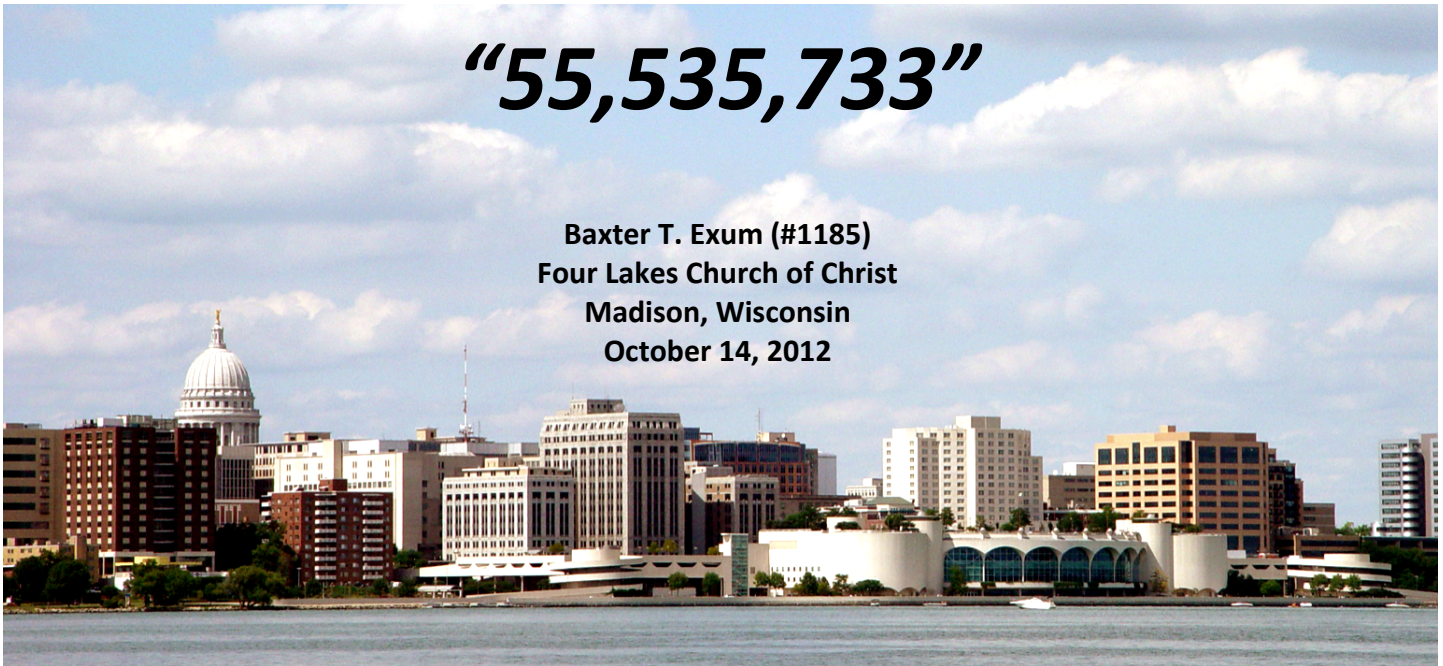


# “55,535,733”

Baxter T. Exum (#1185)  
Four Lakes Church of Christ  
Madison, Wisconsin  
October 14, 2012



Many years ago near the coast of Syria, archaeologists discovered what was basically a cemetery, and in one of the underground burial chambers, they discovered a number of funeral jars containing the bodies of young children who had been buried alive. We discover something like that, and we are shocked by what we see. We look at those who would bury children alive, and we have to conclude that they must have been some of the most evil people to ever walk the face of the earth.

We look in the Bible, and we find some very disturbing descriptions of God’s people actually doing some of the same things in their worship of several pagan gods. We think, for example, of the worship of Molech. In 2 Kings 17:17, among other things, we read about how **“...they sacrificed their sons and daughters in the fire.”** In our Wednesday evening class, we have studied the ancient practice of child sacrifice. The statue of Molech was shaped in the form of a human, but it had the head of a bull. It was made out of metal, it was hollowed out so they could light a fire in the statue from behind, and we know from ancient sources that infants were then placed on the outstretched hands of the statue. In order to drown out the cries of those innocent children, the people would play flutes, and they would beat on their drums. God’s people, then, had fallen to the point where they were killing their own children and justifying it in the name of religion. The practice continued until King Josiah came along – only eight years old when he took office, but he eventually brought the child sacrifice to an end and turned the location into a perpetually burning trash heap. It was this burning heap that the Lord later used as an illustration of hell [Dugger, Tracy; *The Southwesterner*; July 22, 2001].

