

God is the Lord of My Life

A Pro-Life Sermon

Text: Romans 14:8

Theme: God is the Lord of my Life!

He gives me life.

He directs my life.

He determines when my life is over.

I'd like to speak to you this morning about a very important issue, an issue that is very important to me and I expect is very important to you as well. It's called life. The reason I'd like to speak to you about this issue I think is somewhat obvious. You see, life is under attack. All across our country the value of life, the sanctity of life, the respect for life at every stage is being undermined and eroded at an alarming rate. The attack began quite a few years ago already, back in 1962, when the United States Supreme court legalized abortion. Since then an estimated 50 million unborn babies have lost their lives, snuffed out before they ever had a chance to be born. 50 million -- you know what that's like? It's like the population of Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Missouri, North and South Dakota, Nebraska and Montana combined! And yet it's still accepted and defended even by the President himself.

In recent years the battle has shifted to the other end of the scale. Assisted suicide and euthanasia have become the hot topics, the issues under debate. In 1997 the state of Oregon became the first state to legalize physician-assisted suicide. Last November the voters of Michigan were asked to approve a similar proposal. Thankfully it failed. I wonder what will happen here in the state of Minnesota? It's only a matter of time, folks. I hope you realize that. Minnesota is one of the states that has been targeted by the Hemlock Society as one of the next places they'd like to get assisted suicide approved. Should it be legal? Those in favor of assisted suicide argue that it gives terminally ill patients the freedom to bring their suffering to an end and die in a dignified manner. Those who oppose the idea assert that it undermines the sanctity of human life and puts doctors in the business of killing their patients rather than helping to alleviate their suffering and pain.

So who's right? How do we decide such an issue? Do we flip a coin? Do we follow the majority opinion? Not at all. As Christians, you and I look to God's Word for direction. We look to the timeless, changeless truths of God's Word to guide us in our decision making process, especially when it comes to matters of life and death. And what does God have to say about this particular issue? I think Paul sums it up pretty well in the words of our text: "If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord." You see, friends, God is the Lord of my life. I am not the Lord of my life. Bill Gates is not the Lord of my life. The US government is not the Lord of my life. Jack Kevorkian is not the Lord of my life. God is the Lord of my life. He is the one who gives me life. He is the one who directs my life. And He is the one who determines when my life is over.

My life is not an accident; neither is yours. The fact that you and I are here in this world is not the result of some weird twist of fate or the random result of billions of years of evolution. You and I did not just happen to develop from a blob of tissue in our mother's womb. God gave us life. Remember the words we read from Psalm 139? Permit me to reread just a few of those verses. Speaking to God David says, "You created my inmost being; You knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise You because I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Your works are wonderful, I know that full well" (vv. 13-14).

Have you ever been in the room when a baby was born? It's an incredible experience, an awesome

experience to watch as another new life comes into the world. Babies, you see, do not come in a box, like a model car or airplane, with all kinds of little parts you have to glue together. No, they come out already assembled, with toes and feet, and fingers and hands, and cute little noses and round, chubby cheeks. They have hearts that pump and lungs that breathe and ears that hear and stomachs that demand to be filled. It's incredible. No group of scientists--no matter how intelligent, no matter how sophisticated their equipment--no group of scientists can duplicate what God does in forming a tiny baby in a mother's womb. Every birth is a vivid testimony to the wisdom and power of our heavenly Father, the one who gave us life.

The apostle Paul recognized this too. Speaking to the people in the city of Athens Paul states, "God gives all men life and breath and everything else" (Acts 17:25). Life is no accident. Life is a gift from God, like everything else I have. As much as I might like to think otherwise, my life does not belong to me. It belongs to Him. He is the Lord of my life.

