

# **“DOING THE RIGHT THING EVEN WHEN IT’S HARD.”**

**Rev. Robert T. Woodyard**

**First Christian Reformed Church**

**January 21, 2018, 10:30 AM**

**Scripture Texts: Daniel 6:1-10**

## **Introduction.**

Winston Churchill once said, “You can always count on Americans to do the right thing - after they've tried everything else.”

Mark Twain said, “Do the right thing. It will gratify some people and astonish the rest.”

Google has changed their motto from “Don’t be evil” to “Do the right thing”

Last Monday was Martin Luther King Jr. day. He said a lot of good things in his day.

“Cowardice asks the question, is it safe? Expediency asks the question, is it politic? Vanity asks the question, is it popular? But, conscience asks the question, is it right? And there comes a time when we must take a position that is neither safe, nor politic, nor popular, but one must take it because it is right.”

This morning I want to talk with you about doing the right thing when it is neither safe, nor politically correct, nor popular, even when it’s hard, even when it costs.

Because the immediate context of my sermon is the issue of abortion, I want to make it very clear that though I want to speak against abortion in the clearest of terms, I want to speak to those who have had an abortion in the most compassionate of terms.

If you have committed this sin or helped or forced someone else to commit this sin, and you have been convicted of it by the Holy Spirit, know that the blood of Jesus is sufficient to completely cover and cleanse your sin, if you will truly repent and turn in faith to Him.

And if you have done that and still feel guilt and shame, if you have done that and Satan tries to condemn you as a murderer, know that’s not Jesus talking, it’s Satan. Tell him, “Yes, I am a murderer but I stand in good company, with Moses and King David and the Apostle Paul, and one day I will stand with them before the throne of my Lord and Savior who loves me and died for me. In the name of Jesus I am set free.” Remind Satan of that every time he tries to remind you of this or any other sin.

We are all sinners here, and I hold out the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We are not saved by being good, but by the grace of God in Christ Jesus. So we can talk honestly about sin and shame and guilt and know that we are not under judgment and condemnation if we are in Christ. Don’t stay outside in the judgment of God. Come inside to the family of God, the

family created by repentance and faith. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

### **Daniel 6:1-10.**

We all know the Daniel in the lion's den story, but few of us remember why he ended up in the lion's den in the first place. It is an incredibly modern story.

It's a story filled with political intrigue, political correctness, and temptations to do what is expedient or will save your neck. It's a story about twisting the truth, telling lies, manipulating the political system, undermining Biblical values and principles.

The political leaders sought incriminating evidence against Daniel, they watched his every move, they had secretaries and subordinates bribed to give them any dirt they could use against him. They examined his financial records, and the minutes of all his meetings. They hired detectives. They tapped his cell phone. They watched his house.

Why? There are several possible motives.

There may have been envy because of his coming promotion, made worse by the fact he was a holdover from the previous Babylonian rule. Or even worse than that, he was a foreigner, a Jew.

And Daniel was a godly man of impeccable character who couldn't be bought and was a threat to their own sinful activity. Holiness convicts bad consciences and arouses hatred. And it was the worst kind of hate, cool and calculating. They were out to destroy him.

This is the world acting like the world. The ungodly hate the godly, the unrighteous hate the righteous, Satan hates God and the things of God and the people of God.

When the world hates and attacks and ridicules and persecutes and slanders and lies and deceives and is unjust the world is doing what the world does. There is no shock or surprise in that.

When they couldn't find any dirt they decided to use his religion against him. They made a law that would create a conflict between the law of Daniel's God and the law of their land. In other words, they came up with a law that would require Daniel to sin. They would exploit his morality.

No religious request could be made for 30 days without going through Darius the Mede and any violation carried a death penalty.

This is similar to what is happening today as godless people are targeting and shutting down Christians who because of their convictions of conscience do not wish to participate in ceremonies that are against God and His Word.

Secular man hates God and hates the people of God and all they stand for and do. It doesn't matter if they are doing good and helping others and making the world a better place. Their presence and their character interfere with the bad consciences of others and they can't stand the turmoil in their own souls.

The bad conscience of our culture will increasingly hate the very presence of Christians. It won't be enough to pass the laws making good evil and evil good, they will not rest until we must approve and give our blessing and consent.

**John 15:19-20** If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. 20 Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you.

### *What does Daniel do in the face of a new law in the land?*

Our text says he went to his house and I wonder what kind of debate was going on in his mind as he walked home. "Daniel, it's just for 30 days so what is the big deal? God's word does say we are to obey those in authority over us so I guess I better obey this new law? At least it's not idolatry like King Nebuchadnezzar tried to force my three friends to do, bowing down to that shiny image. Or I could just close the window and pray in secret."

What would it say if he did any of those things? Since everyone knew his witness and his practice, to change it now would bring the charge of hypocrisy, his testimony would be damaged. It would say he feared man more than he feared God.

How many countless thousands of prayers had Daniel prayed and God answered? How much of his wisdom and discernment and courage and boldness and blessings had come from these very times of prayer? This was his lifeblood, this was his hope and help. Why would he turn away from this now? No, he would not betray His God.

### *Daniel prayed as he had always done.*

This is amazing. People really are out to get Daniel and he isn't paranoid about it. The lions are real, but he knows who controls the lions.

Dare we say that is the greater miracle in this story. Shutting the mouths of the lions was big, but bending his knees in the face of such pressure was huge.

Daniel saw what was at stake, worshipping and honoring His God or falling into fear and disbelief. When man's laws and God's laws conflict, the duty is clear, the right thing to do is to obey God rather than man.

