



Good Shepherd Lutheran Church

Watertown, WI

“For Those Who Cannot Speak for Themselves”

Proverbs 31:8-9

Rev. David K. Groth

*“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves,
for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and
judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and
needy” (Prov. 31:8-9).*

January 27, 2013

Collect of the Day

Almighty God, You know we live in the midst of so many dangers that in our frailty we cannot stand upright. Grant strength and protection to support us in all dangers and carry us through all temptations; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

When I was living in Germany, a number of times the conversation drifted to World War II, and more specifically, to the Holocaust. I mostly listened and said very little. There's deep, lingering shame in the collective conscience of the country. But the students I visited with said their parents and grandparents simply did not know what was going on. They saw the yellow stars on the clothing, they knew of the oppression and even of work camps filled mostly with Jews, but had no idea of the systematic execution of Jews.

Of course, some disagree. Daniel Goldhagen wrote a controversial book entitled "*Hitler's Willing Executioners*." In it, he claims the reason there was so little resistance to the Nazis, the reason why more didn't speak up against Hitler's concentration camps was because most people pretty much agreed with what the Nazis were doing. They knew of it, and more or less approved of it. I suspect the truth is probably somewhere in the middle. In either case, we Americans shouldn't be too quick to judge. We know precisely what is happening in our country.

Tuesday of last week marked the 40th anniversary of the Roe v. Wade, the Supreme Court decision that legalized abortion. We know that since that day, the lives of over 55 million unborn children have been destroyed.

On 9/11, just under 3,000 precious lives were lost. Public outcry was enormous. There are more abortions every single day in our country than the lives that were lost on Sept. 11. Yet the outcry and opposition is faint. Why? The Wall Street Journal reported this last

week that seven in ten Americans believe Roe v. Wade should stand. Seven in ten. I'm sure there are more than a few in this room who believe it should stand. And I'm sure there are just as many who consider abortion a political issue, an election issue that is not appropriate to preach about from the pulpit.

But let's think about that for a minute. God's Word speaks to some of the political issues of our day, but not all of them. For example, the topic of taxes. Jesus said, "Render to Caesar what is Caesar's." But he does not talk about tax structures or percentages. Therefore Christians can debate that topic, and disagree on it. God's Word speaks about salvation, but has nothing to say about how best to save Social Security or Medicare. Therefore Christians can in good conscience disagree on and debate these important issues. But regarding the destruction of innocent life, there's no wiggle room in God's Word. There is a very clean, very clear "Thou shalt not murder." Therefore abortion is not a "political issue" or "election issue." It's a spiritual issue. For Christians, it's not a constitutional right or a difficult choice or a low-risk medical procedure. It's a grave sin. Abortion is an assault against God's Word of truth which says human life is sacred. We can no more debate the rightness or wrongness of abortion than we can the pros and cons of rape, or stealing.

Abortion in one form or another has been going on for thousands of years. And for thousands of years God's people, until just a few decades ago, presented a unified front against abortion. Of late some denominations have grown soft and fuzzy on the topic, but the LCMS is not one of them. We argue about a lot of things but abortion is not one of them. We believe the Bible clearly prohibits abortion.

A congregation has no business preaching about tax credits or campaign finance reform, but I believe we have a sacred duty to address the issue of abortion. To the extent that we fail, collectively and individually, we

are complicit. Silence from the church and from individual Christians is not a polite form of opposition. Silence is assent. Our silence gives a nod of approval to abortion. Put yourself in the shoes of a pregnant teen. As she and her boyfriend consider abortion, if they never heard from the pulpit or from the moms and dads that abortion is wrong, they very well might come to the conclusion that it must be okay, or at least not that big of a deal. Similarly, if we never speak on the topic of euthanasia, we should not be surprised if our youth start looking at suicide as a viable alternative to a hard and disappointing life. It's not that far of a stretch.

We must always remember the context in which we live. It's the age of moral relativism, which denies any objective truth. Under the dictates of moral relativism, no view is any more valid than any other view. So, for example, Yale University hosts on campus something called a "Sex Week". They dress it up as sex education, but really it's just a festival, some graduates say, of sleaze and porn. Hard-core porn is screened in classrooms and sold in the hallways. Toys are marketed to students. Partially nude porn stars demonstrate sadomasochism. Again, all this happens with the full knowledge and approval of Yale's senior administrators, and is defended as "academic freedom." By the way, it's being replicated at Harvard, Brown, Duke, Northwestern, the University of Illinois, and, of course, my alma mater, (not Concordia Seminary) but the University of Wisconsin.

Question: If the academic elite cannot distinguish or teach right from wrong because of moral relativism, what chance is there that we'll get solid leadership from them on the topics of abortion and euthanasia and suicide? Don't assume "the experts" know any better than you do about what's right and what's wrong.

