

Good morning, I'm Jeffrey Anderson, the teaching pastor here at Northlake Christian Church. Today is Sanctity of Life Sunday, and as a result I'll be stepping away from the book of Philippians to focus on the importance of human life.

Background: Several months ago I met with Bill Sullivan and Donna Rickman to discuss today's events. It was there that I discovered that Northlake does have a history of taking this day each year to focus on the sanctity of life. Although it was made clear that I could continue in our study of Philippians I deliberately chose to speak today on the importance of this subject—a subject that, I'm afraid, is not properly understood even within the church. So I'm looking forward to examining this subject today.

One of the first disclaimers I want to make is that today is not “Abortion Sunday.” That is not to trivialize the seriousness of abortion or take anything away from it, but rather it is to say that the sanctity of human life is a much broader subject than simply abortion (although I do think that abortion is, perhaps, the single most demeaning action today against the majesty of God).

Genesis 9: 1-6—“Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth. 2 The fear and dread of you will fall upon all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air, upon every creature that moves along the ground, and upon all the fish of the sea; they are given into your hands. 3 Everything that lives and moves will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything. 4 "But you must not eat meat that has its lifeblood still in it. 5 And for your lifeblood I will surely demand an accounting. I will demand an accounting from every animal. And from each man, too, I will demand an accounting for the life of his fellow man. 6 "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man.”

- **Henry:** “In general, *God blessed Noah and his sons* (v. 1), that is, he assured them of his good-will to them and his gracious intentions concerning them. This follows from what he said in his heart. Note, All God's promises of good flow from his purposes of love and the counsels of his own will. See Eph. 1:11, 3:11, and compare Jer. 29:11. I know the thoughts that I think towards you.”¹

Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth.

¹ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 6 vols. (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 1: 56.

- Matthew Henry describes what takes place here as, in part, a grant of lands of vast extent, and a promise of a great increase of men to occupy and enjoy them....
- God sets the whole earth before them, tells them it is all their own, *while it remains*.
- The earth God has given to the children of men, for a possession and habitation, *Ps. 115:16*. “The highest heavens belong to the LORD, but the earth he has given to man.”
- *Henry*: “Though it is not a paradise, but a wilderness rather; yet it is better than we deserve. Blessed be God, it is not hell.”²

2 The fear and dread of you will fall upon all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air, upon every creature that moves along the ground, and upon all the fish of the sea; they are given into your hands.

- A grant of power over them, without which the title would avail little: *The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast*.
- *Henry*: “This revives a former grant (*ch. 1:28*), only with this difference, that man in innocence ruled by love, fallen man rules by fear. Now this grant remains in force, and thus far we have still the benefit of it.”³

3 Everything that lives and moves will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything.

- Question: Did they eat meat before the flood? Calvin thought so.
- *Calvin*: “God here does not bestow on men more than he had previously given, but only restores what had been taken away...For since they had before offered sacrifices to God, and were also permitted to kill wild beasts, from the hides and skins of which, they might make for themselves garments and tents. I do not see what obligation should prevent them from the eating of [meat]”⁴
- Yet the passage would seem to imply that this was a new development. “**I now give you everything.**”

4 "But you must not eat meat that has its lifeblood still in it. 5 And for your lifeblood I will surely demand an accounting.

- Throughout the Bible the idea of eating meat that still had the blood in it was repugnant to God. The reason that is given is that “the life of the animal is in its blood.”

² Henry, 56.

³ Henry, 56.

⁴ Calvin, John, *Calvin's Commentaries*, 22 volumes, trans. William Pringle (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House 1996), 1: 291.

I will demand an accounting from every animal. And from each man, too, I will demand an accounting for the life of his fellow man. 6 "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed;

- Before the flood God took the punishment of murder into his own hands; but now he committed this judgment to men, to masters of families at first, and afterwards to the heads of countries, who ought to be faithful to the trust reposed in them.⁵

- Note: willful murder was always to be punished with death in the Bible.

- But **note the reason why the death penalty was imposed:**

for in the image of God has God made man.

