

Life Sunday Sermon 2016

Isaiah 43:1 “Created, Redeemed, Called”

Rev. Dr. James I. Lamb, Executive Director, Lutherans For Life

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They can be complicated, confusing, controversial, and uncomfortable. I’m talking about those things we typically address on a Sanctity of Life Sunday—the life issues. They can be complicated—stem cell research, cloning, in vitro fertilization, genetic engineering. It seems like we need to be scientists to figure it all out. They can be confusing—should we or should we not remove that feeding tube, stop that treatment, sign that Living Will, or initiate a Do Not Resuscitate order? It seems like we need to be ethicists to figure it all out. They can be controversial—why do we talk about this in church and bring it up in Bible study? These are political and social issues. Let’s stick to the Gospel. It seems like we need to be theologians to figure it all out. They can be uncomfortable—people in our pews have had abortions or pressured a girlfriend or daughter to have an abortion or were unable to stop someone from having an abortion. It seems like we need to be psychologists to figure it all out.

And it’s all true. The life issues are complicated, confusing, controversial, and uncomfortable. But today, on *this* Sanctity of Life Sunday, we are not going to talk about any of these things. Instead, we are going to talk about something that is not complicated, not confusing, not controversial, and not uncomfortable at all. We are going to talk about something that is, in fact, very simple. Yet in its simplicity it speaks profoundly to all of the life issues. It is where we need to start before addressing any of the life issues. We will answer the question: “What has God done that gives value to human life?” Our text contains the answer in three simple words—created, redeemed, and called.

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Let’s look at each of these, not as scientists or ethicists or theologians or psychologists, but 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. “Your hands fashioned and made me” (Job 10:8). “For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb” (Psalm 139:13 NIV). We could all have a tag attached to the back of our necks like we see on clothing. Our tag would read, “Hand Made by God!”

Now some might want to interrupt here and say, “So if every human being is the work of God’s hands, then how do we explain Down syndrome babies or other babies with various physical or mental challenges?” Now remember, we want this sermon to be simple! So here is the simple answer to that question: They are the work of God’s hands. And God has a couple of questions for us about His children. “Do you question me about my children, or give me orders about the work of my hands?” (Isaiah 45:11). 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’?” (29:16) 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” (v. 5 NIV). Since sinfulness is a human condition and we are sinful from the moment of conception, we must necessarily be human from the moment of

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conception. This verse also points us 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! Remember the angel’s words to Mary? “You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus” (Luke 1:31). We often read this at Christmas time, but note that there are two events in Jesus’ life described here, His conception and His birth. And it is His conception that is miraculous, not His birth. When the “power of the Most High” overshadowed Mary (1:35a), Jesus was conceived without the aid of an earthly father, which is why the angel also refers to Him as “the Son of God” (35b) from the moment of His conception. “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (John 1:14a) at Jesus’ conception, not His birth. Jesus was not only the “God-man,” He was 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 hands to touch and heal the sick. He needed a mouth so He could teach. He needed a heart to be filled with compassion for the lost. He needed a body so He could take little children in His arms and hold them close and bless them.

And there are 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 needed a mouth to utter that forsaken cry so we never have to. He needed a heart to pump the blood that would be shed and bring cleansing for sin, and then be stilled in death. He

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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” (1 Corinthians 6:20a). 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” (Acts 20:28b). 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! 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” (Hebrews 9:12). 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 and death and resurrection give value to *all* human life.

So, we have two pretty simple answers so far to our question, “What has 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 His hands stretched out on a cross in redemption. Every human being is created and redeemed.

One simple answer is left. Every human life has value because every person 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” (1 Timothy 2:4). 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

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His children and hold us, indeed “engrave” us, in the palms of His hands (Isaiah 49:16)

now and in 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.

1. Why do we strive to protect tiny embryos in Petri dishes or frozen in a fertility clinic? Because they are created, redeemed, and little ones whom God wants to call.
2. Why do we speak up for those in the womb who cannot speak? Because they are created, redeemed, and little ones whom God wants to call.
3. What do we teach our little children so that when they are older, sexual promiscuity and abortion will be unthinkable? They are very special because they are created, redeemed, and called.
4. 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 *whose* you are and that you can make good choices because you are created, redeemed, and called.
5. What do we share with that unmarried, pregnant college freshman who is ashamed and afraid and sees only one way out? We share that she is loved and forgiven and not forsaken because she is created, redeemed, and called.

6. 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 the love of God in Christ Jesus.
7. What do we share with the infertile couple desperately desiring a child? They are created, redeemed, and called, and they can trust in the ways and will of their God.
8. 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 hands.
9. 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.
10. How can we help the family struggling with a difficult end-of-life decision for a loved one? They and their loved one 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.

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! Amen.