

God Says Yes To Us Already in the Womb

Second in a Series of Three

January 19, 2020

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Jeremiah 1:5 - 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.

Isaiah 49: The Lord called me from the womb, from the body of my mother he named my name. He made my mouth like a sharp sword, in the shadow of his hand, he hid me.

Luke 1: 41 - And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she exclaimed with a loud voice, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb."

Dear Friends in Christ,

The theme of our three part Epiphany sermon series is the title of a song written by long time Director of Youth Ministry in the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, Terry Dittmer - "And God Said Yes!" Last week, we explored God saying yes to us in the baptism of Jesus in the River Jordan / God saying yes to us in our own baptism. Next week, we will explore God saying yes to us at the cross in the suffering and death of Jesus Christ, and today, on this Sanctity of Human Life Sunday, we explore the simple truth that God said yes to each one of us already in our mother's wombs, and even before that.

In our Thursday devotional Debi and I read a theory of one pastor that the two most important days of life are the day we were born and the day we understand why we were born. All three Bible readings for today reinforce these two simple and yet life-changing truths. #1 truth on this Sanctity of Human Life Sunday is that each of us was created by God marvelously and wonderfully in our mother's wombs. And truth #2 is that God has unique and important purposes for each one of us to live out in our various vocations.

Truth #1 is that each one of us was created marvelously and wonderfully and in unique fashion in our mother's wombs. The abortion controversy is near and dear to my heart, and I am assuming it is to many of you, as well. When I get on this topic with confirmation classes and youth groups, I often begin the discussion with the fact that on this topic, I have lost my sense of humor. I say to them that if you're ever going to sit up straight and listen to what I say and not mess around, this next half hour would be your time. There's nothing funny about 3000 children being destroyed by abortion in this great land every day. There's nothing funny about millions of people in this country accepting the lie that a woman's right to choose death trumps an unborn child's right to live.

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In our first reading for today, we learn that Already in the womb, and even before, God knew Jeremiah by name and ordained that he would be a prophet to the nations. Already in his mother's womb, God was busy designing him with all of the gifts and talents he would need to begin his ministry in the year 627 B.C under the pious and good king Josiah, that his ministry would last over 40 years, and that it would end about the year Jerusalem was destroyed. Keep in mind the Lord's choice was entirely rooted in his grace, and the bottom line purpose for every one of Jeremiah's days was for him to be preaching both the Law and the Gospel as commanded, the Law in all of its terror and the Gospel in all of its sweetness, the Law with every one of its threats and the Gospel with every one of its promises, the Law in its ugliness, and the Gospel in all of its beauty. Isn't that what God is saying in verses 8 and 9, as God touches his mouth symbolizing that he would be giving him the very words he would be saying, that Jeremiah was appointed to do ***the work of uprooting and tearing down, the work of destroying and overthrowing, the work of building and planting.***

So also in our second reading for today, the prophet Isaiah records the words of Jesus Christ, **The Lord called me from the womb, from the body of my mother he named my name. He made my mouth like a sharp sword, in the shadow of his hand, he hid me.** From the beginning God's plan for the deliverance of the world involved the coming of a child who would be born of a virgin, the words of Jesus would be cutting through all the pretense, they would be exposing every bit of hypocrisy and unbelief, the words of Jesus would be a perfect teaching of both Law and Gospel, Law with all of its curses and Gospel with all of its blessings, Law with all of its consequences and Gospel with all of its rewards, Law with all of its rocking of the boat and Gospel with all of its calm in the midst of the storm.

Jesus would be delivering a salvation first of all to the Jewish nation and then to all of the Gentile nations. Jesus would be living the perfect life the world needed him to live, he would be learning obedience as he suffered all that he was appointed to suffer, in his death, in his burial, in his resurrection and in his ascension, God would be saying yes to all who are repenting, He would be saying yes to all who are believing. Yes, this is my son in whom I am well pleased. Yes, in the shedding of his blood, there is forgiveness. Yes, in his death, there is life, and in his resurrection, you may know for certain that Jesus is who he claimed to be. In his resurrection, you may know for certain that all of his teachings are true. In his resurrection, you may be certain of your own resurrection.

