

Sermon January 25, 2015

## To Kill or Not To Kill? Sanctity of Human Life Series Various Texts



Dear Friends in Christ,

Once more we continue with our series on the Sanctity of Life Series, and today and a couple of more Sunday we shall meditate on the theme of Life's End.

Much is being said and promoted even during these last few years and certainly the last few months regarding the right to terminate one's life. Laws are being passed government and civil attitudes differ from one another, and are at times ironic.

Articles like the following give us an insight as to what the spectrum on the issue has been:

This headline for example: "A 17-Year-Old Girl with Cancer Who Refused Treatment and Was Put into State Custody Will Have Her Case Heard by the Conn. Supreme Court." "The Connecticut Supreme Court is set to hear the case of a 17-year-old girl who is in temporary custody of the state after she refused to undergo chemotherapy treatment for Hodgkins Lymphoma, a form of cancer with which she was diagnosed in September 2014"

A writer comments on this case: "You can murder your child, but you can't make medical decisions for her"

Another headline reads: "Doctors decided this baby's life wasn't worth saving. Now a Missouri legislator wants to make sure it never happens again." Pete Baklinski in this article says: "Imagine being in a hospital watching your recently born child gasp for air as his or her oxygen levels plummet. Imagine watching in horror as medical professionals stand by doing absolutely nothing, indicating to you through body language and inaction that your son or daughter is not worth saving. This is exactly what befell Sheryl and Scott Crosier, of St. Louis, Missouri, in December 2010 when they lost their three-month-old son Simon who had the chromosomal abnormality Trisomy 18 that left him with serious physical problems. Weeks after his death, the parents discovered that the hospital had a "futility policy" in effect that allowed doctors to actually place a "Do Not Resuscitate" order on Simon's medical chart without his parents' permission or consultation."

In general it could be said that the Lawmakers will become the lawbreakers when it comes to making decisions about our lives and the end of it, especially when life is ending in so much suffering, be it young or old. If the end seems painful or if the doctor's diagnosis is not good or promising, the human reaction is to end that suffering even if that means ending the life of that person, and that is also the sentiment of some in society.

We need to consider where modern culture is heading. At the very least, we are forced to re-examine end-of-life issues. When families are in the midst of a life-changing health crisis, they also are in the midst of a popular culture that often portrays efforts to preserve life as

undignified and intrusive. "Who wants to live with a seemingly poor quality of life?" many ask. But that question is framed in a way that shifts the focus away from God's will and onto our subjective human ability to measure "quality of life."

But the reality is that euthanasia or mercy killing is not the answer to appropriate answer for several reasons.

First, euthanasia or mercy killing means to take life in our own hands, our own or somebody else's. It means we can decide what is best for a person and perhaps is not so much because of the suffering the dying person is going through, but sometimes those actions spring from acts of selfish motives. There is more to dying a natural death than we or somebody else deciding to end that life prematurely. And it is because we have somebody who cares about that person and Him alone will decide when to take that person's life.

Second, euthanasia or assisted suicide or pulling the plug before the natural time runs its course, is immoral for we force our will on somebody's else' life, and that act of immorality bring unresolved issues with members of the close family, or of those who are who hold power over somebody's life.

Third, its goes against what God wills for each one of us and his commandment of not killing but rather protect that life which means that the dying are to be cared for and left in God's hand until He decides that their time is up.

Fourth, we don't know what plans God has for every person. It is possible God will restore de dying to wholesome life again in a miracle, with a purpose. We have heard stories of how God has given second chances or more, to some so that they will fulfill a mission God places in their hands. Therefore we could only pray and ask the Lord for His will to be done.

But the reality is that taking and making decision pertaining to the end of suffering can be complicated and difficult, but to help us be equipped for such eventualities, the Bible study that is going on right now will help us understand this issue farther as it will take you over a few cases, and help us make better decisions. You are invited to join us as we explore God's word together.

And for today as we gather and think on the issue at hand, it is important to remember that if you are baptized Child of God, redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, that is the blood that Jesus shed on the Cross of Calvary has washed your sins away, then your life is in God's hands. You belong to Him and He belongs to you. And it's important to never shift our sight from God to our own measurement of quality of life. But that allow God to take care of you after all you are God's and as Job said in the Old Testament, Job who was familiar with suffering and death, he said; "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." (Job 1:21) And when his suffering was unbearable his wife told him: "Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die." <sup>10</sup> But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips." (Job 2:9-10)

In the same way our prayer is and shall be, "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away!"

The Material we are using for Bible study entitled “Christian Care *at Life’s End*” by the Missouri Synod highlights several guiding principles on this matter of which the first two read:

**Principle 1:** *Euthanasia, in its proper sense, is a synonym for mercy killing, which involves suicide and/or murder. It is, therefore, contrary to God’s Law.*

**Principle 2:** *As Creator, God alone knows with certainty whether a disease or an injury is incurable.*

**Principle 3:** *When the God-given powers of the body to sustain its own life can no longer function and doctors in their professional judgment conclude that there is no real hope for recovery even with life-support instruments, a Christian may in good conscience “let nature take its course.”*

Now, because God gives and God takes, then He is in control of time and circumstance and if so, we Christians never aim at death as a “solution” to the problems of dying. But our role and aim is always to *care, never to kill*. Care does not include subjecting patients to treatments that only prolong dying and increase suffering (Principle 3), but Christian care also never aims at the death of a fellow human being. But confess and trust as Job did that God is the One who both gives and takes life and Job’s refusal to “curse God and die” is not a healthy way out. Life is God’s gift and trust. God gives and God takes away. We have no authority to decide for ourselves when life shall end nor to make the judgment whether the quality of someone’s life makes life no longer worth living. A Christian recognizes that God has given us our time in this life and only He knows His full intention concerning our death. The Psalmist says, “My times are in your hand” (Psalm 31:15).

And because our times are in His hands the what the Apostle Paul says comes true: “For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself.”<sup>8</sup> For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord’s.<sup>9</sup> For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.” (Romans 14:7-9) No wonder he writes in the letter to Philippians: “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” (Phil. 1:21).

As Christians we are to accept God’s gift of life and never aims to destroy the life He gives, and we are to encourage others to see this reality as well.

Jesus is our greatest example in trusting God that He gives and takes away. As he was dying for each one of us on the Cross of Calvary he prayed: “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!” (Luke 23:46)

Jesus did put His trust in God from whom his life came and was returned. Showing us the way that both our living and our dying are in His hands for He understands our living and dying.

Dealing with end of life issues is not an easy one, but we also learn from Jesus who at the Garden of Gethsemane he said: “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me.”<sup>39</sup> And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.” (Matt. 26:38-39)

Three times Jesus wrestled with his dying, but those three times He prayed “not as I will, but as you will.”

We can approach dying as Jesus did, wrestling in prayer, and through prayer faithfully affirming “nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.” For He promise to be in control of our lives.

Although our lives are shuttered by sin, the Work of Christ on the cross redeems and sanctifies our lives for we belong to Him, therefore no government or any human will can take life in to his her or his own hands. But so that we continue being strengthened, I would like to leave with you the words the apostle Peter writes in his letter: “And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.” (1 Peter 5:10)

Amen.