Besides giving me life, God also directs my life. Again, look at the example of Paul. Paul, or shall I say Saul, was not always a Christian. In fact, prior to becoming a Christian, Saul was adamantly opposed to Christianity. He was determined to stamp out and eradicate this new sect of Christians that had sprung up in the land of Palestine. So he set out for Damascus -- arrest warrants in hand -- to apprehend any Christians he might find in that city and bring them back to Jerusalem for prosecution. And then he met Jesus; and Jesus turned his life around. He changed Paul from a persecutor of the church into its greatest missionary, a man who worked tirelessly to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the Roman world.

Or take Martin Luther, for example. Luther did not set out to be a pastor or a priest. Luther went to school to become a lawyer; but God had other plans. God redirected Luther's life from the university to the monastery, where he became a monk and later on a priest. Along the way, of course, Luther had plenty of opportunity to read and study God's Word. And the more he did, the more he became convinced that there was definitely something wrong, that the church of his day was on the wrong tract, that it had drifted away from the true teachings of God's Word. So God used Luther to reform the church and bring it back to the truths of His Word, particularly the truth that we are saved by grace through faith in Christ.

God has a plan for my life too. As the Lord of my life, He will guide me and direct me so that His good plans are fulfilled. Isn't that what David says in the 23rd Psalm? "He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake." And isn't that what we sing in the words of one of our hymns?

What God ordains is always good; His will abideth holy.
As He directs my life for me, I follow meek and lowly.
My God indeed In every need Doth well know how to shield me;
To Him, then, I will yield me. (TLH # 521:1)

I may have plans of being a doctor some day. God may have other plans. I may plan on being an engineer. God may have other plans. But regardless of whether my plans turn out or God redirects my life in some other direction, I trust that God will guide and lead me in the way that is truly best for me. After all, He is the Lord of my life. And He is the one who determines when my life is over. I'd like to read for you a passage that is found in the book of 1 Samuel -- 1 Samuel 2:6. It goes like this: "The LORD brings death and makes alive; He brings down to the grave and raises up." God is the one who gives life; and He and only He has the right and authority to end life, He and those to whom He extends that authority. I do not have the right to terminate your life. That's what makes murder wrong. Likewise I do not have the right to end my own life. That's what makes suicide wrong. And in the same vein I do not have the right to ask someone else to help me end my life. That's what makes assisted suicide wrong. The right to

decide when my life is over is His right. It is His prerogative. With the Psalmist I say, "O Lord, my times are in your hands"(31:15). "You are the Lord of my life."

Sad to say that attitude is not shared by many people in our society. Many do not have a high regard for the sanctity of human life. They see life as cheap, as disposable, easy come, easy go. That attitude is very evident in some of the movies and the shows on TV, shows where people are being blown away left and right, movies where people are brutally hacked apart and murdered by some lunatic named Freddy or Jason. If life is a gift of God, a gift that is to be respected and treasured, how can we watch shows like that and think its fun? God forgive us.

Likewise people today tend to think that they are the ones in charge of their lives. They call the shots. They make the decisions. And God is left out of the picture. "It's my life and I can live it the way I want to." "If I wanna do drugs, then I'm gonna do drugs and no one's gonna stop me. It's my life." If a woman gets pregnant and doesn't want to have a baby right now and she wants to abort it, she should be able to. She should have the right to. After all, it's her life and her body. If two young people want to shack up together, who are we to say it's wrong. It's their life. Perhaps you have displayed that attitude yourself a few times. Again, may God forgive us for our Savior's sake.

And that same attitude is now being displayed in end of life issues. If a person doesn't want to live anymore, if their quality of life is such that they don't feel like living anymore, they should have the right and the freedom to end their lives. It's their life. No, it isn't their life. Their life is a gift from God and they do not have the right to determine when their lives are over. That's God's jurisdiction.

"But what if I'm in a lot of pain and there's very little hope of recovery. Wouldn't it be better just to get it over with, rather than lie there and suffer? I'm gonna die anyway." To be a Christian does not mean I have to put up with pain. Personally speaking, I don't like pain. I've had migraine headaches. I don't like them. But just because I'm a Christian does not mean I have to endure suffering and pain. If there is some sort of medication or treatment that will help alleviate my pain, I'm free to use it. The same goes for those who are suffering sort of chronic, painful disease. They are free to use whatever pain medication or treatment is available that would help alleviate their pain and suffering; but they are not free to take an overdose or have someone give them an overdose so they don't have to suffer anymore. That would be taking it too far. Remember, my life is in His hands.