Could there be any better news on this Sanctity of Life Sunday? That in spite of a society that seems more and more like it's going to hell in a handbasket, Jesus

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Christ is the same, yesterday, today, and forever. He stands among us with a grace that is amazing, a mercy that is all encompassing, and a peace that is beyond understanding. Even though the gates of hell seem to be prevailing, they are not. The forgiveness of sins is never very far away. God keeps on saying to us that our sins are forgiven, that Jesus is ruling all of heaven and earth on behalf of His Church, that He is with us always as our Prophet, our Priest, and our King. God keeps on saying yes in the preaching and teaching and hearing of His Word, He says yes as often as the waters of Baptism are splashing, and He says yes to us as often as we are eating and drinking at the communion table.

Which brings us to the purpose of all of this Good News. By definition, good news is meant to be shared. Week after week, we gather in God's house to be loved and to be forgiven and to be served, and then we scatter into all the corners of Waseca County looking for hurting and wounded folks who need to be loved and to be forgiven and to be served.

Truth #2 is that God has important purposes for each one of us individually and for all of us collectively. You will see in your bulletin inserts today that the stated mission of Lutherans for Life is to be *equipping Lutherans to be Gospel motivated voices for life.* Their vision is *that every Lutheran congregation would be upholding the God-given value of human life and influencing society to do the same.*

On the one hand we need to be taking a stand with God's Word of Law and call wrong things wrong. On the other hand we need to be taking a stand with God's Word of Gospel and be directing anyone who might be listening to a Savior whose light is brighter than any darkness we may be hiding. His grace is stronger than any of our weaknesses, His love is deeper than any of our hatred, His forgiveness is wider than any of our sinful habits.

Blessed was Mary among all women, and blessed was the fruit of her womb, among all wombs. Those were the words of Elizabeth to her young cousin Mary, as these two women swapped their surprising stories of pregnancy and what was yet to come. Luke records for us that the Holy Spirit had filled the very soul of Elizabeth, and oh how these two must have reveled in the realization that the favor of the Lord was resting upon them in those days and would be resting on them in the days to come. Even little John the Baptist gets into the act. Already in the womb, he leaps for joy at the presence of His Savior. Later in the Gospel of Luke, Jesus urges his disciples to be rejoicing in the days when they would be persecuted and hated for living out their Christian faith, He promises, **“Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their fathers treated the prophets..”**

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Dear friends in Christ, already in my mother's womb, God knew me by name, He knew exactly how my life would unfold, He knew that I would be your pastor in these days, He knew that I would be appointed on this very day to be preaching the Fifth Commandment in all of its seriousness and the Gospel in all of its cheerfulness.

Already in your mother's wombs, God knew you by name, He had already ordained all of your days and how they would be unfolding, He has appointed you in the days ahead to be Gospel motivated voices for the sanctity of human life. Your assignment in the days ahead is to be calling wrong behavior wrong and right behavior right. Together as pastor and people, our calling is to keep the message straight and get the message out.

The kingdom of God is like a medium sized church in a medium sized city full of folks who rejoice in the presence of their Savior, for they know their rewards are great in heaven. They take great comfort in knowing that God said yes to them already in their mother's wombs, and even before. They revel in the truth that God has created them wonderfully, He has designed them marvelously, and He has given them unique purposes to fulfill in all their stations of life, whether they be married or single, employed or retired, elderly or middle aged or in the prime of life.

The kingdom of God is like a congregation of believers who want God to be glorified, they want the Name of Jesus to be known, they want the cross of Christ to be lifted high, they aspire to be famous out and about in their community, famous first of all for confessing their sins so that the grace of God to be sweeping over and ruling in their midst. When they call wrong things wrong, they make sure to do so with humility. They speak as one beggar might speak to another beggar telling him where he might find some bread. In Jesus' Name. Amen.