

## **Introduction**

We are observing “Sanctity of Human Life Day” today. I sure appreciate the testimony that Marci Ferrell shared with us earlier. Now we are going to open God’s word and I want to preach to you about the heart attitude that most blatantly dishonors human life. It is because of this attitude that we must preach on the sanctity of human life. That attitude is hate. Hate is the core attitude of the heart which stands in opposition to the sacredness of human life. Hate is expressive of hostility against fellow human beings in many ways. And according to scripture, one of the main descriptions or characterizations of the sinful nature is hatred. The emphasis jumps out at us as we look to Titus 3. Titus was appointed by the Apostle Paul to lead the work of strengthening the churches that had been established under Paul’s ministry on the island of Crete. In this epistle Paul sets forth guidelines to aid Titus in the appointment of church leaders and preaching in the churches. He tells Titus to teach the people sound doctrine and godly living that corresponds to the gospel. Thus at the beginning of chapter 3, he writes . . .

[Read Scripture and Pray]

Paul is telling Titus to REMIND the folks, the sheep, remind these new Christians. They need to hear again and again the way they ought to live. The reminder is necessary because the way they used to live is completely contradictory to the way the gospel teaches us to live. And in verse 3 the character of the way these new Christ-followers used to live is laid out. This is the course of life in general for all people apart from coming to saving faith in Christ. At its core it is a way of life that is foolish, unruly, marked by deception and enslavement to fleshly desires. That kind of enslavement revolves around the love and pursuit of oneself. Hence, says Paul, we were passing our days in malice and envy. The relational implication of living for oneself is that others get in the way. Human beings dislike what stands between them and their pleasures. They become angry and resentful. The result is a mass of hate. Paul says, we were “hated by others and hating one another.”

Someone might say, "Now, Pastor, isn't he jumping a little too far? I love other people. Even when I was not a Christian I loved other people." Yes, you loved. But you loved according to the world's definition not according to the Bible's. Worldly love loves what feeds one's passions and desires. It is a love of others for what they give you. You love what makes you feel better about yourself. YOU are the heart and soul of that love. Really, you love yourself. Therefore, you also love others who assist in giving you what you want for yourself. But when they cease doing so, you no longer love them. Getting married, couples tell one another, "I love you." A few years later one is telling the other, "I don't love you anymore." How can that be? It is because they loved for what they received. And when their fleshly desires were no longer satisfied, when they no longer received from that person what they want for themselves, they no longer loved.

Biblical love, Christ-empowered and exemplified love, sacrifices self for the well-being of others. Love for others is the determination to do them good. Meanwhile hate is what the world has because the world, people by nature, use others to get what they want. While they are getting what they want, they call it love. When that stops, they are done. They begin looking for someone else to use for their own selfish purposes, someone else to "love." Because people are by nature enslaved to their own selfish desires, it is their nature to be "hated by others and hate one another."

Hatred runs in complete opposition to God's basic requirements for human beings. God has given human beings two great, overriding commandments. The first is that we love God above all and with everything we have. And the second is that we love other human beings as we love ourselves. Why these two? Well we should love God because he is worthy. He bears infinite and supreme worth. He made us. He is our authority and our provider. He deserves to be loved by us. And part of loving God this way means loving other humans as ourselves. But why, then, why other humans? Because humans also bear special worth. It is not ultimate worth, but it is a derived worth. The worth of humans is that they bear the image of God. To fail to love those who bear the image of God is to fail in some sense to love God as well. Human sanctity is bound up in creation and the fact that when God created human beings, he made them unique

from all the other creatures. He explicitly created them in his likeness bearing his image as the crown of his creation.

I think of the time when the Jewish leaders were trying to trap Jesus by presenting to him controversial questions. So they asked him if it was lawful to pay taxes to Caesar. Remember what he did? He asked them to show him the coin. When they brought the coin, he asked, "whose likeness and inscription is this?" They said, "Caesar's." And he said, "Therefore, render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's." The coin bore worth because of Caesar's likeness. And there was a certain obligation owed to him who provides the coin. Similarly since human beings bear God's likeness and image, there is an obligation to the one whose likeness they bear. Because human beings bear the mark of God, they are to be treated with dignity and to do so is part of honoring the One whose image we bear. Upholding the sanctity of human life then demands love. Love your neighbor as yourself. The obligation to love runs deep. And yet it is opposed wherever there is hate. And what is at the core of sinful human nature? Hate. We are "hated and hating one another."

