

**Sermon Series: “The Bible and Some Election Issues”**  
**“Abortion”**  
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**Sunday, October 4, 2020**

It has been said that the November 3rd presidential election is one of the most important— perhaps the most important-- election in our nation’s history. I can think of one election which may have had more significance for our nation, and that was the 1864 election between Abraham Lincoln and George McClellan— the candidate from the party that wanted to sue for peace with the Confederates in the summer of 1964, before the end of the Civil War. Nevertheless, we are painfully aware that our nation is increasingly polarized. Let me stress that committed Christians can vote Democrate or Republican and not negate their faith; Christians can emphasize one policy over another. And of course no political party is the savior— that role remains with Jesus. And yet we are called by Jesus to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matthew 5:13-16), and our voting is part of that. It is not my role as your pastor to tell you for which candidate to vote, nor should it be. Then what role should I play as pastor, and what role should you play as laypeople?

I believe a good example was set by the Catholic Archbishop Gregory Aymond. E.g., last month I came across an article in our local newspaper the likes of which I don’t recall ever seeing. It was a guest editorial article by Archbishop Aymond entitled, “How Catholics Should Approach Election Issues” (*Times-Picayune New Orleans Advocate* , September 21, 2020, 4B). I was intrigued. In that article Archbishop Aymond states, “It is our responsibility as disciples of Jesus to look carefully at the platform of each candidate and compare these principles to the teaching of Christ and the Church.” He is exactly right. So in this new sermon series, “The Bible and Some Election Issues”, I invite you to examine with me the teaching of Christ and the Church. I cannot examine all the

issues, but have prayerfully chosen four very important ones for our faith: abortion, racism, gender/sexuality, and socialism/Marxism. Today we address abortion. Archbishop Aymond stated, “Abortion and euthanasia are identified in the bishops’ document as being preeminent issues because it is upon the protection and sanctity of human life within the family unit that all other life issues are built.” Our UM position is that we are against abortion for birth control and gender selection.

My goal in this series is twofold: (1) To help us become better informed on these four issues before we vote; (2) To be able to articulate better the biblical position on these four issues, which will continue to be issues long after the November election.

What I want to do today is first examine where we are today as a nation on the issue of abortion. Then we will take a brief look at where the early church was on abortion, and then look at some key arguments for the pro-choice position and how they relate to the Bible.

In fact, since the last presidential election in 2016 the issue of abortion has become a bigger issue in three ways— even though the number of abortions has decreased in the last few years. The Guttmacher Institute— a pro-choice research group that tallies all abortions in the nation— has reported that in 2017 the total number of abortions in the U.S. was 862,000, down from 926,000 in 2014, and the all-time high of 1.6 million in 1990 (from the NBC News website, “Number of Abortions in U.S. Drops to Lowest Since They Became Legal Nationwide, Report Finds”, September 18, 2019). From what I have read online roughly 20% of all pregnancies in the U.S. are aborted. First, many are saying they want to discontinue the Hyde Amendment, which restricts taxpayer money from paying for abortions. This amendment originated in 1976, three years after the *Roe v. Wade* U.S. Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion, with U.S. House of Representative Henry Hyde from Illinois. This amendment has to be renewed

every year—it is not settled law—and since the 2016 election the former unified effort to continue it has fragmented, even more so today. Second, there has been a movement to have unfettered access to abortion at any stage. This unfettered access to abortion and *even* beyond is now enshrined in New York state. In January, 2019 a new abortion law was signed into existence called the Reproductive Health Act. It makes clear that abortion is unrestricted, even into the third trimester as long as the abortion doctor determines with “reasonable and good-faith judgment” that the abortion will be a protection of the mother’s life or health, with health including the vague conditions of psychological and emotional health. We see this law in a state with one of the highest rates of abortion in the nation, and in New York City where one in three pregnancies end in abortion (“Explainer: What New York’s New Abortion Law Does and Doesn’t Do”, by Sam Sawyer, January, 30, 2019 at the website “American: The Jesuit Review”). This new law allows abortions to be conducted by non-physicians, such as licensed nurse practitioners and physician assistants. Also, this law is open to infanticide, as it eliminates protections from section 4164 of New York’s public health law, which stated that a baby born alive during an abortion had “the protection of New York’s laws. . . Without section 4164, the public health law is now silent on the status of an infant born alive during an abortion” (ibid.). The third way the abortion issue has become bigger today is the recent death of U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg and the current consideration of Amy Coney Barrett, who may well tip the balance of the Supreme Court to overrule *Roe v. Wade*. These three aspects of the abortion issue represent our present circumstance.

What about “Abortion in the first and second centuries AD”? One may wonder whether abortion was even in existence then— could this be an example of new technology we have today that was not considered then? Actually, abortion was known in the ancient world. The Roman emperor Domitian, who

ruled from 81-96 AD, had an affair with his niece Domitia. As Suetonius tells it in *The Twelve Caesars* ("Domitian", 22), Domitian "demonstrated his love for her so openly and ardently that she became pregnant by him and died as the result of an abortion which he forced on her". We do not have in the Old Testament or New Testament a direct word on abortion. However, it was known, and the Apostolic Fathers addressed it. In *The Didache* (dated from the end of the first century AD, perhaps 70 AD, to 150 AD) we read, "you shall not abort a child or commit infanticide" (*The Didache* 2). In *The Epistle of Barnabas* 19 (dated 70-135 AD) we read, "You shall not abort a child nor, again, commit infanticide". So it seems abortion was done in the ancient world, but the early Church was against it, and saw the fetus as a child. Admittedly, the Bible-- Old or New Testaments— does not directly address abortion. I.e., we don't have a command, "Thou shalt not commit abortion."