- In other words, the reason that God so strongly condemned the murder of a man or woman is because they have been made in his image and likeness. This is critical to properly understanding the sanctity of human life: Our lives are incalculably valuable, not because we are intrinsically valuable, but because we have been made in God's image. The fact that we are like God is what makes us so extraordinarily unique. So unique and so valuable that when someone kills someone else God takes it personally—as if they were attempting to kill Him in effigy.
- **Henry:** "God put honour upon him, let not us then put contempt upon him. Such remains of God's image are still even upon fallen man so that he who unjustly kills a man defaces the image of God and does dishonour to him."
- **Erickson:** "Man is to be understood as having originated, not through a chance process of evolution, but through a conscious, purposeful act by God. Thus there is a reason for man's existence, a reason which lies in the intention of the supreme being. Second: the image of God is intrinsic to man. Man would not be human without it."⁶
- **Philip Hughes:** "This disclosure (that man is the image bearer of God) is indisputably of immense consequence if we wish to establish a right understanding of the nature of man"⁷
- The significance of this point is cannot be overstated: One simply cannot value human life the way that they should if they do not see the extraordinary value that God sees in Himself.
- **Supremacy of God in the Life of the Mind:** "When a person is overwhelmed by the pervasive Biblical truth of God's supremacy in his own mind, then God's supremacy in ours is almost irresistible."⁸

⁵ Adapted from Henry, 57.

⁶ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 470-471.

⁷ Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *The True Image*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 3.

- **John Piper:** “From predestination to creation to incarnation to propitiation to sanctification to consummation the refrain of God over and over in his inspired word is: I do this for my glory. That is, I make my glory supreme in everything I do. Mark well, the most stunning point of these texts is not to tell us to make God supreme, but to tell us that God makes himself the supreme goal of all that he does in saving us from beginning to end.”⁹
- **Brothers We Are Not Professionals:** “Why is it important to be stunned by the God-centeredness of God? Because many people are willing to be God-centered as long as they feel that God is man-centered. It is a subtle danger. We may think we are centering our lives on God, when we are really making Him a means to self-esteem.”¹⁰
- This was much of the reason that Albert Einstein didn’t like church.
- **Charles Misner:** “He...looked at what the preachers said about God and felt that they were blaspheming. He had seen much more majesty than they had ever imagined, and they were just not talking about the real thing. My guess is that he simply felt that religions he'd run across did not have proper respect...for the author of the universe.”¹¹
- This also puts into perspective in what ways we are and are not valuable. There is a right way and a wrong way to value human life. First, human life is valuable because made us valuable. But again our value is derivative. That is, we are not innately valuable, but we are valuable because God has bestowed value upon us.
- **The Passion of Jesus Christ:** “I have heard it said, ‘God didn’t die for frogs. So he was responding to our value as humans.’ This turns grace on its head. We are worse off than frogs. They have not sinned. They have not rebelled and treated God with the contempt of being inconsequential in their lives. God did not have to die for frogs. They aren’t bad enough. We are. Our debt is so great, only a divine sacrifice could pay it. There is only one explanation for God’s sacrifice for us. It is not us. It is “the riches of his grace” (Ephesians 1:7). It is all free. It is not a response to our worth. It is the overflow of his infinite worth. In fact, that is what divine love is in the end: a passion to enthrall undeserving sinners, at great cost, with what will make us supremely happy forever, namely, his infinite beauty.”¹²

⁸ John Piper, *The Supremacy of God in the Life of the Mind*, http://www.desiringgod.org/library/topics/culture/life_mind_03.html

⁹ John Piper, *The Supremacy of God in the Life of the Mind*, http://www.desiringgod.org/library/topics/culture/life_mind_03.html

¹⁰ John Piper, *Brothers, We Are Not Professionals* (Broadman Holman Publishers: Nashville, 2002), 6-7.

¹¹ Charles Misner, “First Things,” Dec. 1991, No. 18, p. 63 (italics added).

¹² Jo John Piper, *The Passion of Jesus Christ* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2004), 29.

