

“SHED NO INNOCENT BLOOD.”

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First Christian Reformed Church

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Scripture Texts: Jeremiah 22:1-5

Prayer: Holy Father, may your holy Word preached through me, your servant, bring about the spiritual fruit of correction and conviction, repentance and faith, healing and hope, grace and glory, for the sake of Jesus and His Gospel, in His name, Amen.

Introduction.

For 49 years since yesterday, longer than the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness of their sin and rebellion, our nation has wandered in the wicked wilderness of our sin and rebellion, evidenced by the scattered bodies of 63 million babies in the US.

A Word of Compassion and grace.

Before I begin I want to give a clear word of loving pastoral care and hope to anyone here or watching who has had an abortion or has helped someone else get an abortion.

Our God is gracious and merciful, willing to forgive us all our sins, including the sin of abortion. Jesus did not come to earth for the righteous, but for the unrighteous, for sinners like you and me. The blood of Jesus is more than sufficient to cover and cleanse all unrighteousness.

This is true for every one of us who is burdened or tormented by past sins. As I speak this morning if you are feeling covered up with shame, know that just means you are not yet free and Satan still has his hooks in you. Shame is God's grace to move us toward His forgiveness and freedom in Christ.

Confess and repent and He will set you free, His perfect love casts out all fear and sin. And when Satan reminds you of what you have done, remind Him of what Jesus has done for you. There is no condemnation for those who trust in and take refuge in the Gospel of Jesus, only grace for those willing to humble themselves and receive it.

Now I turn to the issue of the day, why?

Earlier this week I had a dream. I rarely remember my dreams but this one was clear and short.

I was back in Wichita, Kansas. Near where I lived there were two one-way streets running east and west. As I came up to the intersection I look left, the direction oncoming traffic would be coming from and there was nothing. So I started to cross and glanced right. About a block

away was a truck coming toward me. I crossed over, stopped got out, went back to the corner and started waving my arms to stop him.

He stopped quickly and pull unto the side street where I was. He rolled down his window and with eyes wide with gratitude he said, “Thank you, thank you!” And the dream ended. I woke up wondering what in the world did that mean. And then this is what came to me.

Someone was going in the wrong direction, a dangerously wrong direction, a direction that could lead to death and someone needed to do something.

I don’t want to get to heaven and have countless innocent children say to me, “Why didn’t you say something, why didn’t you do something.” I must not be silent. If I am silent against abortion, I will have innocent blood on my hands.

I also preach this morning to keep my heart from growing complacent, to keep my heart from thinking it doesn’t matter what I do or I can’t make a small difference.

Jesus said, “What you have done for the least of these, you have done for me.” For the sake of Jesus and the least among us, I humbly speak up and add my voice. May God be glorified.

Jeremiah 22:1-5, the duty of kings.

Jeremiah was a prophet called by God as a boy to proclaim the word of the Lord in the southern kingdom of Judah during the last five kings of Judah before Judah was carried off into exile by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon.

Jeremiah has been called the weeping prophet. He was uncompromising but tender, resolute but affectionate, inflexible but loving. Jeremiah bitterly lamented the state of his people and their moral decline into the worst kinds of idolatry, sacrificing their children to foreign gods (Jeremiah 7:30-34; 19:3-9).

Jeremiah 22:9 They have forsaken the covenant of the Lord their God and worshiped other gods and served them.

Jeremiah 21:11–22:30 is a collection of oracles God commands Jeremiah to give to the king of Judah. The specific command in chapter 22 is to declare to the king the duties of the king, what God looks for in a faithful king.

Jeremiah 22:2-3 O King of Judah, ... Do justice and righteousness, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor him who has been robbed. And do no wrong or violence to the resident alien, the fatherless, and the widow, nor shed innocent blood in this place.

A good government depends on good leaders with good hearts. If the king will do justice, equally, fairly, to all; if he will do righteousness, do what is right and do no wrong; if the king

will execute judgment on wrongdoers, and devote himself to deliver from the hands of the wicked those who are oppressed; if he will not take advantage of the vulnerable, the outcaste, the poor, the fatherless, the orphan, the widow, the resident alien, the strangers in the land, those who have no power, no voice, no help and shed no innocent blood; if, in a word, he will obey God's Word, then he will prosper and have victory. And if not, he will come to ruin and judgment. Sin is the downfall and destruction of any nation.

God tells the church to speak to the state.

Notice the proper order of things. Some will say separation of church and state means the church needs to stay out of politics and political issues. These are separate sphere and the one is to stay out of the business of the other.

The separation of church and state does not mean the church can't speak to the state or influence the state or admonish or rebuke the state. The OT and NT are full of strong words being spoken to kings and Pharaohs and pagan rulers, to magistrates of all kinds.

Moses confronted Pharaoh over the slavery of the Jews.

Nathan confronted King David over his sin of adultery and murder.

Elijah confronted King Ahab over his sin of murder and theft against Naboth.

John the Baptist confronted King Herod over his illicit marriage to his brother's wife. That cost him his head.

