

“LEST WE FORGET THE LEAST OF THESE.”

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First Christian Reformed Church

January 20, 2019, 10:30 AM

Scripture Texts: Matthew 25:37-40

Introduction.

Have any of you ever forgotten anything? Dumb question, right? Of course, we have, we all do. Forgetting is easy and it gets easier as you grow older. Some of us have to go to extra effort not to forget things.

We write notes, make lists, write on our hand, tie a string around our finger, put keys in exactly the same place every time so we can find them next time.

Certain things in our personal lives are considered so important that we have days to remember them, birthdays, anniversaries, special events. It's important, we want to remember.

This same thing is true in our national life, in our life as a country, there are days too important to forget. Tomorrow is MLK Day, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Veterans Day.

As Christians we remember Christmas and Easter. We can't imagine ever forgetting those days.

But some important things are being forgotten. There are now generations of Americans who have no clue about the Holocaust, and some deny it even happened.

Today is Sanctity of Human Life Sunday, marking the 46th anniversary of the infamous Supreme Court ruling, Roe v. Wade, legalizing abortion. In some ways abortion has become so commonplace in our culture that it is becoming forgotten, considered old news.

Are we forgetting? I watched the Google News feed yesterday. There was no mention of the March for Life in Washington DC yesterday, but there were big headlines for the Women's March. When I searched for an article I found some that said thousands attended, but a time lapse video shows hundreds of thousands attended.

The media covers up abortion. Another example is all the reports of the leading causes of death in America. We are told it is heart disease and cancer, but it's not true. Abortion is by far the leading cause of death in America and Canada.

I don't preach about this topic every year, but it has been on my heart for some time now to do so this year, lest we forget the least of these little ones who don't have a voice.

Word of grace. Holding out hope.

When I have preached on this topic in the past I have always included a word of grace and forgiveness to anyone who has ever had an abortion or participated in helping someone get one or has used an abortifacient such as IUD or Morning After pill or Plan B pill.

The blood of Jesus covers the guilt and shame of all our many sins, including this sin.

With Satan there is only condemnation, guilt, shame, beating yourself up, thinking the very worst about yourself, rehearsing your sin, listening to voices in your head about how terrible a person you are.

Let me show you to an honest, healthy, hope filled way of dealing with real sin.

Micah 7:8–9 Rejoice not over me, O my enemy; when I fall, I shall rise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light to me. I will bear the indignation of the Lord because I have sinned against him, until he pleads my cause and executes judgment for me. He will bring me out to the light; I shall look upon his vindication.

Micah calls his sin sin, and he acknowledges how bad it really is, he has sinned against God, he has fallen into darkness. No excuses, he owns it.

But notice he doesn't stay there, he doesn't wallow in the mud. He turns to the God he sinned against and he looks to God for His forgiveness and redemption. God delights in those who fear Him and hate their sin and turn to Him.

Your vindication is named Jesus, who executes judgment for you on the cross, who cleanses you from all unrighteousness with His blood. Jesus loves you with a very great love and to prove it He died for you. Come to Jesus, confess our sin to Him and He will set us free.

Our sin does not disqualify us from God's love and grace and from God using us and our life in beautiful ways. Do you want to be set free from your past sin? Glory to God, that is exactly what He most delights to do and wants to do for you. I hold out the love of

God and the love of the church to you. There is no condemnation here, only grace for those willing to humble themselves and receive it.

Abortion.

Should we be talking about a political issue like abortion in the church and in sermons? If abortion was only a political issue then no, but abortion is not a political issue. It is a serious spiritual issue that has become politicized in our culture by feminism and liberal politics.

Abortion is a spiritual matter, a matter of the soul, a matter of life and death. Abortion is a spiritual matter because it relates to the meaning of true religion.

James 1:27 Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

True religion cares about what God cares about. The Lord is especially attentive to the case of the poor and needy, to the fatherless, the orphan and the widow. He hears their pleas and pleads their case.

“If we should care for those whose parents have been killed, should we not also care for those whose parents want to kill them?” (John Piper).

Who is needier and more orphaned than a baby who is unwanted by his father or mother? Who is more helpless in our nation today than the countless babies in the womb who have no voice, no defense, no legal help, no justice?

Abortion is a spiritual matter because Scripture calls us to love and care for the least of these.

