***VOICELESS Sermon Week 3***

*Our Battle Is Not Against Flesh and Blood*

55:58 - 57:32

For the last couple of weeks, we have been diving in to analyze and apply clips from this movie, *Voiceless*, which deals with the Church’s responsibility and hopeful actions against abortion. It is a heavy and moving story, and it is one that challenges us to take realistic action and to become a “voice for the voiceless.” As your pastor, today I feel a special burden to examine this scene with you so that we can assess our heart as a church, realign our priorities, remind ourselves of the eternal battle we are in, and push forward to make real change happen and bring forth the kingdom of God.

Let’s pray: *Father, let us be honest with ourselves and with You today. We hope to be the Church as Your bride, who loves Your heart and who pursues Your righteousness. God, we know that this is a difficult and sensitive topic for many, and we pray that Your Spirit would be present with us as we have this discussion so that we are comforted, empowered, and inspired to do Your work on Earth. Thank You for the gift of forgiveness through Your Son so that we can be redeemed and be vessels of Your gospel to the people in our lives.*

So, we have talked about this at the beginning of our sermons for the last two weeks and we are going to talk about it again. Just as the pastor says in this clip, there are likely several of you in this church who have the marks of abortion on your past. But unlike what he suggests in the movie, we *are* going to talk about the issue today. Not because we hope to scare you or shame you or make you re-live your past, but because we believe God has a big heart for this issue and we believe you are forgiven and free to be a part of the fight against it.

This movie makes it clear that abortion is wrong and that we have the responsibility to fight against the murder of unborn children. The film does not mince words. And I do not want to mince words with you: abortion is evil; it is a sin. **But** if you are here today and you have had an abortion or have been part of the decision to have an abortion (I’m speaking to all of you, because men are oftentimes equally or even more responsible for these decisions), and you know the heart of God and have accepted His *eternal* forgiveness through belief in Jesus by grace, then the Lord does not condemn you. His forgiveness is eternal, thus wiping out the consequences of sin past, present, and future. You are not marked as murderer, as sinner, or as unclean. You are marked as pure, and we believe that God has mercy on the innocent, including on children who have no voice and no say.

Similarly, I want to remind you that shaming, pointing fingers, mocking, or condemning *anyone* is a sin. If you are or have been one of those among the Christian Church who has chosen to publicly condemn people for their sins, especially on this topic of abortion, or on sexual immorality, then you have been a hypocrite and you are among those who blemish the world’s view of Jesus. You are one of the ones whom Jesus is referring to when He calls the Pharisees a “brood of vipers.” You use the shame of others to make yourself feel more holy and all the while you are walking in the opposite direction of Jesus. But just as those who have been involved in this sin of abortion are completely forgiven and told to go about their way and sin no more, so are you forgiven through faith by the grace of Jesus. You are not marked as hypocrite or as one who casts shade on others. So go, and leave your life of sin.

Again, if you have dealt with ANY sin that this series deals with, understand that God does not condemn you if you have come to Him and asked for forgiveness.

In Ephesians 6, Paul gives us his famous passage talking about the armor of God, but in verse 12, he slides in this big truth for us: “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (ESV). Today we are going to talk about some hard truths in the Church. All of these things that we talk about will, in the end, relate back to this verse and the reality of spiritual warfare.

In the clip, we see the main character, Jesse, arguing with the pastor of the church about their priorities in outreach ministry. The pastor does not want to get involved with a stance against the abortion clinic that is across the street. Jesse has already been reprimanded by the police for overstepping his boundaries. But this pastor makes the mistake that *far too many* ministry leaders make, which is to step back, concede to what the country’s law says, throw up his hands and say, “There’s nothing else we can do.” He hides behind the argument that taking a stand would be bad for the Church. Friends, I never want to be the type of leader or pastor that makes this mistake, and I pray that we hold each other to a standard that knows this is not okay.

Last week, we talked a little bit about how the Church does have a place in the political arena and how we have a corporate responsibility to care for those who need help. Let me remind you of something: We do not have the luxury of picking and choosing which issues are important to God. We do not get to choose which issues to focus on and which to turn our heads from and pretend like they aren’t a problem at all. Throughout the last several decades, the Church has chosen many hot topics to focus its energy, but I am not convinced that we have ever done an effective job of fighting against the issues that we seem to care about the most.

Let’s go back to the verse I want to focus on today. We are fighting “against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness.” Friends, we live in a dark time. We live in a world full of lies about who we are, what sin is, and what we can do about it. And Satan is at the heart of these lies. Part of following Jesus in this life is being filled with the Holy Spirit so that we can clearly separate truth from lies and follow the truth so that we can pursue righteousness.

Isaiah 44:24-25 (ESV) says,

“Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer,  
who formed you from the womb:  
“I am the LORD, who made all things,  
who alone stretched out the heavens,  
who spread out the earth by myself,  
who frustrates the signs of liars  
and makes fools of [false prophets],  
who turns wise men back  
and makes their knowledge foolish.”

This passage has a direct correlation to the fight against abortion and the sabotage on the value of life that we have seen in our world. God, as the Creator of *all things,* makes a point to show you that He has *formed you from the womb*. I don’t think I need to explain how that relates to this issue. God knit you together and He had *you* in mind when He created the Earth, and He had the lives of every unborn child in His mind, as well. He recognizes, through the mouth of the prophet Isaiah, that there will be liars, false prophets, and foolish men that will try to destroy His creation, including the creation of life. He says that He **frustrates** their teachings, makes them fools, and turns them back.

