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**Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York**

**October 14, 2018**

**Communion Sunday**

**Selected Scriptures**

**Prayer:** *Father God, we just again want to be drawn nearer to your precious bleeding side, and Lord, communion is the time when we pay particular attention to what you've done at the cross. And Lord, this morning it's going to be a little different and so again I pray your grace, I pray your wisdom, I pray your insight. I pray, Lord, this morning as we open up your word that you would just accompany us, that you would give us your heart and your passion and your desire and I just continue to pray that you would be honored and glorified in everything that takes place. I pray this in Jesus' name, amen.*

Well, this morning we are celebrating the Lord's table and Jesus on the night before he died, he met with his disciples and there for the last time he celebrated a Passover supper with them. We read *Matthew 26* to describe it. It says: *Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying,*

*"Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."* Jesus took bread and he took wine and he offered them up as symbols of his flesh and his blood then he asked his disciples to eat the bread and drink the cup to symbolically eat his flesh and drink his blood. At that night, that dinner, he asked them to remember this sacrifice on a regular basis and this is what we call "the Lord's table", and we celebrate it once a month. We do that by meditating on what it is the Lord Jesus Christ did for us on the cross, by examining ourselves, and that means asking God's Holy Spirit to point out areas where he's convicting us of sin, by confessing that sin and then by participating in the elements. Jesus said in *John 6:53*: *So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you."*

Well today's communion Sunday. It is also Life Chain Sunday and I just want to address a little bit of the confusion that happened because of what's been taking place in the last few years. There's now two Life Chains. There's one in Middletown and there's one in Port Jervis, and there's been some ambivalence as to whether or not we should support both or one and which one is the most important,

et cetera, et cetera and so there was some confusion about that last week and the Gingeriches could only come last Sunday, they're our missionaries in the Philippines and so we had a luncheon for them and so a lot of folks couldn't make it. After the luncheon I scooted out to Middletown to the Life Chain there, and it was, to say it was disappointing would be an understatement, but I'll have more to say about that a little later.

So what I want to talk about this morning is we are deviating a little bit from our meditation on the life of Christ and I want to do that in order to revisit our explanation about why we as a church are pro-life. Now I can instantly think some folks are thinking, well, wait a minute, that's politics. That's not the gospel. I would say to you sometimes the gospel overshadows and intersects with even politics. Our presidential election marked a major split among evangelicals about what it means to be pro-life. Some folks said that it's important but it's not any more so than the environment or social justice. I believe that they could not be more mistaken. And so this morning I would like to explain why. I would like to explain why being pro-life has everything to do with being a believer in the gospel of Jesus Christ, and it all has to do with who we are and with why we're here.

And that question was asked centuries ago by the authors of the

Westminster Catechism. The very first question they asked was: What is the chief end of man? Well, the answer according to the catechism and scripture is: The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. Okay. So how do we do that? How do we glorify God? Well, God's glory is really his character, it's his attributes that are made manifest to the world. So glorifying God is really manifesting or displaying in our lives who God is and what he does. You see, God created only one creature to expressly demonstrate God's character and we are those creatures. When Jesus commanded us to *let your light shine before others, so they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven*, he was telling us, he was explaining to us that we are God's living billboards. So human beings are in God's eyes a very, very big deal. God tells us why at the very beginning of the book of Genesis. God makes it clear that of all the creatures in all of creation, there's only one creature who bears the "imago dei" and that means the very image of God. *Genesis 1:26* says: *Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea, over the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."* So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. It's my contention that we mostly don't have a clue about the privilege that we've been given. I mean God says

that we are of such an exalted nature due to the fact that we are created in his image that at some point we will judge the world and we will judge angels. It was the apostle Paul who made that amazing statement. Paul in 1 Corinthians, he was just astounded that the Corinthians had gotten so caught up in these earthly pursuits that they were suing one another. And he said about our destiny in 1 Corinthians 6, he said this, he said: *If any of you has a dispute with another, do you dare to take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the Lord's people? Or do you not know that the Lord's people will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life!* Those four words that were uttered by Paul, "we will judge angels," those words may well be the reason behind Satan's rebellion and the fall of mankind. I mean understand that Satan was the angel Lucifer who was the highest created being ever. We can only speculate as to why it is that Satan chose to rebel but suffice it to say he wanted the position of highest authority amongst all of the angels. And perhaps learning that we human beings will be the only creatures created in God's image and that we would one day judge angels, maybe that proved too much for Satan. Maybe that caused his rebellion. We don't know. We do know that God and his angels went to war with Satan and his angels perhaps over us. And we also know that Satan

lost. Revelation 12 says: *Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down -- that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to earth, and his angels with him.*

