

As you have probably heard the news, as of this Friday, with the ruling of *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization*, the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision guaranteeing the right to abortion at the federal level has been overturned. It is now a state-by-state issue. This means it is illegal in Wisconsin yet it is legal a mere 2.5 miles away in Minnesota. We live in the midst of strange times, and yet the Church has something to say to all ages, even in this day and age.

I had my sermon on Luke 9 written and prepared for today. I even practiced it Thursday, but in light of Friday’s news, I don’t think I can in good conscience simply preach what would have been an otherwise fine sermon any other Sunday. I took time last night to write this sermon. Pardon me if it is not as well practiced or polished as a normal sermon would be from me.

This sermon is not going to be a detailed defense of why abortion is wrong. I will share with you resources that are longer form and more detailed than a twelve to fifteen minute sermon. I want to remind us why we as Christians in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod are pro-life.

I am basing this sermon off of Isaiah 43, especially verse 1, but I will be drawing upon many scriptures in my treatment of this topic. I will re-read Isaiah 43:1 for you right now: **“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.”** Our theme: LCMS CHRISTIANS ARE PRO-LIFE BECAUSE THE LORD HAS CREATED, REDEEMED, AND CALLED US.

First, I. LCMS Christians are pro-life because the Lord has created us. Every human being is made in the image of God from conception. To be pro-life is to acknowledge that from conception to death, every life is sacred in the eyes of God.

Life is precious to our Lord from conception. Take Isaiah 43:1 **“But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel.”** Take that passage, and instead of Jacob, put your first name, and instead of Israel, put your middle name or your nickname. For me it’s easy because my first name is already there in the first blank. But take a moment and say it to yourself. The Lord God has created you. Like a potter forming clay, he has formed you!

The Psalmist writes, **“For 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.”** The Lord said to Jeremiah, **““Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.””** The Lord knows each and every human. They are His masterpiece, and He loves them deeply.

God perhaps has a sense of humor. On June 24<sup>th</sup>, the day the Supreme Court ruling came out, it was exactly six months before Christmas. John the Baptist is

Jesus' cousin and he was born six months before Jesus. On June 24<sup>th</sup> the Church observes the birth of John the Baptist. He was the one who prepared the way for Jesus and pointed out, **“Behold! The Lamb of God who Takes away the Sin of the World!”** But get this, in Luke 1:41 we read, **“And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby [John the Baptist] leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit,”** This was weeks after Mary was pregnant with Jesus in her womb. Mary wasn't showing, and of course we would say this was a kind of miracle, but John the Baptist, even in utero was pointing out the Lamb of God who was likely no bigger than a seed in Mary's womb. Jesus and John weren't simply clumps of cells in Mary and Elizabeth's wombs.

But being pro-life doesn't end in the womb. We see throughout the Bible care and love given to the most vulnerable. Time doesn't permit me to go into every example, but let's quickly review the story of Mephibosheth.

Mephibosheth was the grandson of King Saul in the Old Testament. King Saul was dethroned by David, and the fear was that if any remaining heirs of King Saul remained, they might have a legitimate claim to the throne. David could have killed Mephibosheth and made it so there were no loose ends or worries about David losing his kingship. By the way, Mephibosheth was lame and couldn't walk. He would have been an easy target for David.

Yet David shows kindness to him. He takes Mephibosheth and his household into the king's court and lets him eat at his table. David shows us the kindness we are called to show to those with differing abilities or skillsets than us.

Finally, we are called to honor our father and our mother. We also read in Isaiah, **“Listen to me, O house of Jacob, all the remnant of the house of Israel, who have been borne by me from before your birth, carried from the womb; even to your old age I am he, and to gray hairs I will carry you. I have made, and I will bear; I will carry and will save.”** The Lord demonstrates that He shows kindness to both the young and the old.

But we are challenged to care for God's creation ever since the beginning of time. God warned Adam and Eve that eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil would result in them surely dying. And death is what we struggle against. The life in the womb becomes an inconvenience or a burden. Iceland has nearly eliminated down syndrome—simply because they screen for it beforehand and abort the down syndrome babies before they are born.

We live in a society where we would rather let the disabled die than take the difficult measures to care for them. We are tempted to let our mothers and fathers die quick painless deaths through assisted suicide than let them fight through a tough illness that might have a chance of survival. In a world of broken homes and sinful people, disturbed people try to find their 15 minutes of fame by ending the lives of others in a gun massacre. Death is the way of this world.