Elizabeth Barrett Browning in her now famous poem attempted to express the height and depth of her love and its moment-by-moment expression for her husband Robert. In similar fashion, I want to point out some of the ways people decry the sanctity of human life by hate toward one another.

### **I. Murder.**

Murder is the ultimate display of human hatred. A human being cannot act in any greater outrage against another human than to take their life. Once you kill someone you cannot do anything more. Murder is the first documented sin in the bible after the Fall of Adam and Eve. Their son Cain was angry at his brother Abel because God accepted Abel's offering but not Cain's. Cain foreshadows the religious leaders of Jesus' day. Abel's offering cast light on the deficiencies of Cain's offering so he killed him. Likewise, Jesus's words and works exposed the failings of the Pharisees and Scribes. Their fury as Cain's was energized not by evil they found in the one they hated, but by good. They hated Jesus and so they destroyed him by taking his life.

Murder is a reality in our city. About 100 people are murdered each year in Milwaukee. Every murder is an act of violent hatred against an image-bearer of God.

## **II. Abortion.**

I am mentioning abortion separately from Murder. I am not saying that Abortion is not murder. The difference is mainly one of legality. Homicide, thankfully, remains a civil prohibition. Sadly, though, abortion is permitted by the civil authorities. But abortion is just as much an act of hate as illegal murder, if not even more so. When a human life is taken while in its mother's womb, it has done nothing whatsoever to offend, to hurt, to antagonize. Through no act of their own little babies are conceived and begin to grow and develop. When their lives are taken, you cannot be angry at the baby, you can't blame the baby at all. The only person you can blame is most likely you, although in cases of rape that would be the perpetrator. But you see my point.

Willful abortion is human selfishness, human self-love, on full display at its absolute worst. Let's compare illegal murder to legal murder in the form of abortion. Remember the yearly number of murders I mentioned in Milwaukee County a moment ago? Around a hundred. By comparison, about 3,000 baby murders occur in Milwaukee County annually. That is 30 times the homicide rate! It is evil, selfish, and blasphemous.

A third way humans exhibit hate is through

## **III. Physical Assault.**

Murder, biblically speaking, is not only the actual taking of life but also even the malicious attempt to injure another human being.

A fourth exhibition of human hate is

## **IV. Sexual Assault**

A fifth example of human hate is

## **V. Human Trafficking and Prostitution**

Studies show that every year hundreds of young people in this very county are victimized in this way.

Sixth

## **VI. Physical Child Abuse**

It is one thing to spank as a form of discipline, but to inflict harm is hateful.

Seventh

## **VII. Injustice and Oppression**

There are all manner of ways in which humans take advantage of other humans. Proverbs 13:23 says that "the fallow ground of the poor would yield much food, but it is swept away through injustice." (Repeat).

Fallow ground is untilled. It has yet to be cultivated and prepared for planting. It has potential. In this proverb the fallow ground of the poor has great potential. But the poor who cannot speak for themselves are treated with injustice. Their fallow ground that could yield much fruit is taken away. They are robbed of their potential. Injustice is oppressive behavior which keeps the poor in their place and denies them the human dignity of productivity. Self-love drives injustice against the weaker ones of society. And by the way, who is weaker than an unborn child? And who is more unjust than the ones who wantonly collude to rob him of his potential?

Eighth, and probably closer to home

## **VIII. Mental and Verbal Assault**

You may never have committed murder. You may never have punched someone or committed a sexual crime. But if we are to honestly look at ourselves in relation to the sanctity of human life, we must admit we have hated other human beings through our thoughts and speech. It is not only physical hostility that expresses hate but also mental and verbal hostility.

Jesus went to great lengths in the Sermon on the Mount to reveal that sin is much more than a surface matter. It commences in the heart and is commonly expressed through one's words. "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not murder;' and 'whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire."