- Man is not the highest value in the universe—God is. And unless we see God as infinitely valuable, more valuable than all the people of the world, we will never be able to appreciate adequately the value that all men *do* have. To set man's value as ultimate is nothing short of idolatry. That is why I said there is a God-exalting way to honor human life and a God-belittling way to honor humanity.
- ***The Supremacy of God in Missions:*** "If the pursuit of God's glory is not ordered above the pursuit of man's good in the affections of the heart and the priorities of the church, man will not be well served and God will not be duly honored."¹³
- This, the supremacy of God above all things, becomes the surprising answer to appreciating all things in creation, whether they be men, women, nature, the stars...everything.
- ***The Pleasures of God:*** "If all the universe and everything in it exist by the design of an infinite, personal God to make his manifold glory known and loved, then to treat any subject without reference to God's glory is not scholarship, but insurrection."¹⁴
- This means that we should seek to see everything in its relationship to God.
- ***God's Passion for His Glory:*** "If God exists, then he is the measure of all things, and what he thinks about all things is the measure of what we should think. Not to care about truth is not to care about God. To love God passionately is to love truth passionately. Being God-centered in life means being truth-driven in ministry. What is not true is not of God. What is false is anti-God. Indifference to the truth is indifference to the mind of God. Pretense is rebellion against reality, and what makes reality is God. Our concern with truth is simply an echo of our concern with God. And all this is rooted in God's concern with God, or God's passion for the glory of God"¹⁵

So what are some ways in which we can display the sanctity of human life?

1. One of the first ways in which we can value human life is to become aware of the many areas that it is attacked and demeaned. I would like to ask Annamaria come up to the platform and share with you a few different ways in which we can glorify God by acknowledging His likeness in others by elevating them to the place that God created them.
2. Abortion is wrong. There simply is no getting around the fact that. Last week I quoted from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. In the article I quoted from last week

¹³ John Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Missions*, (Grand Rapids, Baker, 1993), 12.

¹⁴ John Piper, *The Pleasures of God* (Sisters: Multnomah, 2000), 298.

¹⁵ John Piper, *God's Passion for His Glory* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1996), 97.

he also stated the following:

- “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny.”
- “One has not only a legal but a moral responsibility to obey just laws. Conversely, one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws. I would agree with St. Augustine that ‘an unjust law is no law at all.’ ...”
- “Now, what is the difference between the two? How does one determine whether a law is just or unjust? A just law is a man-made code that squares with the moral law or the law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law. To put it in the terms of St. Thomas Aquinas: An unjust law is a human law that is not rooted in eternal law and natural law...”
- “Any law that uplifts human personality is just. Any law that degrades human personality is unjust.”¹⁶
- All of these charges could and should be leveled against the God-denigrating, Christ-belittling practice of abortion. It is wrong first and foremost because it is an attack on the very image of God in the world. People are, in affect, attempting to snuff-out God’s likeness in this world.
- Insert photo:



- **Malcolm Muggeridge:** “In my television interview with Mother Teresa, I raised the point as to whether, in view of the commonly held opinion that there are too many people in India, it was really worth while trying to salvage a few abandoned children who might otherwise be expected to die of neglect, malnutrition, or some related illness. It was a point, as I was to discover subsequently, so remote from her whole way of looking at life that

¹⁶ Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” (April 16, 1963). A copy of this letter can be found at: <http://www.stanford.edu/group/King/frequentdocs/birmingham.pdf>.

she had difficulty in grasping it. The notion that there could in any circumstances be too many children was, to her, as inconceivable as suggesting that there are too many bluebells in the woods or stars in the sky. In the film we made in Calcutta, there is a shot of Mother Teresa holding a tiny baby girl in her hands; so minute that her very existence seemed like a miracle. As she holds this child, she says in a voice, and with an expression, of exaltation most wonderful and moving: "See! there's life in her!" Her face is glowing and triumphant; as it might be the mother of us all glorying in what we all possess-this life in us, in our world, in the universe, which, however low it flickers or fiercely burns, is still a divine flame which no man dare presume to put out, be his motives never so humane and enlightened."¹⁷