Psalms 82:3-4 Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute. 4 Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.”

Proverbs 24:11 Rescue those who are being taken away to death; hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter.

In our nation and in our world, children are being slaughtered at a horrific rate.

About 3,500 a day in America, over one million lives lost a year. 9/11 happens every day.

60 million a year in the world.

Over 1 billion since 1973. Unborn girls are killed at a much higher rate. 93% are healthy mothers and healthy babies. Less than 1% are for rape or incest.

Abortion is the greatest stain on the soul of our nation. True religion seeks to be unstained.

Abortion is a spiritual matter, the church must speak to the culture and not the other way around, the Word of God must guide the nation, not the politicians.

When we forget, when Christians forget, when the church forgets, then Satan wins. So, I preach this morning lest we forget the least of these, lest we be complicit in shedding innocent blood.

The Least of These.

In Matthew 25 Jesus is talking about the Last Judgment, He says the last judgment will be based on the two great commandments. Did we love God and did we love our neighbor?

We already know from I John that we show our love for God who is invisible by how we love those who are visible. So, loving our neighbor is a form of loving God. Doing the second commandment in some ways fulfills the first commandment.

And we already know from the parable of the Good Samaritan our neighbor is anyone in need that we have the means to help in some small way.

Who are the least? Jesus gives a summary list of possible candidates, but many others could be added. These are examples of what love can look like by which we give proof of what we profess concerning Christ. We show what we believe not just with words but with our hands.

Our faith must have works, the truth of our faith is tested by our lives and our words and actions.

Why does Jesus use the example of the least, the lowest, the last, the lost, the lonely? Because that's who's on His heart, that's who He came down to earth for. These are the ones who have God's heart.

The list shows what must be true of our character as we reflect Christ in this culture we live in.

First, are we characterized by a love for others? Are we ready to show love by doing others good? Are we ready to do what lifts up and blesses and helps and contributes to the well-being of another?

What's our attitude toward the least? How do we treat those who seem beneath us, worse off than us, the poor and needy? How do we treat those who have no advocate, no help in this life, are true victims of injustice? Just feel sorry for them, feel sad, feel glad we're not one of them? Or do we feel compassion?

Love the least of these.

Second, are we willing and ready to deny ourselves in the service of others less fortunate and in need? Are we willing to do good to others who will not be able to do good back to us?

In this world there are always those who need food and those who have food, those who have the necessities of this life and those who don't. And God so distributes wealth that those who have more are to share with those who have less.

Even if we don't have the means to make a big difference in someone else's life, is our heart so predisposed. It is the desire of our heart to help even when we are unable? Are we sad about our inability or are we uncaring?

Babies in the womb are our weakest, most vulnerable, most helpless neighbors, they have no voice, no ability to defend themselves. They have nothing, they are the poorest of the poor. They are completely dependent on someone else to help them, come to their aid.

Jesus could have added to the list, "I was a baby and you brought me to full term. I was conceived and you gave me birth."

Third, are we motivated and compelled out of a love for Jesus? Do we do what we do in the name of Jesus, that He gets the glory? The best works are the works done in His name.

Colossians 3:17 Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Christ is more present in this world than we realize, and He is more present in situations and circumstance where we wouldn't first expect.

Jesus sees and Jesus remembers what we do and why and with what heart and attitude. The kindness and mercy and grace we extend to those in need will be received by Jesus as done also to Him and He will remember. He will not forget.

We can't lose, He will pay back with high interest.

When we remember and help and bless and defend and fight for the least, the lost, the lonely, and especially the innocent unborn human lives, we won't get the praise of the culture, we won't be looked up to or admired or respected by the world. To stand against abortion is one of the most unpopular things we can do.

But we will be confessed and acknowledge by God and His holy angels, we will be blessed by the Father and made to share in the Son's inheritance. We will enter into our Master's joy.

Which would you rather have: to be blessed by the world and reproached by the Father, or blessed by the Father and bear the reproach of the world? We who bear the cross and the reproach of the cross in this life will receive glory in the life to come.

Let us be rich in good deeds toward the least of these, so that people might see the kind of Master we serve and give him glory on the day of His coming again.

Implications and application.

Brothers and sisters, the evil of abortion is more than our minds and hearts can fathom. It is a great darkness on our land. The blood of millions of innocent children cry out to God.