Church, God is asking for your help in this.

Notice that the pastor in this scene says that he believes “this is a fight we cannot win.” And even more, he says that if we try to fight it, we will compromise our Church! This is simply not true and I want to give you a few reasons why.

*Reasons why this* ***is*** *a fight we can win:*

1. Protecting children, women, and the powerless are important issues to God, as seen directly through the actions of Jesus.
2. If God is for us in our fight against this, then who can be against us?
3. As a citizen of this country, you have the right to speak up for what you believe in and bring change to the political, social, and personal injustices at hand.

If you believe this is a fight you cannot win, then you must believe that we have no power to win any other fight against evil. With that logic, we might as well succumb to the evils of idolatry, racism, sexual immorality, and hatred. With that reasoning, we might as well throw up our hands and say, “Oh well! The world is just evil so we should give up and stop caring for others!”

This is bad reasoning. If we are to follow the life model that Jesus set out for us, then when we see injustice in our world, we should be laying down our very lives and sacrificing everything we have to protect God’s people.

But instead of addressing God’s priorities, we create our own priorities. Jesse, the main character, points out a deeply painful but very true reality of the American Church. We worry far too much about our outward appearance in the community because we don’t want people to stop filling seats at church on Sundays. We hold our tongues on real issues because we don’t want to offend anybody and scare them off!

Let me remind you of an important truth, and I spoke on this verse a couple of weeks ago: “Salvation belongs to the LORD” (Jonah 2:9, ESV). If we convince ourselves that it is up to us to persuade people and to soften hearts and to bring them into salvation, then we are wrong. Believing that lie will lead us to care about our appearance and our political stance, it will make us fear being seen as radical or as activists, and it will cripple us from doing the work that God is calling His Church to do in this world.

Is the fear of being or appearing “radical” holding you back from God’s call on your life? We have to challenge ourselves to step out of this fear. Here are a few things that we can do to stir up our passions for things God is calling us to:

1. Ask God to stir and create passions within you to protect those in need and to bring His kingdom here to Earth.
2. Recognize what is right and what is wrong.
   * When people’s hearts are changed by the gospel, those hearts begin to beat in new rhythms. These are the people who, renewed in Christ, begin to see with fresh eyes what is wrong, because the gospel has taught them what is right.
3. Step up to the call and take action when God is calling you.
   * If we ignore God’s call for us to act, He doesn’t get to accomplish His purposes through us. He grants you a free will so that you, as an individual, can be used to fulfill the call to be salt and light and to bring His righteousness to our world.
4. Fight against the fear of activism or of appearing as radical, and recognize that God asks us to live a radical lifestyle, just as Jesus modeled morally and culturally radical beliefs for His day.

So, if our fight is not against flesh and blood, but against the spiritual powers of evil, how can we take real action while we are still in the flesh? We will address that in greater detail next week but for now, we need to see our world and our enemy for what they are, and we need to recognize that the fight we are facing is one that we *can* win.

How can you begin winning this fight this week? You can write to your legislator and tell them that you see a grave danger and evil that is a crime against real humans who have yet to be born. That you see the trauma and the danger that abortion poses to the mother, as well as the death sentence that it is for the child. You can begin having conversations about why this is an important issue to God. You can lovingly and truthfully rebuke your neighbors and coworkers when they present illogical arguments that are pro-abortion.

You can take on the label of pro-life, and you can understand that this is more than a label, it is a lifestyle. Pro-life means more than condemning abortion, it requires us to provide help to pregnant women in crisis, to offer real aid to them as they wrestle with this tough decision, and to promote a culture of adoption and of breaking generational bonds so that people in the midst of this decision can learn to be good mothers and fathers, regardless of their situation or what they have been told or modeled throughout their upbringing.

You can, if you know someone who might be struggling with this, offer real help and resources. You can let them know that your family will help them, perhaps with finances or housing, or if that is not appropriate or helpful in their situation, then offer help with babysitting, encouragement, and safety however you might be able to provide them.

You can pray diligently that the Lord will begin to soften your heart and demolish your bias against this struggle. You might have a specific image in your head of what kind of people struggle with this issue. You might believe that only young, promiscuous women with absent (or unknown) baby daddies have abortions. But you are wrong and you need to eliminate that bias. Women of all ages, married and not married, low and high income, of every race, have dealt with this issue. If you choose to believe that only a specific “type” of person deals with this, then you are not recognizing the size or the reality of this issue, and you are not preparing yourself to bring the amount of grace and reconciliation that needs to be brought to our world in this.

Lastly, you can pray that the Holy Spirit would enter into the lives of women and men who believe that abortion is not evil, that their hearts would be changed, and that they would be inspired to be a voice for the voiceless and a power for the powerless.

Let’s pray: *Father, we come to You and humbly ask You to empower us to make a difference in our world on this issue. We know that Your heart breaks for all people who are wrestling with decisions like this one and we accept the challenge to reach out to them so that they will know the truth of Your gospel. Bring change to our world through the power of Your Spirit, and remind us that this is a fight we absolutely can win, through Your power and Your power alone. Amen.*