Now I want to give you sort of an exercise this morning. I want you to picture yourself as the devil. Now for some of you that may be easier than for others. But here's what you want you to do: I want were you to picture yourself seething with rage that you had just lost the most important battle you had ever undertaken. You had determined that as the highest created being, you too were worthy of worship like God. And for that fact, for that act of ultimate pride and arrogance you were cast out. It's entirely possible that you hold us humans responsible for your fate. And so if you are Satan, what do you do? I mean you've already lost the war, and all that's left is a series of battles that can only give you a brief taste of victory. You can't attack the victor, I mean, that's God himself. You can't attack him directly and so you go for the next best thing. You go for the creatures that bear his image. You take on the form of a serpent and you enter into the very Garden of Eden where the first man and woman to bear the image of God had been created and you tempt them into defiling that

image, by defying their creator and eating the forbidden fruit. And you caused their perfection to completely collapse. In one fell swoop, God's image is defiled, man's perfection is shattered. And we all know that the rest is history. What I don't think we realize is how specifically Satan still targets the image of God that we bear and how he goes about that attack. Jesus gave us real insight as to how Satan operates in the description he gave us of him in *John 8:44*. This is Jesus's words about Satan. He says: *He was a murderer from the beginning, and he does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.* You see, according to Jesus, Satan is the polar opposite of truth. He says everything about him and the kingdom that he occupies is a lie, and that lie gets promulgated as truth to any and all who are not protected by God's truth.

I mean one of the most popular but I think one of the most highly misunderstood scriptures in all of the Bible is *Proverbs 29:18* which says: *Where there is no vision, the people perish.* Can I tell you that that scripture is not speaking about a plan or a goal or a vision for your life or for your future, instead what God is saying is he's speaking about the truth that is contained in scripture because that in itself is the vision. He says if you go outside of the boundaries of that vision, of that truth, you're

going to perish. I mean, just as there are two separate kingdoms, the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness, there are two separate visions, there are two separate groundings: One is in the truth, the other's in a lie. And if you don't capture the vision of truth in scripture, God is saying you are going to perish. He says that because the only thing outside of truth is by definition, a lie. Jesus is telling us that lying is Satan's native language, and his native tongue is the vision that most of this world thinks of as truth. I mean we live on this earth under the rule of the king of liars. The very angel who was thrown out of heaven and cast down to earth, in fact Satan was the ruler of planet earth. Jesus himself just before going to the cross referred to Satan in *John 12:31* saying: *"Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out."* You know, understand, for most of this world, this guy is still in charge. He's still ruling. And God is tell us we are no match for his lies and we need to cling to God's vision as opposed to his. This is what the entire verse says, *Proverbs 29:18: Where there is no vision, the people perish: But he that keepeth the law, happy is he.* What it's saying is the law here is the word of God. I mean it's the only truth that can expose the attacks of the ruler of this world on the image of God that we all bear. So this morning I want to revisit those three different ways that the ruler of this earth attacks the image of God and how the vision of God's truth responds

to those attacks.

