

January 17, 2016
Isaiah 43:1

Sanctity of Life Sunday
Created, Redeemed, Called

Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our text is from last week's Old Testament lesson, Isaiah 43:1 *But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine."*¹

Complicated, controversial, confusing, uncomfortable. That might be how we feel on Sanctity of Life Sunday. From embryonic stem-cell research to in-vitro fertilization to abortion to homosexual marriage and cohabitation amongst heterosexual couples. You may have seen President Obama on TV a week or so ago shedding tears for the students who lost their lives at Sandy Hook in Newtown, CT. Indeed a sad situation and rightful tears, but some of have been asking, what about the millions of tiny lives lost in abortion clinics across America – including the Planned Parenthood Clinics which are backing Hillary Clinton for president. Representative Steve King from IA left the State of the Union address to leave his seat empty for Abortion Victims. This issues of life are politicized, which makes it complicated, controversial, confusing, and uncomfortable. Dear family of God, life issues are biblical issues...they are faith issues

Even when these life issues are complicated, confusing, controversial, and uncomfortable. This morning, Life Sunday, we are going to talk about something that is not complicated, not confusing, not controversial, and not uncomfortable at all. In fact, it is very simple. In its simplicity it does speak profoundly to all the life issues. It is where we need start before addressing any of these life issues. The question we are going to answer this morning is this: "What has God done that gives value to human life?" Our one verse text for today contains the answer in three simple words – created, redeemed, called.

We're going to look at each of these as people of God who, in Christ and His Holy Word, live, and move and have our being.

Every human life has value because God creates every human life! The Bible pictures this pro-creative activity as an intimate and hands-on work. Job records, "*Your hands fashioned and made me.*" The Psalmist writes: "*For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.*" We could all have a tag attached to the back of our necks like we see on clothing. On clothing we see such things as "made in china" "Made in Bangladesh" but for us our tag would read "hand made by God!"

You and I, and every human being has been created by God. We might question, "What about the down syndrome baby or the baby born without a skull or the baby born with other disabilities? What about the baby that didn't come to full development and

¹ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version.* (2001). (Is 43:1). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

died before birth?" The simple answer to that is this: "They are the work of God's hands?" They are dearly loved by God and we rest in His grace! God has a couple of questions for us about His children? Written in Isaiah 45 God asks, "*Do you question me about my children, or give me orders about the work of my hands?*" And again from Isaiah, "*Shall what is formed say to the one who formed it, 'You did not make me'?*" *Can the pot say to the potter, 'You know nothing'?*" Anybody want to challenge God about what he makes?

That God makes tiny little human beings from the moment of conception is clear in this verse from Psalm 51, "*Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.*" Since sinfulness is a human condition and we are sinful from the moment of conception, we must necessarily be human from the time the sperm cell fertilizes the egg, from conception. This verse also points to the next thing God has done that gives value to human life.

Since we are sinful from the moment of conception, we need a Savior from the moment of conception. We have one! We just went through the Advent and Christmas Season. We know all about his conception and birth. Remember the Angel's Words to Mary? "*You will conceive and give birth to a Son, and you are to call him Jesus.*"_ There are two event of Jesus life described here...His conception and birth. It's His conception that is miraculous...not His birth. When the "power of the Most High" overshadowed Mary, Jesus was conceived without the aid of an earthly father, which is why the angel also refers to Him as the "Son of God" from the moment of conception. "*The Word became flesh and dwelt among us*" at Jesus' conception, not His birth. Jesus was not only the "God-man," He was also the "God-embryo"! His holiness at conception takes the place of our un-holiness at conception. What value this gives to all embryos from that very moment!

But there is more! Jesus needed to develop in a womb. He needed feet to walk among us! He needed his hands to touch and heal. He needed His mouth so He could teach and change the Water into Wine. He needed His heart to be filled with compassion for the lost. He needed a body so He could take the little children in His arms and hold them close and bless them.