As shocked as we might be by something like this, I would suggest that these ancient people have nothing on us in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. According to the most conservative estimates, researchers tell us that more than 55 million children have been aborted in the United States since the Roe vs. Wade decision unleashed a river of blood on this nation. I checked the figures this morning, and since this past Friday afternoon, the number has gone up by another 6,431. This morning, I would like for us to consider a sermon request that comes from these 55 million children. You might remember that after Cain killed his brother Abel, God approached Cain and said, **“The voice of your brother’s blood is crying to me from the ground.”** Certainly the blood of more than 55 million innocent children can also say something to us this morning. To put this in perspective, drop side cribs have been outlawed in this nation because 32 children died over a period of 10 years. More children than that have been aborted since I stood up here a few minutes ago.

I realize that this is a sensitive issue. I realize that with the statistics the way they are, there may very well be several here in this room who have been affected by this in a very personal way. I also realize that through the years several of our young people have asked me for advice – for themselves, and also wondering what they can say or do to persuade a friend not to have an abortion. We are studying a topic, therefore, that can have some very practical and life-saving applications. In more than 12 years, we have not covered this subject here at this congregation. That is not okay. It is important for us understand what the Bible teaches on this issue.

First of all, I'd like for us to look at what the Bible says about life before birth. Then, I would like for us to just briefly consider a few objections. And then finally, I'd like for us to answer the question: What can we personally do? We will not go into the gruesome descriptions of what happens in our local abortion clinic – those details need to be known and should be studied on our own, but this morning I would simply like for us to study what the will of God is on this matter – What does He think, and what does He want us to do? And as we study, I am going to share a number of images of children in the womb. Back before my kids were born, we had these dark and murky images that almost looked like an x-ray, but technology has certainly progressed quite a bit over the past 10-15 years, and I will be sharing some of those images as we study.

I. **But first of all, let us please answer the question: WHAT DOES THE BIBLE HAVE TO SAY ON THIS ISSUE? And here at the beginning, I would like to give just a brief overview of a number of Scriptures.**

A. **One of the first and most basic ideas we need to consider here is that human life is sacred.**

In the creation, God gave the human race a part of Himself. We find that basic concept in Genesis 1:26, where God said, ***“Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness....”*** Now it's interesting that God uses that statement just a few chapters later (in Genesis 9:6) as He establishes a rule – Genesis 9:6, ***“Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man.”*** In other words, back in those days right after the flood, if someone were to murder another human being, that person would need to give up his own life – not because his life isn't valuable, but because the first person's life was valuable. As the verse explains, ***“For in the image of God He made man.”*** When someone takes another person's life, he is destroying a being that was made in the image of God, or as one person has put it: He is murdering God in effigy. With some of the recent unrest in the Middle East, we know what it means for someone to be murdered in effigy. We have seen life-size images of our president dragged through the streets and burned. In a similar way, when someone sheds innocent blood, he or she is murdering God in effigy – God is being murdered in some sense, in that the victim was made in God's image. We learn from the beginning of the Bible, therefore, that human life is sacred. Human life is special because God says that it is special.

Perhaps some of you have seen it illustrated in this way: Friday afternoon I stopped by the UW Credit Union near our house, and I asked for the most perfect \$20 bill that they had there. They dug through their drawers, and this is what they came up with. It is crispy. It is perfect. It looks like it has never been folded. If I would offer this bill to you today, who would take it? But what if I did this to it? [CRUMPLED] Would any of you be willing to take it now? What if I were to put it on the floor and step on it? What if I put it through the laundry? What if I leave it outside in the rain for a while? I am assuming that some of you would still be interested. It is valuable not because it is crispy, not because it is clean, not because it is perfect, not because it has never been folded, but it is valuable because its creator (the government of the United States of America) says that it is valuable! In a similar way, all human life is valuable because God says that it is valuable. Life is sacred and special because God tells us that it is.