Now the three ways that Satan attacks God's image or three of the ways that Satan attacks God's image bearers is through their design, through their diversity, and through their development. The first area of attack is in the area of design. As you probably well know, the battlefield today for that area of attack is gender, and the battle is between two different versions of truth. We have gender fluidity versus binary complementarity. How's that for a fifty cent sentence right there? See, binary complementarity is a fifty-cent phrase, but it works. It refers to the way God organized the entire world. Binary means two, it means two sides, two parts, two halves of one whole. And your eyes are going to tell you that all of biological life is divided into two. God made them all male and female. And he made them with a unique and complementary design. He said so in *Genesis 1:26*. It says: *Then God said, "Let us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over all the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.* So one of the most basic elements of God's design for us as his image bearers is the complementarity of maleness and femaleness. I mean each is incomplete without the other. God made

it very clear in the words that we speak at marriage ceremonies in *Ephesians 5:31*. Everybody recognizes this statement. It says: "*For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.*" Those words were originally spoken in the garden. They were spoken in the Garden of Eden about the very first male and the very first female, Adam and Eve. I mean if I were Satan and I wanted to attack the image of God at its most basic level, I'd begin the attack at the design level and I would use my primary weapon. What's my primary weapon? It's the lie. I would attack the notion of maleness and femaleness and the beauty of the way they go together on every level physically, mentally, spiritually. I would attack it as an idea that now spawns patriarchy and misogyny and oppression. And since I traffic in lies, I would describe gender differences as fluid, as changing, as merely an artificial mental construct, one that needs to be overthrown by the powers of Hollywood, the music industry, and reality TV. Then I'd add to it the Supreme Court's reinterpretation of the law in what was once obviously a lie, presto-chango becomes a truth now swallowed by millions. See folks now reject the truth of binary complementarity for the lie of gender fluidity, because *where there is no vision, the people perish*. I mean if I was Satan, I would be extraordinarily pleased. I would measure my success by noting that instead of male and female, Australia has 33 different gender

descriptions. Facebook has 51. ABC News now defines 58. And I have learned that one state has now proposed to have birth certificates that have three -- quote -- "genders:" male, female and X. I would relish the fact that gender is no longer biological and fixed. It's now attitudinal, it's now fluid.

This is what God says. He says: *Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying, "Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us." He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision.* You see because our culture no longer has this vision of truth, we actually think we have successfully burst the bonds of biology apart. But the truth shouts otherwise and its shouting is inescapable. You see, each of us has within us hundreds of billions of cells who tell us who we are in our DNA. And every single cell tells us whether we are XY male or XX female. And for some reason now that biological truth is considered the lie and the inventions of man with regard to gender are the new truth, and to say otherwise, that makes you a bigot because *where there is no vision, the people perish.*

God goes on to tell us what happens when we embrace that kind of vision. He says we actually wind up standing truth on its head.

He says in *Isaiah 5:20*: *Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!* Tell me that's not an accurate description of where our culture is today. Satan has successfully attacked the image of God we bear by attacking its design. But you know God still has the ultimate weapon. And God's ultimate weapon is and will always be the cross. *Romans 5:8* says: *But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

So next if I was Satan, I would also attack the image of God born by us humans in its diversity. I mean at its core that is precisely what racism is, it's an attack on the image of God. Speaking of the racial divide that once existed between Jew and Gentile, God says this in *Ephesians 2*, he says: *But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. Jesus went to the cross to make us one new people, one man instead of two, and this new man was no longer subject to the demands of perfection because Christ*

himself had borne the cost of our imperfection by becoming our sin on the cross. So how dare we say in any way, how dare we try to divide that one man into many men in terms of the color of their skin. I mean if I was Satan, I would see racism as one of my greatest assets. Red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in his sight. But I would use race and nationality as key elements to divide and separate us into competing groups who fear and mistrust each other. If I was Satan I'd be pretty proud of my efforts. I believe this is the greatest country in the world but great countries are made up of sinful people. And every single person who has come to this country, whether it's European, Scandinavian or Asian, they all have one thing in common, they came here because this place was, by the grace of God, the greatest place where freedom still found its expression. But only one group of people, African Americans, were brought here chained and sold like animals. You can't tell me that wasn't one of Satan's greatest victories, and its effect on both sides has continued for centuries. I mean I know for a fact there are folks in our church who still have to instruct their children how to dress and act if they ever get pulled over because they fear for their lives. And I clearly know cops who put their lives on the line every single day and wonder if their sacrifice is worth the risk. And I know exactly who delights in pitting one group against another. I mean it's true we are centuries from slavery and we've made tremendous