Jesus assigns verbal assault and even the anger which fuels it to the category of murder. They are acts which do violence against human beings. They malign the sanctity of human life and hence they demean God himself. It would be hypocritical for us to vilify murders and abortions and assaults but assault each other with our words and our thoughts. The root reason we should abstain from these behaviors is the same. God made human beings in his image.

And Paul bears this out to Titus. We see his point particularly in Titus 3:2. We need to listen to what he says, "Speak evil of no one." That is a powerful statement. All of us ought to memorize that one. "Speak evil of no one." No one! It is sinful to speak evil of human beings. . . any human beings. Speaking evil here means to say bad things, insulting things, demeaning things, to speak of others with contempt. Speak evil of no one. This behavior will set followers of Christ in distinction from the world, from how we once lived. Speak evil of no one. Avoid quarreling. Why should people avoid quarreling? James argues in chapter 4 that quarreling is an act of murder produced by unfulfilled selfishness. Be gentle. Do not be harsh with people. Treat them as image bearers of God. Consider them. Be sensitive to their situation. Be kind and caring. And finally, get this, Paul writes, "Show perfect courtesy toward all people." Courtesy is the extension of human kindness and favor and respect. To whom should we show it? To all people. Even evil people? Yes, indeed, because even evil people are image bearers of God.

You may assert that you have never hated anyone in your life. You never murdered or assaulted or oppressed. You may have thought you are a pretty good person. But no one (except Jesus) has ever fulfilled the standards Paul sets forth here. Our failure in this regard demonstrates the fact that we have all sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

## **Conclusion**

Where I need to conclude today is with the assurance of the grace of God for sinners. Everyone in this room this morning has demonstrated hate through murder of one sort or another. On one end of the range, some have participated in the murder of your children. Certainly some have a propensity for belittling and demeaning others with our words and actions.

In whatever form all of us are guilty of hate. Each and every one of us has despised human life. We are all murders at the core of our being, "hated and hating others." Hopefully, we are able to grasp a little better the evil and repulsiveness of our sin. Hopefully we bear a little more deeply the shame that is ours because of our hate. But I do not want to leave us there this morning. The knowledge and conviction of the ugliness of our sin by itself might lead to despair and utter hopelessness. But that is not the last point! Psalm 32 offers hope. It says, "Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity. ... For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. [But] I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord," and you forgave the iniquity of my sin.

I am so glad this morning to let you know that there is hope. Sin is very, very bad. Murder is very, very bad. Abortion is very, very bad. Verbal assault is very, very bad. But God is very, very good. Where sin and its guilt abound, God's grace abounds all the more through Jesus Christ our Lord! All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, but sinners may be justified by God's grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Christ Jesus died a murderer's death as a substitute. He who knew no sin became sin in our behalf. His death satisfied the demands of divine justice. Justification and forgiveness are by him extended to those who come with repentant hearts to receive the gift. Whatever your sin, you may come to him today and come to know how blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven and whose sin is covered. If you will, with sorrow over your sin and resolve to flee from that sin, you can come with full assurance that God through Christ's sacrifice will forgive and cleanse you.

A recent hymn by Matt Papa expresses this wonderful truth.

What love could remember no wrongs we have done  
Omniscient, all-knowing, He counts not their sum  
Thrown into a sea without bottom or shore  
Our sins, they are many, His mercy is more

What patience would wait as we constantly roam  
What Father, so tender, is calling us home  
He welcomes the weakest, the vilest, the poor  
Our sins, they are many, His mercy is more

What riches of kindness He lavished on us  
His blood was the payment, His life was the cost  
We stood 'neath a debt we could never afford  
Our sins, they are many, His mercy is more  
Whatever our sin, his mercy is more.

Praise God. Our hate, it is great, but God's mercy is more!!!

And, finally, out of the gracious and merciful work of God, let us resolve afresh and anew this morning to stand for the sanctity of human life. That means there is a lot to stand against in this world. Where you can make a difference, stand on the gap, raise awareness, impact politics, determine to do it. But here is something we must all do. Resolve to implement Paul's words to Titus. "Speak evil of no one, avoid quarreling, be gentle, and show perfect courtesy toward all people." By these actions we can count the ways we love rather than the ways we hate.