



OUR LITTLEST *Neighbor*

by Peter Scaer

A great darkness has fallen upon us. In the 1973 landmark decision known as *Roe v. Wade*, the Supreme Court struck down all laws regulating or restricting abortion, thus effectively making abortion-on-demand the law of the land. Forty years our nation has wandered in this wilderness. Forty years, and we have grown comfortable with the culture of death.

Abortion mills dot our nation's landscape, and the morning-after pill can be taken right at home. Our increasingly secular society no longer speaks about keeping abortion rare but is concerned only that it is available and affordable. Christians are even being drawn into abortion's web. Our tax dollars fund Planned Parenthood, the nation's largest abortion provider and great corrupter of our young. More recently, as part of the new health-care law, a mandate from the Department of Health and Human Services requires employers to include abortifacient drugs as part of their health-care plans.

We must ask some basic questions: Without the right to life, what does it mean to talk about the rights of liberty and the pursuit of happiness? What does affordable health care mean to a child whose life is taken from her? And by disregarding the lives of the little ones, are we not cheapening the inherent value of everyone?

On this 40th anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*, we do well to step back and count our losses. Since that deadly decision, there have been over 54 million abortions. It's hard to wrap our heads around such

a number. Consider Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin, Missouri, Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, Wyoming, South Dakota and North Dakota. Now picture those states completely uninhabited.

The problem persists. Every day, abortion takes from us the number of people lost in the World Trade Center. Every day, little children are dismembered, with trash bags as their coffins and dumpsters as their graves.

It can be too much to handle, and the numbers are mind-numbing. Perhaps it would be better to think small, and remember that every victim of abortion is a person. Each of us started this life as an embryo, the coming together of a sperm and an egg to create a new and wonderful person. A little embryo is not simply life tissue or a potential life, but it is a human being, loved and known by God. With the psalmist, we sing, "For you formed me in my inward parts. You knitted me together in my mother's womb" (Ps. 139:13). Take a look at an embryo on the very first day of conception, and you are taking a look at your own first baby picture.

HOPE AND LIFE

As Christians, we confess that every unborn child has been redeemed by the blood of Christ and is endowed with an eternal soul. Our very lives are defined by the Lord of Life, who was born of the Virgin Mary and conceived by the Holy Spirit. God's own Son

came into this world as an embryonic child, the littlest among us. Within His mother Mary's womb, He was nourished, protected and grew until the day of His birth. Had the technology been available, we could have seen the ultrasound pictures of our Lord and Savior.

So it is Christians love little children. When we hold a baby in our arms, we show our love for Christ. And we look upon a woman with child, we cannot help but think that Christ once made the womb His home. And as John the Baptist leaped for joy in the womb of his mother Elizabeth, so also do we sing for joy that our Lord was conceived and born for our salvation.

When we say as Christians that we love children, we love them all. The value of a person does not depend on what she can do but on who she is. Down Syndrome children tragically have been special targets of the abortion industry. Abortion rates among African-Americans are distressingly high. Other children are aborted, shamefully, due to sex selection. Our abortion culture has not only taken the lives of our children, but has also hardened our hearts, making us colder and more callous toward those who are marginalized or weak.

Society tells us that by speaking out for the little ones, we are engaging in a "war on women." This is yet another of the many lies the devil tells. After every abortion, there are two casualties: a dead child and a wounded mother. Groups like Planned Parenthood tell our young women that abortion is a very common medical procedure and treat it as if it were nothing more than the removal of a tumor. But once the deed is done, they leave behind women who are hurt and wracked with guilt. In the midst of all this, we proclaim a better way, a way of hope and life, restoration and forgiveness.

Some might say this is a religious matter and that we should stay out of politics. But Christians can and must act as we are able. Many of those who fought against slavery or championed civil rights were motivated by Christ's love for people of every race and tribe. Now, our time has come. We must put our faith into action by defending the most defenseless among us. With Christ, we must speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves. The child in the womb is our littlest neighbor, and he needs our help.

GUILT, DESPAIR, FEAR

What is stopping us? Many of us are burdened with painful guilt and self-loathing. The sin of abortion has stained many of our own families. Women we know and love have had abortions. Others of us have encouraged women to do so. And for many others, abortion is the skeleton in our closet. But none of us is innocent. Abortion is a national sin, and the guilt belongs to all of us. For too long, we have encouraged a culture of decadence, standing idly by while our littlest neighbors suffer.

But know this: In Christ, there is forgiveness and healing. The same Christ who loves the little children has died for each and every one of us. Christ took the sin of abortion upon Himself, and that sin,

like all others, was nailed to the cross. Take heart. As our Lord was dying, He prayed, "Father, forgive them. They know not what they do." Even now, He prays for us. Even now, His death pays for our greatest sins and takes away our heaviest burdens.

As we embrace the cause of the unborn, so also do we embrace those riddled with guilt and fear. Post-abortive support groups can be found throughout the land. Those struggling with abortion may want to learn about "Silent No More," a group of women who have had abortions but are now speaking out in order to help other women in distress. Guilt need not paralyze us. Christ's forgiveness is greater than our guilt, and His baptismal robe of righteousness covers all our sin. If you're struggling, know you are not alone. Find a pastor you trust, and offer up your confession. He will speak to you healing words of forgiveness.

What's stopping us? The sin of despair. The devil would have us believe that there is nothing we can do, that we are outnumbered and that our cause is hopeless and that things will never change. I do not know many who predicted the fall of the Berlin Wall, but fall it did. So also pray that the tipping point will come soon. Until then, we will work together, celebrating the little children saved along the way.

What's stopping us? We are afraid of what others think of us. We do not want to make waves or stick our head up, lest we make ourselves a target. Our fear grows greater as our secular society has grown more virulent and aggressive. As sodomy is endorsed in so-called "same-sex marriage," those who stand for traditional marriage, given by God specifically for the procreation and raising of children, are branded haters. Our very religious liberty is under attack. The signs of our times are ominous, and it appears as if widespread persecution may be near. With the world against us, we would rather shrink back and remain quiet.

GOOD COURAGE

But there is no reason to be afraid. Be of good courage. Our Lord is with us. The same God who wonderfully formed you in the womb knows the number of hairs on your head. He will provide for you, and He will give you the strength and courage you need. If we fear God, we need fear no one else. You are not alone. Christians throughout the land share your conviction for life. The mighty angels watch over the little ones, and they are on your side. And even more, the same Lord Jesus who made His home in Mary's womb is still our Emmanuel, God with us. Take. Eat of His body, and know He is present. Drink of His blood, and know that you are forgiven. Then take up, once more, the cause of the children Christ loves so dearly. ☩

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