Preaching Series: Words of Wisdom in a Whacked Out (Crazy World)
Sermon Title: The Sanctity of Life

Text: **Proverbs 24:11-12 -- Rescue those who are being taken away to death; hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter. 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?**

Introduction: In the mid-1960s, **Obstetrician Dr. Bernard Nathanson** performed numerous illegal abortions (5,000 by his own estimate) including one on his girlfriend that resulted in the termination of the life of his own child. Later as **the director of the Center for Reproductive and Sexual Health in New York City for two years**, he oversaw another 60,000 of them. As one who had campaigned vigorously for the legalization of abortion, he believed that his intentions were GOOD AND REASONABLE. After all, during his residency at the New York Women's Hospital ten years earlier he had seen hundreds of emergency cases resulting from illegal abortions that had gone bad. Many of those women, who were poor and could not afford to fake a miscarriage and get an abortion at a modern medical facility, arrived hemorrhaging badly, running high fevers and in shock. Some suffered massive infections that resulted in sterility while a few even died. **It was this inequity that drove Dr. Nathanson to campaign for the legalization of abortion**.

While we can commend his compassion for these women, most Christ-followers today (*although certainly not all*) would argue that the practice of terminating the life of the unborn is immoral and denies what the Scriptures teach about the sanctity of human life. By the way, "sanctity" means "holiness" and refers to the biblical teaching that every human life, including the preborn, is holy unto the Lord. **Where does Scripture teach this?** Here are FOUR PASSAGES that teach children in the womb are viewed as human beings. (**1**) **Psalm 139:13-16** says, "**For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance (EMBRYO); in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there were none of them." Note the Psalmist acknowledges God's handiwork in fashioning him in the womb**. The Hebrew word translated as "***unformed substance***" is the word for "EMBRYO," a word which recognizes the early stages of human development; **(2) Psalm 51:5 -- Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me**. In this passage, King David acknowledges HIS OWN sinful heart that was in him from the very point of conception. "***How can a mass of tissue be held accountable to God?" Only a real person can be judged for his sinful nature;*** **(3) Luke 1:41-44 -- 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 cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy**. Since John the Baptist's role was to prepare the Jews for the coming of Christ, his response to Mary demonstrates that ***he was already fulfilling his God-ordained purpose*** while still inside her womb**; (4) Exodus 21:22-25 -- "When men strive together and hit a pregnant woman, so that her children come out, but there is no harm, the one who hit her shall**

surely be fined, as the woman's husband shall impose on him, and he shall pay as the judges determine. But if there is harm, then you shall pay life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe. The normal reading of this passage makes it clear that God considers the life inside a mother's womb to have value equal to those who have already been born. That's why He made provision to protect it.

In light of these passages, we might wonder why Dr. Nathanson wouldn't agree with something so plain and obvious to us from the pages of God's holy Word. The answer to that question is simple: **He didn't share the same belief about where life begins**. And why not? In the decades of the 60s and 70s, **Dr. Nathanson** was not a Christian who lived by a belief system that was formed by the Scriptures. Rather he was **a humanist who believed mankind to be the only source of morality and that man's highest achievement is to improve the human condition**. From his point of view, ***it was wrong to expose women plagued by poverty to great harm just because they carried an embryo in their wombs that would one day become a human being.*** Why should they have to put their lives on the line simply because they didn't have the same kind of financial resources or opportunities as more well-to-do women? **Dr. Nathanson saw this as terribly wrong and felt compelled to do something about it**.

This morning, in our 7th message in the series, "**Words of Wisdom in a Whacked Out (Crazy) World**", I want to look at this very volatile and divisive issue and explain why God is always on the side of LIFE! The reason why we are at opposite ends on this very important issue is because of differing worldviews. NOW I'M GOING TO ASK YOU TO PAY CLOSE ATTENTION AS THIS IS A VERY IMPORTANT TOPIC CONSIDERING WHERE OUR COUNTRY AND THE WORLD ARE TODAY. IT IS NOT, HOWEVER, AN EASY ONE TO UNDERSTAND! A **"worldview"** is **the sum total of our beliefs about the world; the big picture that directs our daily decisions and actions**. **Chuck Colson**, in his book ***How Now Shall We Live***, argues that every worldview must address three essential questions: **(1)** Where did we come from and who are we?: **(2)** What has gone wrong with the world? **(3)** And what can we do to fix it? I invite you to join me this morning as we consider these questions from the perspective of ***the Christian worldview*** which is, of course, found in God's revelation to us in the Bible.

Where did we come from and who are we? This raises two questions that need to be answered in any worldview – the questions of our origin and our identity.