progress but understand, there's a reason why after hundreds of years this is still a huge problem in this country and it has to do more with who we are than many of us think, realize. I mean racism is inherently an assault on the imago dei. I mean the enemy attacks the image of God and that's because it doesn't look or act exactly like we do. He delights when the bearers of God's own image turn on each other based on nothing more than physical, cultural or ethnic differences because where there is no vision, hey, the people perish. And we only have to look at God's word to see racism for the lie that it is. Look at Acts 10:34: *So Peter opened his mouth and said, "Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him."* What does "anyone" mean? It means anyone. 1 Samuel 16 says: *For the LORD does not see as man sees: Man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.* Galatians 3:28 says: *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.* I mean how many ways does God have to say it, racism is an attack on the imago dei. I mean as gender confusion attacks its design, so racism attacks its diversity, and both sins have been around since the fall of Adam. And until we see racism as a demonic attack, we will not give it the attention it deserves. If I was Satan I'd be pretty happy with how well my attacks on the design and diversity of God's image has gone but I

would still fear God's weapon of choice, that God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

As the elders begin to distribute the bread, just take a moment to consider the privilege we have. We are the bearers of the image of God. Understand the responsibility that that entails as well.

Consider also this warning that God gives about communion itself.

It's found in 1 Corinthians 11:28. It says: *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.* As I say each month, communion is an extremely serious undertaking, and if you enter into it in an unworthy manner, you are literally courting disaster. I beg of you if you are not absolutely confident that you are a child of the King, if you have not by faith trusted in Christ as your Savior or perhaps you first need to be reconciled to your brother before you bring any sacrifice to the altar, just pass the elements on as they come to you. Now on the other hand, you can make the mistake of thinking that unless you are spotless, unless you are perfect you are not really worthy to receive communion. The devil loves that

mistake as well. You see, being a child of the King doesn't mean that you don't sin, it doesn't mean that you never fall. It does mean that you recognize that your salvation is a gift that God has given to you, that it's something that you're never ever capable of earning by being good. As Dane Ortlund puts it: In the kingdom of God the one thing that qualifies you is knowing you don't qualify, and the one thing that disqualifies you is thinking that you do. You know it also means that when we do fail, because we have the Holy Spirit of God within us, we understand that conviction. We grieve as children who know that we have a father who longs to forgive and to cleanse us. God says in *1 John 1:9*: *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* So being a child of the King doesn't mean that you're spotless, that you're sinless. It means that you understand that when you sin or if you sin you have an advocate with the Father, someone there speaking on your behalf. That's what the word "advocate" means. *1 John 2:1* says: *My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father -- Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.* So understand it's because we have Jesus's righteousness and not our own, that's the reason why we are free to eat from his table. So if you love your Lord, don't deny yourself the privilege that Jesus purchased for you. He lived the life that we were supposed to live and then he died the death we

all deserved to die so that we could be made worthy of heaven. So ask yourself this morning: Do I give God the glory he is due? Do I recognize the privilege that I have been given? I bear the very image of God. Do I celebrate his design and diversity in the image of God that I bear? Consider that for a moment.

*1 Corinthians 11:23 says: For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." So take, and eat.*

As the elders begin distributing the cup, we've so far looked at two ways of the three ways that Satan attacks the image of God in us. We've looked at his attacks through gender fluidity on our design, we've examined how successfully he has used racism to attack our diversity, but now I want to examine Satan's attack on the image of God in its development.

You know I'm not a huge fan of bumper stickers, I mean, I like to read them on other cars and because perhaps I make very fast judgments on the occupants of those cars based on those bumper stickers, I tend to avoid them on my own car. But I was at a pro-life dinner a while back and I saw a bumper sticker that I

