

“The Redeemer Will Stand”
(Job 19:23-27)
Life Sunday, February 1st, 2015
Pastor Espinosa

[Pastor originally preached this sermon at the 2nd LC-MS life conference in Washington D.C. which took place on January 22nd-24th of this year in conjunction with the national walk for life (on January 22nd) from mid-point the national mall to the supreme court building. About 600,000 people participated in the march remembering the approximately 57 million babies aborted since the 1973 Roe v. Wade landmark decision. LC-MS life ministries also focus on compassion ministry to parents who have aborted in the past and need the healing grace of the Lord Jesus. Pastor’s role on the LC-MS Board for National Mission is to support the synod’s Life and Health Ministries and we’re excited to be building bridges with Concordia University Irvine on both these fronts. Pastor hopes that Saint Paul’s Lutheran Church of Irvine will conduct its own life ministry that might support a local pregnancy help ministry that stands for God’s gift of life. Note that the life ministry of the LC-MS is well-rounded and extends care to our elderly and disabled; and is working with the overall synod to stand for biblical marriage and to advocate religious liberty.]

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ who takes up the little ones in His arms to bless them. Amen.

Job presents himself – even as one with a fallen nature – as nevertheless righteous and innocent. You know the story of this godly man: he was a man of prayer; a man of faith, but he was also overwhelmed by the seeming injustice of this terrible suffering. What had he done to deserve it? Thus it was for him a burning priority to find some way to defend his integrity. Who would stand for the innocent? Who *will* stand for the innocent?

I imagine that if the holy innocents could speak that they might sound a lot like Job! We probably grossly underestimate their energy and dare I say “passion?” to live. John while in the womb and in close proximity to the LORD (who at the time was Himself in the womb), had a faith which caused him to leap for joy (Luke 1:44)! His life in the womb was **uncontainable!** But the LORD is always near to each of us. Indeed, who else but Jesus knits us together in our mother’s womb (Psalm 139)? The LORD is near and especially present with the weak. We must be bolder in this confession and not underestimate the grace of God who delights to be found in the things treated as nothing in the world. Nothing is more dignified than what is despised; and nothing is holier than what is forgotten.

So I hear the babies speak as Job: “Oh that my words were written! Oh that they were inscribed in a book! (v 23) Oh that with an iron pen and lead they were engraved in the rock forever! (v 24)...My heart faints within me!”

The innocent ones created for life deserve at the very least what our great nation has done and is doing for so many others neglected. One of the current exhibits in the magnificent

Library of Congress highlights the civil rights movement and presents an overview about so many who have been vindicated. The powerful testament to defend the inalienable rights of those treated as if despised is a hall-mark of America.

That same Library of Congress is marked by the word “theology” on the ceiling of the Great Hall which displays two monumental copies of the Word of God (the Giant Bible of Mainz and the Gutenberg). We are primed to speak of “the right thing to do” (even as our president did in his last state of the union address), because truth, the very Word of God is etched into stone throughout our nation’s capital (and indeed throughout our nation)! So I was not surprised when our president – who we are called to love and pray for – said in his state of the union address week before last, “In America we respect human dignity.” But the statement betrays our narrow view because the babies are left out, so much so that they don’t even have their own designation as people who need defending. They are the forgotten citizens as our politics replace the rights of the unborn with the “right to choose.”

Nor am I suggesting that you and I point fingers, as an LC-MS pastor going on 24 years I have done very little to speak for the unborn; and as self-absorbed sinners we would rather remain quiet and “not get into it” than live out true faith that is dying to remember the forgotten. We desperately need to pray that the LORD would open our lips so that we would speak for the helpless ones; we must confess our terrible pride which seeks to preserve our reputations while seeking the approval of men over the approval of God. We are called to not simply get over ourselves, but to crucify ourselves, so that “Pro-Life” is a really really good thing to say!

And if we cry out to the LORD that we would not be forgotten in our helplessness, what of the innocent ones?

O – like Job – they assuredly want someone to make their case; they want to be remembered because they too were gifted with life! They want an indelible record; a durable cast. They want it written in lead so that when the sun shines on their defense, the letters would be caused to glisten. They want their lives remembered on a rock that will stand forever! They want their gift of life to be lasting and it consumes them with longing within them – but unlike John who lept for joy – his little sisters and brothers feel their kidneys fail...they kick against and feel the pain of being slaughtered and robbed of life.

Who will vindicate them? And who will restore us who fall short of doing what we ought to do and renew us so that we may do what is beyond our ability?