- **The question of our origin**. How did we all get here? The world, as you know, is divided as to the answer it gives. Those who hold to some form of **NATURALISM**—the view that everything can be explained in terms of natural causes and laws—are in conflict with those who hold to some for of **SUPERNATURALISM**—the belief that a supernatural agent intervenes in the course of natural laws. Obviously, as Christians, we hold to THE LATTER EXPLANATION and believe that everything including mankind was **CREATED BY GOD** (**Genesis 1:1 -- In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth; Colossians 1:15-16 -- He (Jesus) is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him, FOR HIS PURPOSES which always end with the glory of God** (**1 Corinthians 10:31 -- Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God**). We also believe that He continues to **SUSTAIN CREATION**, preventing it from falling into chaos (**Colossians 1:17 -- And he is before all things, and**

in him all things hold together). **THESE BELIEFS ARE SHARED BY THE VAST MAJORITY OF CHRISTIANS AROUND THE WORLD.**

- **The question of our identity**. This is the "**Who are we?**" part. The Bible teaches that we are God's image-bearers (**Genesis 1:26-27 -- God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and 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**). The Hebrew word for "***image***" means ***a representative figure***. It was used to describe a carved likeness of an animal or a person. ***In some significant way, we are made to be like God and to represent Him to our world***. Since the Bible doesn't spell out exactly what this means we can try to draw some inferences from the Scriptures. **As God rules over all His creation** (**Job 25:2**), **so we have delegated authority to rule over every living creature** (**Genesis 1:28—And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth"**). **We are social beings created with the capacity to love and be loved** (*God created us as man and woman. God is also a social being in His own godhead*—**See Genesis 1:26; Matthew 3:16-17**). **We are responsible beings** (**Genesis 2:16-17 -- And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die"**) **just as God is a responsible being dispensing justice (Psalm 37:28 -- For the Lord loves the just and will not forsake his faithful ones. They will be protected forever).**

  What do our answers to these two questions mean for us? We have been *created by God* which gives us value, *with a purpose* that gives us meaning and *with accountability* that motivates us to do what is right.

What has gone wrong with the world? Each worldview has to address the question of THE HUMAN DILEMMA. **Why do war and suffering, disease and death exist in our world**? **Christians must provide an answer to this question since we know that while God values us, gives us purpose and meaning and motivation to live for Him, still many choose to live self-centered rather than God-centered lives**. ***Our answer is a simple one***: the introduction of sin with all of its evil consequences into the world occurred when Adam and Eve rebelled against God (**See Genesis 3:11**). **Their disobedience brought them into CONFLICT WITH GOD** (**See Genesis 3:23; Isaiah 59:2 -- your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear**), **WITH ONE ANOTHER** and **THE CREATED ORDER.** Their new and natural tendency to sin was passed on to every succeeding generation (**Romans 5:12 -- Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned**), so that we are all corrupted by it (**See Galatians 5:19-20**) and enslaved to it (**See Ephesians 2:1-3**). **This is why it should not surprise us when we see the effects of sin in our world**. I'm reminded of the man who took great pride in caring for his lawn. One spring, however, it grew full of dandelions and try as he might he simply couldn't get rid of them. Finally, he contacted the Department of Agriculture, explaining what he had done and asking what he should do next. Their reply was short and to the point, "***Get used to them***!" Christians believe that sin is here to stay until just before the renewal of all things at the final judgment when "**death**," the wage of sin, will itself be thrown into the Lake of Fire

(**Revelation 21:4 -- He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away"**).

What can we do to fix it? After attempting to answer the questions surrounding one's origin, identity and the human dilemma, each worldview must then tackle **the question of redemption**. **Or to put it another way, how does one's view of the world provide salvation from pain, disease, war, suffering and death?** The Christian response is the gospel of Jesus Christ so eloquently stated by the Apostle Paul in **Ephesians 2:3-10**. God, in His grace makes those who are dead in their trespasses and sin alive in Christ through faith in His atoning sacrifice on the cross. We are transferred from the dominion of darkness to the kingdom of His Son (**See Colossians 1:13-14**). **NOW,** we who have been rescued from death are called to be living examples of the incomparable riches of His grace expressed in His kindness to us in Christ Jesus. **This transformation does not occur because of anything we do for God, but because of what He has done for us. He makes sinful people holy people who are then capable of doing good works**. That is what we believe about the question of mankind's redemption.