3. A couple of years ago my wife and I watched the movie "Hotel Rwanda" with Don Cheadle. Rent the movie and watch it. It won't be a popcorn movie that you sit back and enjoy, but it will help to bring the reality of genocide home. One of the areas that I personally have grieved over during the past three years is the African region of Darfur in the Sudan. Darfur has been embroiled in a deadly conflict for over three years. At least **400,000** people have been killed; more than 2 million civilians have been forced to flee their homes and now live in refugee camps in various locations; and more than 3.5 million are completely reliant on international aid for survival. "Not since the Rwandan genocide of 1994 has the world seen such a calculated campaign of displacement, starvation, rape, and mass slaughter."¹⁸ The website listed below in the footnotes has up to date news as to what kind of steps you could take to try to bring about a stop to the genocide.
4. The last suggestion of God-honoring way to honor human life may seem, perhaps, a little unusual. However, if we take seriously the fact that we are dependent upon God for our significance and that God is glorified by our dependence upon him, then there is yet another way we can sanctify human life. That is to freely and willingly acknowledge our utter dependence upon God, and to look to him as the most desirable thing in all the universe.
 - ***God's Passion for His Glory***: "If God's glory is the only all-satisfying reality in the universe, then to try to do good for people, without aiming to show them the glory of God and ignite in them a delight in God, would be like treating fever with cold packs when you have penicillin."¹⁹
 - **To direct people to value human life without pointing them to the ultimate value**

¹⁷ Malcolm Muggeridge in "Something Beautiful for God" as quoted in "Mother Teresa: She stirred a generation by touching the untouchables," *Christian History*, Issue 65 (vol. XIX, No 1).

¹⁸ See: <http://www.savedarfur.org>.

¹⁹ Piper, *God's Passion for His Glory*, 36.

(from which we derive our value) is like trying to help someone who is sick by offering them some type of pain killers so that they won't experience the suffering of some disease, but never offering them the cure. Only giving them pain killers without the antidote may seem like an act of mercy but in reality is an act of cruelty.

- ***A Hunger For God:*** “God is committed to rewarding those acts of the human heart that signify human helplessness and hope in God. Over and over again in Scripture God promises to come to the aid of those who stop depending on themselves and seek God as their treasure and help...The reason for this is that these acts call attention to God’s glory.”²⁰
- ***God’s Passion for His Glory:*** “Nothing makes God more supreme and more central in worship than when a people are utterly persuaded that nothing—not money or prestige or leisure or family or job or health or sports or toys or friends—nothing is going to bring satisfaction to their sinful, guilty, aching hearts besides God. This conviction breeds a people who go hard after God on Sunday morning.”²¹ “Belief is not merely an agreement with facts in the head; it is also and appetite for God in the heart, which fastens on Jesus for satisfaction.”²²
- ***Desiring God:*** “Saving faith is the heartfelt conviction not only that Christ is reliable, but also that he is desirable. It is the confidence that he will come through with his promises and that what he promises is more to be desired than all the world.”²³
- The upshot of all of this is that the way in which you can value human life is to believe that “Jesus is life-giving water and food. Faith is coming to Jesus and drinking the water and eating the food so that we find out hearts satisfied in him.”²⁴ In other words, to believe the gospel. To attempt to honor human life while all the time you do not come to Christ to satisfy your deepest longings is to join the ranks of the hypocrites. This morning, come to Christ. Come and drink deeply of him. Trust him and the gospel message and in so doing honor that greatest value in all the universe.
- Is there anyone here that says, “Anderson, I don’t know about everything you’ve said this morning, but I do know that what you’ve said about Jesus Christ strikes a real chord inside of me. I want to trust Christ in the way you’re talking about. I don’t want to come to him simply because it’s the right thing to do but because it is the preferable thing to do. What should I do?”

²⁰ John Piper, *A Hunger For God* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1997), 178-179.

²¹ Piper, *God’s Passion for His Glory*, 41.

²² John Piper, *Future Grace* (Sisters: Multnomah, 1995), 86.

²³ John Piper, *Desiring God: Meditations of the Christian Hedonist* (Multnomah: Sisters, 1986), 69.

²⁴ John Piper, *Future Grace*, 87