The church is the conscience of the nation and state. The government is an instrument ordained by God and governed by God. The church has the role of reminding the government of its duty. Just as Jeremiah was sent by God to remind the kings to do justice and uphold righteousness, so the is church sent into our world, our culture, our political sphere, to call for justice and righteousness.

Abortion is a spiritual matter, the church is to speak to the culture and not the other way around, where the pulpit is to guide the nation, not the politicians.

If the church won't speak up who will? If Christians are silent, then who else will speak? Silence by the church in Germany contributed to the death of six million Jews. The silence of all the mainline denominations in our country has contributed to the death of millions of babies.

The government is God's servant to do good and punish evil, to maintain, sustain, and protect the sanctity of all human life. When the state fails to do that, is the duty of the church and of every Christian to voice opposition to it.

Now there may be someone who is thinking, yes and amen, and down with facemasks and vaccine mandates. And do you know what is shameful about those thoughts? If we are more concerned about our own rights than the rights of others.

The coronavirus has killed its thousands. Abortion has killed its tens of millions.

If a tenth of Christian's anger and opposition against Covid public health measures were directed at the slaughter of our nations infants we might actually see some progress. What are we most concerned about, who are we most concerned about?

Shed no innocent blood.

The phrase "innocent blood" occurs about 20 times in the Bible. The context is always one of condemning those who shed this blood or warning people not to shed it.

Psalm 106:36-38 They served their idols, which became a snare to them.
37 They sacrificed their sons and their daughters to the demons;
38 they poured out innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters,
whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan, and the land was polluted with blood.

Proverbs 6:16-17 There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to him:
17 haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood ...

Christianity is unique in asserting that the blood is not silent and that God hears the cry of innocent blood. Their blood cries out for justice and justice will be done.

Genesis 4:10 The Lord said [to Cain], "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground."

The horror of a great judgment hangs over our nation, as the blood of over 63 million children cry out to God for justice. Over three thousand babies a day in America. A 9/11 every day, year in and year out. A million babies a year in America alone.

The US is one of the most dangerous countries for an unborn person. This is our American holocaust, it is a far greater moral evil than slavery, which was terrible. Woe to those who shed innocent blood, woe to the nation who sheds innocent blood.

Abortion is a direct assault on the image of God. This is the greatest injustice to the greatest number, to the most vulnerable population, to those least able to defend themselves and speak up for themselves. There is no comparable genocide, no group more dehumanized and marginalized. It is in the words of God, an abomination.

All human life begins at conception. The instant the egg is fertilized it is a human life, at that moment it is given an immortal soul that will live forever, at that moment it is a unique individual made in the image of God. It has a moral and legal right to all the protections given to any human being. To kill him is a violation of the sixth commandment to not murder.

Conclusion and application.

There is a danger in pointing out the sins of others, especially those in political office. It is always easy to see the sins of others.

The sins of our culture are now visible in our churches and in the thinking of many people who call themselves Christians.

What we must beware of is how the sins of others begin to influence us, begin to jade us, begin to wear us down, until we are persuaded maybe it isn't so bad. This is why it is necessary to preach on matters like abortion, to remind us of why we believe what we believe and stand where we stand, whatever the cost.

But what can we do? How can we rescue the perishing? Where can we stand? Just as we should not shed innocent blood, so also we should not passively or silently accept it.

What is true for kings, is also true for those who love and serve King Jesus. "God's people, filled with God's Spirit, following God's way, will move inevitably toward and not away from the people with the greatest need" (John Piper).

Everyone can do something, small or large, to show love to our unborn neighbor.

We must start with confession and repentance and seeking forgiveness for ourselves and our nation. For our silence, our complicity, our passivity, our complacency about the sanctity of all human life.

You can pray. This is no small thing. You can make this issue a more conscious part of your weekly prayer life, personally and with your family. You can pray outside of Planned Parenthood or every time you drive by it.

You can fill up a baby bottle to help our local pregnancy center. You can call WCPC and offer to volunteer in some way. Or at New Way Ministries.

You can not vote for civil authorities, mayors, judges, congressmen, senators, and presidents who support or advocate for the shedding of innocent blood.

Psalm 94:20-21 Can wicked rulers be allied with you, those who frame injustice by statute? They band together against the life of the righteous and condemn the innocent to death.

You can not practice any form of birth control that is an abortifacient, that is something that kills a conceived child or keeps it from implanting in the womb. Not everything the pharmaceuticals call contraception is really a contraception. Make it your responsibility to know what you are doing. Fear God and glorify God in all you do.

You can stand up to the lies and stand up for the truth. You can love those who have been broken and hurt by abortion, minister the grace of the Gospel of Jesus to them.

Whatever we do in this matter, it is infinitely more valuable, helpful, fruitful than most other things because this is a matter of life and death for so many. It will matter to them in eternity. May we seek to be used by God to warn someone who is going the wrong direction.

May we live and speak that all would know the truth, beauty and goodness of God's Word:

Psalm 139:13–16 You formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.

Prayer: Almighty God, have mercy on us as a nation. We have shed innocent blood because we do not trust you and do not fear you. 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.