

Sanctity of Human Life Sunday

A Sermon Suggestion

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Text: Luke 15:10

Grace, mercy, and peace be yours in our Epiphany Lord, the Light of the World.

Text: Luke 15:10 “In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

The Torah of God, the Revelation of God, the Story of God, as told by Sacred Scripture, is a narrative of giving. The grand indicatives of Genesis 1 and 2 are spellbinding. God gives time. God gives space. God gives the heavens and the earth. God gives life. And God’s gifts, by His own word, are good — profoundly good. God calls them “very good” (Gen. 1:31).

And then, God gave Himself: “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.’ So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Gen. 1:26-27).

In such a world of gifts, Genesis 1 places man and woman at the apex of creation. The heavens and the earth and all that is in them were created for the man and the woman. God’s gracious attentiveness to man and woman is striking. Genesis 2 shows the intimate care that God extends in the creation of Eve. What inconceivable beauty and innocence, from our vantage point, characterized Adam and Eve as they communed with God and with each other in primeval purity.

If we look to Egypt and to Mesopotamia for other accounts of man and woman’s relationship to the Divine and to the world, Genesis 1 and 2 become even more remarkable. The other accounts, such as the Enuma Elish, place human beings on the margins and at the bottom of the cosmic drama. For these texts, the real action is with the gods, often identified with celestial bodies like the sun and moon and other forces of nature. Man and woman, in these readings, are accidental in origin and incidental in importance. They were subject to the caprice of gods and forces uninterested in their

welfare.

It is striking that some contemporary cosmologies assign man and woman a similarly tenuous position. Not unlike the dinosaurs it is suggested, man and woman will one day disappear with only the sun and stars and galaxies abiding. In such a world, human worth is reduced. In such a world, the significance of human life evaporates.

Genesis 1 and 2, and all of Sacred Scripture, radically challenge ancient and modern reductions of human beings to specs on the great canvas of evolution. The grand indicatives of God's creative hand stand. They stand against every attempt to reduce life to a meaningless series of sensations. And, they stand for the beauty and sacred character of every human life.

When Adam and Eve refused the good image of God by wanting to be like God, death came into the world (Gen. 3:15). Even then, however, God reached out to guarantee the significance and sacred character of human life by promising the Woman's Seed (Gen. 3:15). This Seed would reverse the curse and bring human beings back to life. As Genesis unfolds, God also condemns the taking of human life (Gen. 4) and protects human life that was created in His image (Gen. 9:6).

The story of Sacred Scripture is permeated by God's gracious affirmation of human significance. The promise of the Woman's Seed is followed by the promise of Abram's Seed and David's Seed until the promise is fulfilled: "A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Matt. 1:1).

The birth, the life, the death, the resurrection, and the ascension of Jesus are the foundations of human significance. Here God gives Himself again. Here His very Son, true God and true Man, reconciles all of humanity to God. From His conception to His ascension, the fully human and fully Divine Jesus anchors human worth. The forces of the cosmos do not control our destiny. Not even death can undo the deliverance and salvation that Jesus has given.

Jesus radically challenges the culture of caprice and death by His perfect human life and His glorious resurrection. He affirms the infinite worth and significance of each human being. He was prepared to shed His blood and to give His life, so greatly did He value every human being. He challenges our culture with a great reversal. Rather than being accidental and incidental, human beings count: "In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents" (Luke 15:10).

Think about this. Reflect on it. God is infinitely gracious, good, and merciful. Heaven rejoices over one person who turns to God. Each and every human being is of such value. Jesus Christ embodies and exhibits this truth. His birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension proclaim this reality: "... there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

Against this beautiful canvas of God's gift of life and redemption of life, it is simply

unthinkable that one would degrade life or take a life at any moment of its existence. From conception to the moment of death, life is a gift from God to be respected and protected.

What a wonderful privilege it is for Christians to paint the canvas of human significance with the image of Christ who has redeemed all of human life by His perfect life, His atoning death, and His victorious resurrection. Each and every one of us can rejoice that our life is the cause for joy in heaven as we turn to God in repentance and faith.

Go forth with this good news. A good and gracious God created the world and gave us life. An infinitely good and gracious God redeemed the world and our life in the gift of His Son. Darkness and death have been replaced with the Light and Life of Christ. Each and every human being is called to the splendor of God's love and the radiance of God's life in Christ.

God grant it to each of us for Christ's sake. Amen.