Nevertheless, the Bible does indirectly address this issue, as we will see as we address "Three common pro-choice arguments considered". The first one goes something like this. "Shouldn't a woman have reproductive freedom over her own body? After all, it is her body. It does not belong to man or anyone else!" E.g., when Brett Kavanaugh was being considered for the U.S. Supreme Court he was asked by one senator on the Judiciary Committee, "Can you think of any laws that give the government the power to make decisions about the male body?" (from *Time*, August 31-September 7, 2020; p. 31). The way one may want to answer this is that a man is not allowed to commit suicide in certain states.. Another way to answer is to say the question is faulty in that it carries an implicit comparison of the male and female body, which comparison is apples and oranges with regard to reproductive capacity. But the point is well-taken. Isn't a pregnancy about the woman's body, and she can do with it whatever she wants? Not for the Christian. READ 1 Corinthians 6:15-20. Once we come to Christ, our bodies are not our own, they now belong to the Lord, and the Holy Spirit resides there. Yet another

way to answer this is that while abortion does involve the woman's body, a strong argument can be made that it involves another person's body as well—the fetus (as Connie Scandiliato has pointed out to me). This last answer brings us to the next pro-choice argument.

The second argument involves the slippery notion of when someone becomes a person with rights. Should we wait until the baby is viable outside the womb? Should we wait until we hear a heartbeat? Should we wait until the baby is actually born? Thanks to Edward Payne, I now see this argument for what it is: an obfuscation. It is an argument meant to confuse and bewilder someone. E.g., the U.S. Fish & Wildlife service website states, “Bald Eagles are no longer an endangered species, but bald and golden eagles are still protected by multiple federal laws, such as the Eagle Act, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the Lacey Act, and other state and municipal protections. Eagles, their feathers and parts, nests, nest trees, and winter/nighttime roosts are all protected by federal laws. The Eagle Act prohibits anyone from taking, possessing, or transporting any eagle or eagle parts (including nests, eggs, feathers, etc) without prior authorization. This includes inactive nests as well as active nests. Activities that directly or indirectly lead to take are prohibited without a permit.” What are the penalties? “Under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act the first criminal offense is a misdemeanor with maximum penalty of one year in prison and \$100,000 fine for an individual (\$200,000 for an organization). The second offense becomes a felony with maximum penalty of 2 years in prison and \$250,000 fine for individual (\$500,000 for an “organization” such as a business).” So, is the eagle egg an eagle? According to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service it basically is. If this is so for eagles' eggs, how much more is it for humans made in God's image? READ Genesis 1:26-28. READ also Matthew 5:21-26, where we see Jesus not weakening the command not to murder, but strengthening it, making it more strenuous.

The third pro-choice argument we will consider goes like this. “If Roe vs. Wade is repealed, then we will be left with unsafe abortions— back alley, coat hanger abortions. We need abortion protected so we can keep them safe.” There are two basic fallacies here. No abortion is 100% safe— women even in abortion clinics can die— and have died— from the procedure, though this is rare. Nevertheless, a physical toll is taken on the woman’s body in abortion. E.g., in the movie “Unplanned”, Abbsy Johnson is shown having an abortion by pill, and she is violently ill and bleeding profusely from this. Also, an abortion can reduce a woman’s ability to get pregnant later in life. And while most women usually survive abortions from a physical perspective, from an emotional perspective women often carry deep psychological and emtional scars the rest of their lives thinking about the child that could have been. It seems abortion contradicts the natural, God-given mothering inistinct found in women. The second fallacy to this argument is that we don’t make laws based on what people would do to break them, but rather we make laws because we sense that certain behavior should not be done, it is injurious to the person and/or society. E.g., we don’t remove laws outlawing heroin because we are worried if it is illegal it would drive people to use tainted heroin or unclean needles.

“So, how should Christians view abortion?” I would like to say three things. First, God is gracious— He is not out to condemn us, but to save us. READ John 3:17. If you have had an abortion, there is plenty of forgiveness. Second, we should do all we can to protect the baby as well as the mother. I agree with Archbishop Aymond, that life is one of those “preeminent issues” because the life of the family unit is that upon which all other life issues are founded. Thus, abortion is a major issue for the Christian when voting. But the Church needs to reach out to those women for whom a pregnancy is dire issue financially and in other ways. I have read that perhaps one of the reasons abortion is so high in New York City is that the cost of living there is very high. Finally, we can also

vote on November 3rd for something the “Love Life Amendment”. The Love Life Vote Yes Amendment does two main things.

- (1) Places our long-standing Louisiana pro-life ethic in our Louisiana Constitution— i.e., there is no constitutional right to abortion in Louisiana.
- (2) Ensures that state courts, whether now or when the U.S. Supreme Court overturns *Roe v. Wade*, cannot establish a “right to abortion” or the tax funding of abortion in Louisiana. Please note that exceptions like rape, incest, and the life of the mother are not an issue here— the state legislature would have to consider those exceptions.

When voters go into the voting booth on November 3 2020, you will read this on the ballot:

“Do you support an amendment declaring that, to protect human life, a right to abortion and the funding of abortion shall not be found in the Louisiana Constitution?”

If the ballot measure succeeds with a majority vote, the following language would be added to the Louisiana Constitution under Article I, Section 20.1:

“To protect human life, nothing in this constitution shall be construed to secure or protect a right to abortion or require the funding of abortion.”

While I don’t, and cannot, endorse a candidate, I do endorse the Love Life Amendment, and encourage you to vote for it.