Let me conclude this message by providing three reasons why should we concern ourselves with understanding worldviews. R**. C. Sproul**, in his book ***Lifeviews***, argues that **our job is to make the invisible reign of Jesus visible to others who are not living out the Christian worldview**. The last question the disciples put to Christ just prior to His ascension was, "***Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom of Israel*** (**Acts 1:6**)?" Rather than answer their question, Jesus told them not to worry about it, but instead to be His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the remotest part of the earth. That is our calling: **to make the invisible Christ visible to a world that desperately needs Him**.

- ***In the context of a worldview where Christ is invisible***, **PEOPLE ARE DEVALUED**. I'm not saying that competing worldviews declare that human beings have no worth, but when we deny the image of God in mankind and the value placed upon us by our Lord when He sacrificed His own life to redeem us, any other view only lowers our worth.
- ***In the context of a worldview where Christ is invisible***, **PEOPLE ARE DISTRESSED**. With God out of the picture, those in authority are not accountable. They are free to use any means necessary to remold people to ***fit their notion of how things ought to be***. Very often this results in human suffering.
- ***In the context of a worldview where Christ is invisible***, **PEOPLE ARE DYING**. Christ is the one who brings life, eternal and abundant. Those who live and perish without Him know only the pain and agony of separation from God. "***The wages of sin is death*** (**Romans 6:23**)."

Now, all of this brings me back to our passage for this morning from Proverbs 24:11-12. Let me read it to you again. **Rescue those who are being taken away to death; hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter. 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?** **WHAT IS IT SAYING TO US?** That human life, whether in the womb, or outside of it matters to God. We cannot sit idly by and let everything play out based on a naturalistic worldview where God and His Word do not come into play. IN THAT KIND OF A WORLD, LIFE HAS DECREASINGLY LESS VALUE. This is true whether we're talking about the unborn or any of the 8.2 billion people who are alive today in the world. As you know, there has been a rapid descent into

moral darkness that has been evident for decades in our post-modern world, but no more so than in **2023. Listen to these numbers related to deaths by unnatural causes in 2023 starting with ABORTIONS worldwide** (**73,000,000**); **the number of people who died of STARVATION** (**9,000,000 people**); **collateral deaths from WARS** (**violence against civilians accounting for 20% of all deaths in wars that were waged**); **and MURDER** (**on average 52 people are intentionally murdered every hour**). Factor into that last statistic the 712 people who died in mass shootings and another 2,692 others who were wounded **last year in our country alone** and **it doesn't take a genius to realize that the value of human life is definitely on the decline**. IF WE DON'T DO SOMETHING, THESE NUMBERS WILL ONLY GROW! THE TIME FOR US TO TAKE ACTION IS NOW. WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO? WILL YOU HELP PROVIDE MEALS FOR THE HUNGRY AT HOME AND ABROAD? WILL YOU BECOME A FOSTER PARENT AND HELP A YOUNG PERSON WHO MIGHT OTHERWISE GO DOWN A DIFFERENT PATH IN LIFE? WILL YOU COME TO OUR PRAYER EVENT THIS SATURDAY AND TAKE YOUR STAND AGAINST ABORTION? GOD IS NOT LOOKING FOR EXCUSES. HE'S LOOKING FOR US, THE VISIBLE REPRESENTATION OF CHRIST IN THE WORLD, TO DO SOMETHING.

At the beginning of this message, I shared a little bit about **Dr. Bernard Nathanson**, one of the champions of a woman's right to abortion in the 60s and the early 70s. In **1973, Dr. Nathanson** was exposed to a new technology that began to transform his thinking about the unborn…**the ultrasound machine**. When for the first time he was able to look inside the womb of a pregnant woman and see a baby boy with all four chambers of his heart beating, with eyes and a mouth and fully formed hands folded over his face, that **he began to refer to it no longer as an embryo or fetus but as a baby**. While this didn't keep him from being an advocate for abortion it did provide him with the technology to witness one. Not long after he witnessed one and was so horrified by what he saw that he turned the tape into a film called "***The Silent Scream***" instantly transforming the nature of the abortion debate while at the same time causing a kind of internal silent scream to plague his own life. For two more decades he searched for some way to resolve his inner conflict. Finally ***in 1996, Dr. Bernard Nathanson*** knelt before the cross of Christ and became a Christian. He later said, "**All I could think about while I was kneeling at the altar was my bar mitzvah. That day I was so afraid. Today I felt all that fear fall away. I experienced sheer grace**." Once Dr. Nathanson began to embrace the Christian worldview everything began to change for him when for the first time he started to see the world through the lens of scripture. **That's what the right worldview can do for anyone who embraces it -- AND I PROMISE, IT WILL MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE.**