral, they've taken away some of the specificity of what the angel actually said.

And they also, in my opinion, messed up on the tense. It's not that she is going to have a child. It's the same word that they used earlier. She has conceived, past tense, a son.

[ 22 : 53 ] She's in her sixth month. The baby in her womb, right now, is her son, a male child. This is how the Bible consistently talks about the unborn in the womb, as though they are people, sons, children.

But it gets even clearer than this. Let's move down to verse 39. At that time, Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea where she entered Zachariah's home and greeted Elizabeth.

When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leapt in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice, Elizabeth exclaimed, blessed are you among women and blessed is the child you will bear.

But why am I so favored that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leapt for joy.

How did Elizabeth know that Mary was pregnant? At this time, she wouldn't have even probably been showing. Mary had just walked in the door.

[ 24 : 18 ] How did Elizabeth know that Mary was pregnant? And beyond that, how did she know that she was right now the mother of her Lord?

There's two things that she gives as reasons that are given as reasons. First of all, she was filled with the Holy Spirit of God. As she expressed this so that she would understand what was happening, it was with the Spirit's help that she figured out what had happened in this moment. I mean, if we heard just any woman say, oh, I think that my baby's happy or sad, we'd probably be like, well, really? Like, we get feelings all the time about the baby, what sex it is, all these things. How do we know that's true? But Elizabeth exclaimed this as she was filled with the Holy Spirit of God. This is something the Spirit helped her to understand, because I don't think she would have otherwise.

God's Spirit made it clear to her that even at six months pregnant, the baby in her womb was capable of joy. Think about that.

[ 25 : 35 ] The baby in her womb was aware, somehow, perhaps with the enabling of God's Spirit, that his Lord was present in the room, and not only did he respond, but it says he leapt for joy.

An inhuman blob of cells doesn't have that capacity, that kind of awareness. How big was John at this time?

Six months pregnant, maybe like that. God. But the question that really gets me is how big was Jesus at this moment in Mary's womb?

Probably about the size of a poppy seed, perhaps as big as a peppercorn. God's God. And yet John felt the presence of his Lord, and Elizabeth recognized that her Lord was in the room.

He wasn't just a speck of pregnancy tissue, even at the earliest moments. God's word speaks of the child in the womb as a human being.

[ 27 : 00 ] a person, a he, a him, a her, a special creation of God. God's word also very clearly forbids the killing of innocent human beings.

That's what abortion is. It's not a service of compassion. It's an act of destruction which takes the life of an innocent human being.

An estimated 56 million people are snuffed out of existence every year around the world like this. almost 100,000 children's lives in Canada were taken last year like this.

And our government calls it a medical or a surgical procedure. 2,000 children each year right here in our own province of Saskatchewan are killed.

and the vast majority of these are not to save the life of a mother. As in the case of an ectopic pregnancy or late term complications, those are very rare.

[ 28 : 25 ] The vast majority are simply unwanted babies. this is a terrible injustice and it grieves the heart of God.

I don't say all this to further crush those who already feel burdened and guilty for having had an abortion. If you or someone that you know has had an abortion, let's proclaim again today that Jesus came into our world on a mission of love.

to save, to broker forgiveness for sins like this one. And we have all sinned. As we talked about in Sunday school this morning again, every last one of us is guilty of sinning against God just as someone who has aborted their child has.

But what Christ suffered on the cross was enough to see justice done for any who are guilty of taking the life of their own child.

What he suffered on the cross was enough to bring forgiveness even for doctors who have done this thousands of times. Do you believe that?

[ 29 : 53 ] through Christ there is true forgiveness from God and there is cleansing of the conscience such as cannot be found anywhere else.

Christ took the guilt and the shame for all of our sins for those of us who will repent and believe in him.

This truth of God's grace should always go with the truth of what abortion really is. God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world but to save the world through him John 3 17 and so as we seek to do something about this we must do it in a way that shows clearly that we are not here to condemn the world.