I share your feeling of powerlessness. As the Psalmist says, "When the foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous do?"

We must be careful not to let our powerlessness and hopelessness in the face of so great an evil lead us to just turn away, to shake our heads and try to forget.

Christ never said it would be easy. He simply said, love your neighbor as you love yourself. And then he died and rose again to cover all our sin and make mercy possible. Jesus came to be a light in the darkness, to bring light to the darkness. He showed us mercy and compassion and then said, now go and do the same.

What can we do for the least of these?

First, don't be silent in those conversations that happen at work or social events. However casual or off the cuff or said in jest, gently resist the lies and the deception and the callousness of our culture. The world needs our voice, Christians are to be salt and light in a dark world.

Martin Luther King, Jr., whose birthday we remember tomorrow would not be silent and was relentless in telling the truth about legalized, racial evil. He once said, "He who passively accepts evil is as much involved in it as he who helps to perpetrate it."

Abortion is not about a woman's right to choose. We all have the right to make a million choices, but no one has a right to make a choice that takes the life of another person. Abortion is the killing of an innocent human life.

And no, it's not just a clump of cells or a blob of tissue. Clumps of cells and blobs of tissue don't grow into living human beings. What is conceived in the womb is life, left alone it will be a full-grown human being, to take its life no matter how small or big, is murder.

Second, we can encourage adoption and bless and come along side those who do. Maybe someday God will enable us to have a fund set up with money specifically to help couples who want to adopt but can't afford the huge costs.

Third, we can support, encourage and even join in events like the bus going to Olympia Tuesday morning, or the Life Chain or praying outside of Planned Parenthood the third Sunday afternoon of every month.

Take a baby bottle home and fill it up. Do this with your kids and talk to them about why you are doing it, how important it is to take whatever small steps we can.

Pregnancy centers face constant attacks from governments and legislators and Planned Parenthood. They do so much on tight budgets. Plan a family project to raise money for Lynden Human Life or Whatcom County Pregnancy Center.

Fourth, we can use our vote for the sake of the least of these. I cannot in good conscience vote for any candidate in any office who believes it is OK to kill babies in the womb. It ought to be unthinkable. It is immoral and unjust to deprive someone life without due process. It is the shedding of innocent human blood. Anyone who supports it is unfit to serve in leadership.

Fifth, love children. Welcome children. Believe with all your heart that all children are a precious gift from God. Jesus loves the little children and so should we.

When they act like children don't become impatient. Smile at them running around the fellowship hall, don't begrudge cleaning up their messes. Help the mother who has her hands full. If you are not on the nursery list, consider serving the smallest in our community a few times a year. Call the church office.

Love all God's children. They are image bearers of the living God. Never criticize anyone who has lots of them. Celebrate births, celebrate large families. They are all blessings from God. May children never feel unwanted. Love and hug and kiss and bless and pray for your children.

Finally, pray for unborn babies, pray for young moms who feel trapped in seemingly impossible circumstances, pray for young dads to do what is right and not what is convenient. Pray for the souls of those who do abortions. Dr. Bernard Nathanson is famous for being one of the first abortionists, but he stopped through the prayers and loving witness of pro-life Christians.

Pray for legislation, for Supreme Court rulings that will protect all human life. Pray for someone like Wilberforce in England or President Lincoln in America to be raised up.

Matthew 25:40 And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

Prayer: Almighty God, have mercy on us as a nation and turn aside your wrath against us. We have shed innocent blood because we do not trust you and do not fear you. Almighty Father convict our hearts of this great wickedness that threatens the very soul of our nation. Give us a great love and compassion for the littlest ones among us, especially those in their mother's wombs. Change the hearts of Christians everywhere to no longer be silent and passive. Jesus, you conquered death on the cross and delivered us from death, come now and conquer this death and deliver us until there is life, liberty and justice, not just for some, but for all. I pray for those who have had abortions that you silence the lies of Satan that there is no forgiveness or relief from guilt. This morning break down those barriers to your love and forgiveness. You died to set us free from all our sins.

Finally, Father, I pray for your blessing upon all the families of our church, upon those with children still in the home, and also on those who desire children and are waiting on you. And for those who desire to be married that they might have a family. Father hear their prayers and answer according to your best wisdom and will and give us patience as we wait on you. Come Holy Spirit, come, have mercy and help us we pray. Amen.