instantly wanted on my car. It was a very short and simple quote by President Ronald Reagan and it said -- quote -- "I have noticed everyone who is for abortion has been born." Now over the years I've given you many different arguments against abortion and this morning I want to give you yet another pro-life argument based on President Ronald Reagan's statement. You see, one thing is inarguable in any discussion between those who maintain the pro-life position and those who are pro-choice and that is both participants in the argument have already been born and they clearly are alive. I almost think right off the bat that I need say nothing further than to point out the obvious fact that should end the argument before it even starts. And what I want to argue is that if you're making any argument whatsoever, then you're obviously alive and you're obviously breathing. That means you've passed whatever fiscal, sociological, or philosophical gauntlet there was during your mother's gestation and that you made it alive to that nine-month finish line. Well it's just striking to me that having made it safely in your own personal lifeboats to the destination of birth, aren't you then as a pro-choicer caught up in the process of kind of pulling up the gangplanks, pulling in the lifesavers and making sure that the ladders are up in order to make sure that somebody else in the exact same position that you once were in doesn't have the opportunity to have life that you clearly and obviously have? You can tell me a thousand different reasons

why life is difficult for single moms and for women who want a career, for women who are struggling with the potential of some kind of birth defect, but let me ask you, if this was your own mother facing whatever socioeconomic situations you want to imagine, just consider for a moment what would have happened if she had listened to that pro-choice argument in your case. You wouldn't even be here. You wouldn't be here to even make the case against life. So how can you argue to remove the chance of another human being to have what you already have without the very argument itself seeming like the height of selfishness. I mean, I got my life, now it's incumbent on me to make sure you don't get yours. We're not talking about money, we're not talking about property, we're talking about the right to exist. It seems to me to be pro-choice is to deny for others what I've already received for myself, it's simply the right to be born. It's the right that so obviously trumps every other right. I find it stunning that so many on the evangelical left seem so concerned about social justice and not as concerned about abortion, when the ultimate social injustice is taking someone's life. I mean concerns about education and opportunity and racism and health really don't mean a thing to you if you're already dead. And I have a hard time hearing arguments that put those issues over the issue of life itself. And again I call you back to this description that Jesus gave us about the enemy and what he does best. Listen to what

Jesus said again. He said: *He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.* See, if I was Satan, I would use the lie when it comes to attacking the image of God in its design and in its diversity. I would do my best to make sure that the people perish because they don't have the vision of truth. But when it comes to abortion, I would combine the lie with my other defining characteristic, again as Jesus puts it: *He was a murderer. He was a murderer from the beginning.* If I was Satan, I would kill God's image bearers while they're still in their mother's womb, and then I would overwhelm the woman that I caught in that trap with guilt. I would then seek to cut them off from the only resource that could restore them to a life by grace by giving them my vision instead of God's word. I would do everything in my power to keep them from the one weapon that I would fear the most and that is the cross, because *God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* If I could just keep people from getting that vision, from understanding the truth that God holds out absolute forgiveness to any and all who would seek it through repentance, if I could blind people to the grace that is offered to them through the cross, I could kill God's image and destroy with guilt the woman I victimized because *where there is no vision, the people perish.* I mean gender confusion and racism are awful sins,

but the victims of those sins still have a chance to escape. Not so with abortion. *Proverbs 24* says this, says: *Rescue those who are being taken away to death; hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter.* That's an incredibly convicting verse but it's the next part of that verse that shows us why the Life Chain taking place today really matters. This is the next part of that verse, it says: *If you say, "Behold, we did not know this," does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who keeps watch over your soul know it, and will he not repay man according to his work?"*

You know, some folks might say what's the point of standing up and holding up a poster for an hour and a half? I mean do you really think you're going to change somebody's mind? I rather doubt that anybody's mind is going to be changed by somebody doing that. The reasons for doing it, I believe, are not to change somebody's mind necessarily. They are to do three specific things: Number one, bear public witness; number two, encourage one another; and number three, encourage myself.