It's the beginning of Lutheran Schools Week. I'm so glad and grateful we have Lutheran School teachers here who use academic freedom to teach right

We teach the kids here that all human life is sacred, because God created it. We believe it begins at conception. “He was conceived by the Holy Spirit” we confess every Sunday. Psalm 139 says “You knit me together in my mother’s womb.” I love that image, a very personal, hands on involvement of God. It makes me think of DNA strands that almost look as if they’ve been knit together.

Looking to defend abortion, some will put the beginning of human life much later than conception, and they’ll base it on size, or level of development or the ability to feel pain or the degree of dependency or the ability to interact with the environment. The assertions of where human life begins run the gamut, some even defending infanticide because new-born infants (in their expert opinion) are not yet persons. We believe human life begins at conception and is always worthy of being defended and protected, no matter how small, how insignificant, how inconvenient or burdensome or handicapped. What about rape? What about incest? What about deformities? What if the child is of the wrong sex? Or is simply unwanted? Would any of these give us reason to take the life of a newborn? It’s unthinkable. Since the newborn has the right to life, why not the preborn? Does our humanity really depend on whether we’ve travelled those eight inches out into the birthing room? Our humanity doesn’t depend on our size, our weight, our stage of development. All that is on a continuum and any attempt to draw a line and say, on this side of the line we have a person and on that side of the line we have fetal tissue, any attempt to draw a line is mostly contrived and reckless.

Many are opposed to late term abortions, but not to the really early ones, because at that point the embryo doesn’t even look like a human being. To me that’s puzzling because that is exactly what a human being is supposed to look like a day or two after

conception. That's how you and I once looked.

As Bethesda knows, our humanity also isn't determined by an IQ test. If the length of this pulpit were a measure of intelligence, here's a unborn child with Down Syndrome, and here's Albert Einstein. And we look at that gap and think, "What a great difference between the two." But what of God's wisdom? Where is he on this line that measures intelligence? Way out there some place; maybe it's a line that doesn't end. And maybe that's why from God's perspective this little gap between Robert and Einstein isn't that big of a deal, and certainly doesn't justify aborting Robert's life. The Bible doesn't have much to say about human wisdom. Apparently, God is not so impressed as we are with human wisdom, and does not use it as a measure of our value.

Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves; defend the rights of the poor and needy and destitute. People of God, we can do better with this command than we are. I believe most people in this church are opposed to abortion, but our voice has been quieted. Maybe it's fear. Maybe it's political correctness. Maybe it's moral relativism. Maybe we don't want to pull the scab off a deep wound. But abortion is not God's will and we simply must risk the hazards and speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves.

Now for those of you who have had an abortion. . . for those of you whose girlfriend or wife or daughter has had an abortion, for those of you who feel an enormous guilt about this topic, let me tell you again of God's Son who came to us full of grace and truth, with forgiveness and healing in his wings.

The journey to the cross did not start in the manger. It started in one of Mary's fallopian tubes. Such is the love of God for you, that he went that far to save you and all mankind. When this child grew to be a man, he came to those who thought they were unforgivable. He came to the sinners, the prostitutes

and tax collectors, those who assumed they were out of the loop of God's love, those who were so weighed down with guilt that they didn't even hope for forgiveness any more. He came to them with love and healing and forgiveness, and enabled them to start again. And then he made his way to the cross, where he paid in full for *all* sins. Do we understand how far that little word *all* reaches? 1 Jn. 1:7 "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from *all* sin." Ps. 103:1 "Praise the Lord my soul! He is the one who forgives *all* your sins." 1 Jn. 1:9 "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just and will . . . cleanse us from *all* unrighteousness." That little word *all* means that no sin is too big for him to handle in spite of how you feel about it.

What is it from your past that your conscience keeps turning over and over again? Maybe an abortion or infidelity or theft. You fill in the details. There at the cross, that sin that is keeping you a prisoner to the past was forgiven. Can I say it any clearer? God loves you and forgives you and nothing can separate you from that love that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. When you taste that bread and wine in your mouth, his body and blood, you know you are forgiven, and if you have feelings to the contrary, you must simply submit those feelings to God's Word.

Now our task, as forgiven people of God, is to be the body of Christ in the world, to speak up, as Christ did, for those who cannot speak up for themselves. Speak up. Silence is not an alternative. Vote for those who hold life as sacred. Write letters to legislators. Support adoption agencies. Volunteer at the local pregnancy center. Provide help for single parents and parents with special needs children. Teach your own children to revere and protect life. Speak up. And find a way to tell your friend who has had an abortion that the blood of Christ cleanses us from *all* sin. Speak up, people of God, for those who cannot speak for themselves. Amen.

BUSINESS NAME
GOOD SHEPHERD LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.goodshepherd.wi.org
1611 East Main Street
Watertown, WI 53094