Yet God was not content to let this world languish in death. II. LCMS Christians are pro-life because the Lord has redeemed us. God put skin into the game by becoming a vulnerable human for you. He became a zygote in the womb of an unwed mother. He was born in a stable in filthy conditions. He cared for the most marginalized and downtrodden among us. He associated with the sick, the demon-possessed, the tax-collectors, and sinners. He let the little children, even infants, come to him for such is the Kingdom of God.

The Lord says to you today, “**Fear not, for I have redeemed you.**” He has proven His pro-life stance by sending His Son Jesus to die for you and die for the sins of the world.

What that means is that He has died to forgive you for your choices that have led to death. The Guttmacher institute estimated in 2017 that nearly one in four women will have had an abortion by age 45. I wasn't born under a rock, I understand that some of you may have had an abortion or encouraged a partner to have an abortion.

As pro-life Christians, the way forward is not to paper over it and say there's nothing wrong, but to lean into Christ's forgiveness. If that applies to you, you are forgiven for the sin of abortion and because the Lord sent His very Son to die for your sins, your guilt is covered. God no longer counts that sin against you, and you are free. Loved by God perfectly, and that mistake no longer has power over you.

For those who were or are caregivers for someone with a disability, there is forgiveness for the times you feel as though you didn't do enough to care for the needs of the individual entrusted to your care. For adult children, there is forgiveness for when you worry whether you gave enough care or the right care to dad or mom in his or her last weeks.

For all of us, Jesus has redeemed us and He forgives us for our indifference when it comes to caring for the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalized among us including the poor, the homeless, but also the unborn, the disabled, and the elderly.

Death was not the final word for our God. Jesus sprung from the tomb on the third day, and to be pro-life is to recognize that life is the final word. The resurrection of the body and the life everlasting is the goal that God has for His entire creation, and He is working through us to act as the ambassadors of reconciliation for a fallen and dying creation.

Finally, how then shall we live? III. LCMS Christians are pro-life because the Lord has called us. The Lord says in Isaiah 43, “**I have called you by name, you are mine.**” The Holy Spirit calls us to lead Holy lives, and that includes living pro-life lives.

It doesn't matter what the laws are, whether abortion is legal in your state or not. God calls us to be pro-life. I don't have time to go into every little detail, but I want us to ask "Who is my neighbor?"

In the insert I have a diagram with a house on the right. This helps answer who is my neighbor. The people closest to the house are our closest neighbors and it goes further and further away. As it gets further and further away, the arrow goes from ordinary to extraordinary.

First of all, God is calling us to be pro-life in ordinary ways. If a pro-life speaker abandons her husband and kids to go on road tours to talk about the evils of abortion, in some way she's missing the boat as she fails to care for the young people in her own house.

To be pro-life means that if your teenage daughter comes and tells you she's pregnant, you celebrate the gift of new life and that you will be a grandma or grandpa, even if the circumstances are less than ideal. The same goes for your sons, you will encourage your son to live out the role of father, even if he hasn't finished college or high school.

To be pro-life means visiting your aging parents and perhaps working with your siblings to establish a care plan for them so that they are never wanting for the help they need. The same could be said of visiting brothers and sisters when they're sick.

To be pro-life as a young adult means living a chaste life with the goal in mind of setting your future children and spouse up for success in giving them a nurturing environment to grow and be taught the love of Jesus.

All of this is the baseline, the ordinary, if you will. But as Christians we are called to the extraordinary, but never to the point of letting the ordinary be neglected.

And that's where it gets into the realm of the political, local charities, and beyond. We have the privilege to advocate for the rights of the vulnerable from conception to death in our politics local, statewide, and nationwide. We have the privilege to donate time, talent, and treasure to local pregnancy crisis centers and other similar ministries.

And the opportunities here are endless to care for the needs of young mothers. I've heard of stories of an older couple taking a young mother into their house and caring for her as a daughter. I've heard of stories of a college student setting up a babysitting schedule for a classmate who got pregnant from her gospel choir director and this college student actually being the delivery room with her even though he wasn't dating her or the dad.

**LCMS CHRISTIANS ARE PRO-LIFE BECAUSE THE LORD HAS CREATED, REDEEMED, AND CALLED US.** The Lord has created you and redeemed you from all your sins and you have been called to serve others. Amen!