“There comes a time when we must take a position that is neither safe, nor politic, nor popular, but one must take it because it is right.”

Some of you have relatives who broke the law in Holland and hid Jews during WWII. They put their own lives in danger to help others. I remember John Tjoelker talking about it.

Metdy Shutt and her sister Johanna Roosma had a grandfather who helped and hid over 300 Jews during WWII. *Johannes Bogaard* with the help of his father and brother and sister and family hid as many as a 100 Jews at one time on their farm in dry wells, ditches, haystacks and in spaces between walls. They gave them food, money, ration cards and fake identity papers. Their farm was raided on more than one occasion and eventually his father, brother and son were taken to concentration camps and killed.

Why did he do it? Because his father taught him the Jewish people were men of God and he wanted to do the right thing. He did the right thing even when it was hard, even at the cost of many family members lives.

Yad Vashem is the World Holocaust Remembrance Center in Jerusalem, the largest holocaust museum in the world, the second most visited place in Israel after the Western Wall.

On the Yad Vashem website it says this:

“A core goal of Yad Vashem's founders was to recognize Gentiles who, at personal risk and without a financial or evangelistic motive, chose to save their Jewish brethren from the ongoing genocide during the Holocaust.”

“In a world of total moral collapse there was a small minority who mustered extraordinary courage to uphold human values. These were the Righteous Among the Nations. (It's the highest honor given to a non-Jew for risking great personal dangers to rescue Jews). They stand in stark contrast to the mainstream of indifference and hostility that prevailed during the Holocaust. Contrary to the general trend, these rescuers regarded the Jews as fellow human beings who came within the bounds of their universe of obligation.”

Johannes Bogaard has been recognized by the Yad Vashim as one of the Righteous Among the Nations for his selfless actions of saving Jews during the Holocaust. He and his family refused to acquiesce or obey the Nazis even during the darkest times and in times of great danger. He paid a heavy price losing a father, brother and son in the effort. In 1964 Johannes Bogaard planted a tree on the Avenue of the Righteous among the Nations in Yad Vashem.

Doing the right thing even when it's hard.

How many of you recognize the name *Captain Sully Sullenberger*? He was the pilot who successfully landed a disabled US Airways plane on the Hudson River in 2009 and refused to evacuate until all his passengers were safe. There is already a movie made about him.

How many of you recognize the name *Captain Francesco Schettino* (sket'ti:no)? He was the captain of the Italian Costa Concordia cruise ship that ran aground in 2012 when he sailed it too close to shore to show off to friends. He jumped ship, and refused to return even when ordered to do so. He is serving a 16-year prison sentence for manslaughter, causing a shipwreck and abandoning ship; for cowardice and his complicity in the deaths of 32 people.

Who do we admire? Who is the hero? What makes Sully Sullenberger a hero?

His willingness to sacrifice for others and his commitment to do the right thing, even when it means being the last one out of a sinking airplane.

It's interesting, many people have a secret desire to be a hero, but few are willing when it comes down to it to make the sacrifices and daily choices and be self-disciplined enough and take personal responsibility that lead to heroic lives. Who today lays down his life for another?

Abortion flies in the face of these admirable and heroic qualities. It promises an easy way out, not having to take responsibility, sacrificing another person's life to make mine easier. There is nothing heroic in defending abortion, there are no heroes in those marches.

### **Implications and application.**

Getting off course has disastrous results. This is true of individuals and of nations. Abortion is the leading cause of death in America. Heart disease and cancer each claim about 600,000 every year. Abortion kills almost a million each year. Since 1770 war has claimed about 650,000 Americans. Since 1970 abortion has claimed almost 60 million. And about a billion worldwide.

And abortion is not just a threat to the lives of babies, it is a threat to all life. When life is devalued all life is threatened. If we value and protect the smallest and most vulnerable of life that spills over into how we treat all of life.

An unborn baby's moral value is determined not by its size, or stage of development, or its degree of autonomy or its viability outside of the womb. Its moral value is determined by one thing, and one thing only, that is a human being created in the image of God.

What's the right thing when it comes to children? For both individuals and societies to protect them; to protect them from harm, from those bigger and stronger than them who want to hurt them or do away with them. We will be judged by what we do to children.

It is a national and global holocaust. We live in a world that desperately needs a generation of Christians willing to do the right thing no matter how hard or what the cost. We need a generation of Daniels and Johannes Bogaards and Captain Sullenbergers.

It is the right thing to stand up for and defend and protect life, especially the life of those who are innocent, who are most vulnerable, most defenseless, most helpless.

It is right even if it costs us credibility in the eyes of the secular culture. Godly men and women do the right thing, care for children, take responsibility over themselves and over others and willingly lay down their life for others.

What can you do?

You and your family can fill a baby bottle with money.

You can go to Planned Parenthood this afternoon at two, and every third Sunday and pray.

You can ride the bus down to Olympia at 8:15 in the morning.

You can volunteer at New Way Ministries.

You can speak up on behalf of life, and go on line to equip yourself to answer the objections.

You can tell your kids stories of people who did what was right even when it cost them, instill in your family the values of courage, integrity, faithfulness and loyalty to our God.

You can repent of complacency and make the end of abortion a regular part of your prayer life.

In a world tottering on the edge of total moral collapse may we be among those who resist the pressure and temptation to cave in and go along, may we do the right thing, may we be the next generation of the righteous among the nations and defend life from the moment of conception to natural death.

**Philippians 4:13** I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me.

I can do the right thing no matter the cost through Christ who strengthens me.