All right, but what about someone who is in a coma. They've been on a respirator for over a year. There has been no response on their part to stimuli. There has been no sign of improvement. There is virtually no hope of them ever getting better. Does a person really have to go on living like that? As Christians, the goal of our lives is heaven, to live with our Lord and Savior in paradise. The goal of our lives is not to stay here on this earth as long as we possibly can, or in this case, to artificially keep someone alive as long as we possibly can. To remove a machine that is artificially keeping someone alive, especially when that person has no hope of getting better, is not wrong. Removing such a machine simply allows the disease or illness to take its natural course. There is a difference, however, between machines that artificially sustain life and those that enable a person to go on living naturally. For example, machines that supply food and water to someone who cannot swallow are essential for survival. Without food and water a person's body cannot live. Removing such would mean that the person would not die of natural causes but would die of starvation.

But now we're getting a little bit off the subject. Let me get us back on track. Assisted suicide is not a God-given right, nor is it a God-pleasing option for dealing with suffering and pain. Why? Because it goes against this very basic principle: that God is the Lord of my life.

It's also wrong for another reason: because of where it will lead. Don't be deceived, friends. Assisted suicide is not the goal. It's just one more step toward the goal. When you play baseball, you have to get to first base and second base and third base before you can get to home plate. The same is true in this situation. Assisted suicide is not home plate. Assisted suicide is first base, or shall I say second base. Abortion was really first base, the ending of life in the womb. Assisted suicide is second base, helping the chronic and terminally ill end their lives. Home plate is euthanasia, active euthanasia, ending the lives of those whom we feel no longer measure up, no longer have the quality of life we think they should have. And so we end their lives without their permission.

Think I'm bluffing? Think I'm simply using scare tactics? The country of Holland has been practicing assisted suicide for about 12 years already. So if we want to peer into the future a bit and see where this assisted suicide issue leads, all we have to do is look at them. Recently the Dutch government did a study of over 8,000 cases in which a doctor prescribed a lethal dose of medication. In over 60% of those cases the patients' lives were ended without their consent. And according to another report, this one done by US News and World Report, in almost half the cases of involuntary euthanasia -- 45% -- in almost half of those cases the person's family wasn't consulted either.

"Well, Pastor, something like that would never happen here in America. We would never allow it." Oh really? Remember what I said about the state of Oregon? Less than two years ago they became the first state in our country to legalize physician-assisted suicide. Recently I read a report that revealed that their state Medicaid program has now put a limit on the amount of pain medication it will cover for Medicaid patients. In other words, if you're on Medicaid and you're suffering with some painful illness, they will only allow you to have a certain amount of pain medication. After that, you have to pay for it yourself. If, on the other hand, you would like to have a doctor administer to you a lethal dose of medication, that Medicaid would be more than happy to cover. Is that what you want for the rest of America? Is that what you want right here in the state of Minnesota? That's where all of this eventually is headed.

"OK, Pastor, I see your point. And I agree. I agree that from a Biblical and a practical standpoint assisted suicide is wrong. But you have to remember something: not everyone in our state or in our country is a Christian. I may believe that assisted suicide is wrong, but how can I impose my beliefs on everyone else?" On that point I would have to disagree. You see, I always thought that's what Christians do: they stand up for what's right. You know, sort of like the way Luther did. As Christians, as representatives of Jesus Christ in this world, you and I are to testify to the truth of God's Word. We are to shine the light of God's Word on the moral issues of our day and point people in the right direction, especially in times of moral confusion, when people aren't so sure what's right or what's wrong. Now more than ever, as people make important decisions about life and death -- now more than ever people need hear the truth that you and I already know and believe: that God is the Lord of my life. Amen.

by Pastor Martin Bentz

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