We're here to see the lives of any who will listen saved. forgiven cleansed and made whole again by God. So what do we do with all this?

I want to stress this morning that this is a very complex issue in our society today. Do not think that by simply changing the laws of our nation that the problem will go away.

[ 31 : 22 ] Some of the most restrictive countries in our world when it comes to abortion law have just as many abortions happening in them today as those that are less restrictive.

Better laws would be great. We want our justice system to reflect what is good and what is right to protect the lives of the innocent, but it's not that simple.

What we need is changed hearts and changed minds, and there are so many factors that contribute here. Part of the push by people who align with the pro-choice side of things, part of the reason for why they want to have easy access and funding so that women can have abortions is because they recognize that women are going to have them anyway.

That's what they have observed around the globe. And if they're going to do it anyway, do we want them risking their lives to do it? Or should we just give them what they want and provide them with a means that's relatively safe for the mother?

I don't agree with that line of thinking. I think it's misguided. But my point here is that the change needs to happen at the level of the heart.

[ 32 : 48 ] Just changing the laws is not going to do it. And there are plenty of other social factors as well. We could look at all the different reasons why mothers don't want to keep their children and we could talk about how do we address those things.

Abortion is very much a symptom kind of issue. It has all kinds of other factors and issues that are root problems which lead to it.

It's not something that women like to do or to have. It's something that they choose because of all kinds of other factors in their lives. And so with the complexities of this issue what do we do about it?

When it comes to the unborn how do we seek the welfare and prosperity of our country of our province? us? I think that the first thing we need to do is humbly admit that silence and doing absolutely nothing is not an option.

Does God not expect each one of us to do something here when this is happening in our own backyard, in our own community?

[ 34 : 05 ] once we've finally settled that in our hearts and minds that we must act, the next question is well what do we do? And I think if we're honest many of us maybe have no idea where to start.

Maybe we've done some things in the past, we've gone to a March for Life, we've had a membership to an advocacy group. But these are difficult questions.

Should we partner with and become members of advocacy groups? If so, which ones? What if those groups don't reflect the commitment that we have to Christ?

What if they advocate in some ways that we feel are unhelpful or wrong? These are not the easiest questions to answer. As elders here in the church we're beginning to discuss some of this.

We actually have someone coming from Midlakes Pro-Life to talk to us as elders on Tuesday night. I think it would be helpful for us to come up with our own clear convictions and strategy as a church as to how we will participate in the cause of the unborn.

[ 35 : 25 ] And I think it would be helpful for those of us who serve as elders to hear continually from each one of you how important this issue is to you. My hope is that we will continue to have conversations about this in the months and the years ahead and that those conversations will result in clear loving action.

But in the meantime there is one clear and simple way that each one of us can participate. As God said in his letter to the exiles that we looked at last week seek the peace and the prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile.

Pray for it. Pray to the Lord for it. Proverbs 29 verse 26. Many seek an audience with a ruler but it is from the Lord that one gets justice.

God can do something about this and one of the things that he wants is for us to ask him to intervene and to work and to bring change.

And so what I've done is I've put together a list of 56 ways to pray about abortion from all different angles and I would encourage you please take a copy of it.

[ 36 : 56 ] It's at the back table here and in the foyer. Make it a part of your regular list to pray about this issue.

Whether you put this into your prayer mate app or you just keep this in your Bible and work through a little bit of it one week at a time kind of thing. as we pray I believe the Lord will answer our prayers and save the lives of children.

I believe that he will answer our questions. I think he will give us clarity for each one of us as to how we should participate in this. What our role is in the important work of saving lives in our own neighborhood, our own community.

I want to conclude this morning with this reminder. First John 5 verse 14 and 15. This is the confidence that we have in approaching God that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us and if we know that he hears us whatever we ask we know that we have what we asked of him. And so let's get asking. Thank you.