And there are much deeper reasons for Jesus' human development in the womb. He needed those hands and feet to be pierced as He was nailed to the cross in our place. He need a mouth to utter that forsaken cry so we will never have to. He needed a heart to pump the blood that would be shed and bring cleansing for sin...a heart to pump the blood that he gives us to drink...a heart to be pumped and then stilled. He needed a body to be buried in a tomb, and then to rise again, victorious over death and the grave!

Paul says that we were "bought at a price". All that Jesus did from His conception onward was part of that price. Paul reminds the Ephesian's pastors of the magnitude of this price when he tells them, "*Be shepherds of the church of God, which He bought with His own blood.*" God did not purchase us with the blood of a man or the blood of some holy martyr. God purchased us with His *own* blood in the person of Jesus Christ!

The price paid for sinful humanity was high! The value it gives to human life is incalculable!

And remember, this price was paid for every human being! Jesus Christ died “once for all”. Not every human being knows this, of course, and it is the task of the Church to share this message. But the fact remains, Jesus’ life from the moment of his miraculous conception to His natural birth, all the way to His death and resurrection give value to **ALL** human life.

So we have two pretty simple answers so far to the question, “What had God done that gives value to human life?” Every human being has value because every human being is the work of God’s hands in creation and the work of God’s hands stretched out on a cross in redemption. Every human being is created and redeemed.

There is one simple answer left. Every human being has value because every human being is someone God desires to call into an eternal relationship with Him; He “*wants all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*” He wants every human life to be splashed with His Holy Spirit in the waters of Baptism. He who created every life with His hands and redeemed every life with His hands wants to call us all as His children and hold us, indeed “engrave” us, in the palms of His hands, now and into eternity.

Created – redeemed – called – it is not complicated or confusing or controversial or uncomfortable at all. It’s very simple. Yet its simplicity speaks profoundly to all of the life issues. It is where we need to start before addressing any of the life issues.

So allow me to end with some quiz questions:

Why do we strive to protect tiny embryos in Petri dishes or frozen in fertility clinics? Because they are created, redeemed, and little ones whom God wants to call!

Why do we speak up for those in the womb who cannot speak? Because they are created, redeemed, and little ones whom God desires to call!

What do we teach our little children so that when they are older, sexual promiscuity, homosexuality, and abortion will be unthinkable? They are very special because they are created, redeemed, and called.

What do we tell you young people as you struggle with temptations and tough choices, mood swings, and confused feelings about your identity? We want you to know, and especially I want you to know as your pastor **WHOSE** you are and that you can make good choice because you are created, redeemed, and called.

What do we share with that unmarried, pregnant college freshman (and the father of the child) who is ashamed and afraid and see only one way out? We share and tell her that she is loved and forgiven and not forsaken because she is created, redeemed, and called.

What do we say to women and men crushed in the aftermath of an abortion decision? They are created, redeemed, and called and therefore **NOTHING** can separate them from God's love in Christ Jesus.

What do we share with infertile couple desperately wanting a child? They are created, redeemed, and called, and they can trust in the ways and will of their God.

What can we say to those who miscarry a child they already know and love? They are created, redeemed, and called, and God holds them in His loving hands.

What do we have to share with the frail elderly who wonder about God's purpose for their lives? They are created, redeemed, and called, and as long as God gives them life, He gives their lives meaning and purpose.

How can we help the family struggling with a difficult end-of-life decision for a loved one? They and their loved ones are created, redeemed and called. They can make a decision they believe is in accordance with God's will and trust that He will work through it.

For those of you that fall into these categories...know that I love you and care for you. Know that you are created, redeemed, and loved by God. Know that I am here for you! And undoubtedly, this list could be even longer. But the answer will still be the same. Our lives have value. Every life has value because every life is someone created by God, redeemed by the blood of Jesus, and someone He either has called or wants to call into an eternal relationship with Him. It doesn't have to be complicated, controversial, confusing, or uncomfortable. It's a simple message that we have to share! A simple message of life...a simple message of Christ's life, death, and resurrection. A simple message that you and every life matters to God.

IN Jesus Name. Amen.

Now may the peace of God which passes all human understanding, guard your hearts and minds and keep them focused in Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior. Amen.

Taken from Rev. James Lamb – Sanctity of Life Sunday Theme for 2016