The first one is to bear public witness. See I, me, myself, I need to make a public declaration. In some ways it's almost like a baptism. It's publicly declaring to the world that I am on the pro-life side and not at all on the pro-choice side. Taking a

public stand by holding up a sign clearly puts me on one side and not the other, and here's why I think it really matters. It goes all the way back to World War II. You see, after World War II President Eisenhower did something extraordinary to the German citizens who lived in and around the concentration camps where millions of Jews were executed. Eisenhower took his soldiers and they went into these towns and they forcibly marched the citizens, not the soldiers, the citizens of those towns into the camps because Eisenhower wanted to force them to see what they had studiously avoided seeing. Eisenhower understood that these people's ignorance was an ignorance of choice, one that they were solely responsible for, one that they had cultivated in order to avoid having to make any type of difficult moral choice. You see, their lack of choice was a choice and Eisenhower was determined to hold them responsible for it. This is the exact type of ignorance that allows the vast majority of pro-choice folks to think that the only issue in abortion is the freedom to choose. I mean one of the most appropriate questions you can ask somebody who is pro-choice is this: Can you tell me what actually takes place during an abortion? Well, if the person says, "no," don't you have the right to say, "Well then how can you support something you don't even know anything about?" You see, the vast majority of folks who don't know what an abortion is really about don't know because they don't want to know. And once again the word of God exposes the

lie. *Proverbs 24: If you say, "Behold, we did not know this," does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who keeps watch over your soul know it, and will he not repay man according to his work?"* Behold we didn't know this. God says your ignorance is by design. I mean how else can you explain the livid reaction people have to seeing explicit photographic evidence of what takes place during an abortion. Folks get absolutely outraged. They don't get outraged about the procedure itself, they get outraged about the tastelessness, the obscenity of the photos.

I recently watched a Ken Burns documentary on the Vietnam War and it was filled with pictures of broken, torn apart dead bodies. No one complained about the tastelessness of that presentation because no one still clings to a moral ambivalence and a contrived ignorance when it comes to that war. When it comes to the war on the unborn it's a completely different story. Folks demand the right to stay ignorant. I submit to you that anyone who actually witnesses what takes place during an abortion, that is the forcible dismemberment of a living human being while he or she is still inside their mother's womb, if they actually witnessed one, they would be so traumatized by what they saw taking place that they would have an almost instant change of opinion. The point is to remain ignorant. And so bearing public witness is simply an attempt to push back against that ignorance.

And the second reason is to encourage one another. I mean the word "encourage" means literally "to grow or stimulate courage in one another." Our presence is an encouragement to one another, our absence is a discouragement. When the Life Chain first started years ago, there were upwards of 2,000 people in attendance. And like I said, last week after the lunch I scooted over to Middletown, my guess is there was less than a hundred people there, if there was -- if that many, to tell you the truth. That was a great discouragement.

And finally the third point is to encourage myself. You see, for many of you this has been an annual event that you have attended for years, even decades. For all that time you have publicly stood against the ruler of this world because we have the vision. This much we know: *He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there's no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.* And ever since 1973 we've watched as those lies and murders have hardened the hearts, seared the conscience and wounded the spirit of an entire nation. And so in one tiny way through the Life Chain we have publicly declared whose side we're on. I pray every day for God's mercy instead of the judgment we so richly deserve because *God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* I don't know that I've ever

heard of a single heart or mind having been changed by this event but I also know that that knowledge is way beyond my scope. I mean I only know this, I know that God changed my heart and my mind by the power of his Holy Spirit. I know that God showed his love for me while I was still a sinner, so that gives me all the hope and encouragement that I need. And what God asks of us is not that we do what only he can do but that we speak the truth in love. And so today in a very small way we have that opportunity. So I'd like us to take some time this morning to thank God for his mercy and consider joining us in the Life Chain.

*1 Corinthians 11:25 says: In the same manner he also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." So take, and drink.*

This is our heart, hands and feet part and I think it's pretty obvious what heart, hands and feet are today. My encouragement to you, to join us in the Life Chain. My encouragement also if you can't do that, then that you would be at least in prayer for all those who are out there, that God would use us to change hearts and minds and to heal this incredibly wounded nation over this incredibly awful demonic scourge. Let's pray.

*Father, I continue to praise you and thank you for your mercy. I pray literally every day for the mercy that we do not deserve instead of the rich judgment we so richly deserve. Lord, we have slaughtered millions. 53 million at the last count. And Father, I just continue to pray that you would give us yet another day of mercy and that we would use the days that you give us to plead with others, to share the good news, to revel in the incredible privilege that we have. We have the vision. The rest of the world is perishing. Give us the ability to share that vision, I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*