Job and the innocent ones and the other children of Adam like you and me are lifted up by the words given to Job which make the brightest biblical scholars scratch their heads. How can Job find in God who has seemingly abandoned him, the same God who would also vindicate him? This is a paradox; and human reason fails in the face of it, but Job holds the Judge to another one of His offices: He is also the REDEEMER!

“²⁵For I know that my Redeemer lives and at the last he will stand upon the earth. ²⁶And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God, ²⁷whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another...”

Job’s hope is not in his own righteousness, but in the Redeemer! And he knew the truth: that even after his body died, that same body would be restored to life. Job is revealing the glorious resurrection of the body, because – finally – **someone will stand for life!** The Redeemer will stand for those who die, but not merely for those who die, but also for those who are murdered.

The Kinsman-Redeemer in God’s Holy Law was the nearest of kin who guaranteed the security and rights of his fellow kinsman, so that whenever a member of the clan was murdered, a kinsman-Redeemer had the responsibility to avenge his brother’s blood (Num. 35:19; Deut. 19:6-12). The Redeemer Jesus took on the flesh of His little brothers and sisters and while His verdict against all sin is death, His vindication is life that conquers death. The Redeemer stands for life so that when **He** avenges, death itself is murdered and Job won’t let us underestimate the Redeemer’s miraculous etched-in-stone vindication!

The horror of abortion is the utter destruction of the body, but Job is no stranger to the idea: he is saying that after his skin has been peeled off; after his body is utterly destroyed, *yet* in his flesh – with his own eyes – he would see God! The one whose hope was aborted would be raised and most certainly *not* forgotten! This is the verdict and it is because the Redeemer came for sinners – even when they are slaughtered though they commit no crime – so that in His defense of little ones; in His avenging of the little ones; in His rising up in court to testify for the little ones; in **standing** for the little ones, they would by grace through faith be raised!

To be redeemed is to be bought back/purchased back to life: this the Redeemer’s blood does for us – **you** are Redeemed! – this is what the Redeemer’s resurrection for us guarantees. And it is for all the little children, even for those born and who grow old on earth...they too by grace through faith in the Redeemer will be gloriously raised. There is no greater hope; there is no better vindication against the invader called “death.”

This is the hope we must extend to one another and to the world. This hope will lead us to affirm that we are ambassadors of the Redeemer. We are called to proclaim His life for He is standing today...standing *this* day for life. My parish in Texas from 2002-2010 participated in **40 Days For Life** a few times at least. We were praying and reading the Psalms in front of an abortion clinic one day when a woman came up to me and asked if she could join us.

As we welcomed her as our sister in Christ, tears came flooding down her face as asked for forgiveness. She knelt on the street confessing that she had a son who had grown up so beautifully – so full of life, so endowed with gifts – who had become a successful attorney, but she had also conceived another child, but she had made a different decision for her. What had she done?! Her brother had become an attorney, what might she had done with life if given a chance? I knelt in front of her, put my hand on her forehead, and pronounced the Redeemer’s

absolution. The Redeemer stands for life! She was restored to life – completely forgiven – and she will be raised!

The very young couple in my former parish, were overjoyed for the twins the LORD had created in her womb. They prayed; they praised God. Then the day of sadness came: the twins were born much too soon. Overwhelmed with grief, by grace they held to the Redeemer (better said, the Redeemer held them). They called me to the hospital to baptize the twins during the few hours they were given. A few weeks later they gifted me with a hand-made stole that I am wearing today [Sunday, February 1st] constructed with the conviction that their twins – Noah Doyle and Travis Shane – had (and have) a Redeemer who stands for life! Through the flood of holy baptism, those precious lambs were restored to life and will be raised!

The little girl in the womb with no one praying over her, with no audible Word of the LORD, with no means of grace coming in contact with her (that we know of)...what about her?

What about her is the scene in Job: God is nowhere to be seen, but then **this** WORD is revealed to all who are hopeless! The Redeemer will stand! And in this glorious revelation He stands for the forgotten; for those who appeared to have absolutely no hope! This is not universalism, but it *is* universal grace and let's just say that we are always wise to sin on the side of grace while being convinced that our call is to stand for **all** the unborn. Why? Because the world's Redeemer is standing today and there is positively **no doubt** that He desires restoration and resurrection for **every single one** and this is why we join Him, we too stand for those who need a voice, the helpless, the weak, the unborn, the elderly, the disabled...that is we live as we ought to, as those *redeemed by the blood of the Redeemer who also stands for you!* And now may the peace of God which surpasses all understanding guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus – who takes up the little ones in His loving arms to bless them – until He comes again in glory. Amen.