To me, it is interesting that we as a nation, though, have drifted so far away from God (we have been so affected by evolution, our politics have affected our faith...instead of our faith affecting our politics) that it is now against the law to destroy the egg of an eagle (you can be fined up to \$250,000), but it is legal (it is acceptable) in the eyes of our government to destroy a human life in the womb. We are living in a messed-up, sinful world. The Scriptures remind us, though, that life is sacred.

- B. There is a second basic idea we can learn from the Scriptures, and that is: God is equally concerned about human life before birth and human life after the point of birth; in fact, there is no distinction.**

And to illustrate, let's go back to an interesting example in Genesis 25 (p. 38). In Genesis 25, the Bible uses the standard, everyday, regular word for "**children**" to refer to the unborn twins, Jacob and Esau. Even before they were born, they were known to God as living personalities. Please look with me at Genesis 25:21-23, "**Isaac prayed to the Lord on behalf of his wife, because she was barren; and the Lord answered him and Rebekah his wife conceived. But the children struggled together within her; and she said, 'If it is so, why then am I this way?' So she went to inquire of the Lord. The Lord said to her, 'Two nations are in your womb; and two peoples will be separated from your body; and one people shall be stronger than the other; and the older shall serve the younger.'**" Notice: Jacob and Esau were known by God (and even had distinct and separate personalities) even before they were born.

The same principle is illustrated in one of the great Old Testament prophets. In Jeremiah 1:5 (p. 1176), God spoke to Jeremiah and said, "**Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations.**" So we see that God chose Jeremiah to be a prophet even before he was born. Please consider a thought question: If Jeremiah's mother had taken his life sometime between conception and birth, how would God have viewed that?

One of the most famous passages that gives us some insight into life before birth can be found in Psalm 139 (p. 993). And in these verses that we are about to read, we'll see that God not only recognizes life inside the mother's womb, but He is actually personally involved in the development that takes place. Please notice Psalm 139:13-16, where King David was praising God and said,

**13 For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother's womb.**

**14 I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;  
Wonderful are Your works, and my soul knows it very well.**

**15 My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret,  
And skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth;**

**16 Your eyes have seen my unformed substance;  
And in Your book were all written the days that were ordained for me,  
When as yet there was not one of them.**

Maybe you picked up on the words "**unformed substance**" in verse 16. You can look that word up, and in Hebrew, the word is literally translated as "**embryo**." Today, we use the term to refer to the stage between conception and eight weeks. The way I look at verse 16, then, is that God looked at King David during those first eight weeks, God looked at King David when he was no more than an inch long, and God knew that David was David! Not only that, but God guided that process, "**...You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother's womb.**"

In the New Testament, we also have a number of interesting passages, starting with several verses in Luke 1 (p. 1595). Remember: Mary and Elizabeth were related. Elizabeth got pregnant with John the Baptist about six months before Mary became pregnant with the Lord. In Luke 1:41, Mary and Elizabeth met, and the Bible says, ***“When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.”*** That right there is interesting! In the womb, John the Baptist got near to the Lord, and John did a little flip! But I want us to flip ahead to the next chapter, to Luke 2:12, where the shepherds were told by an angel that they would find ***“a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”*** Did you catch that? John was referred to as a ***“baby”*** in his mother’s womb, and the Lord is referred to as a ***“baby”*** in the manger – the same word is used! As far as the word ***“baby”*** is concerned, there is no distinction between being in the womb or out of the womb! Of course today, we refer to it as a ***“fetus”*** before it’s born and we call it a ***“baby”*** after it’s born. What some people don’t know, however, is that ***“fetus”*** is simply the Latin word for ***“baby”***! I guess if we use the word ***“fetus”*** we’re being all scientific, and it is easier to destroy a ***“fetus”*** than a ***“baby”*** (not admitting that they are the same). In the Bible as well, a baby is just as much a baby before being born as it is after the birth takes place.

We could say something similar about the word ***“son.”*** In Luke 1:36, the angel told Mary, ***“And behold, even your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age; and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month.”*** And then, a few verses later (in Luke 1:57), we find that Elizabeth ***“brought forth a son.”*** The same word is used to refer to John – from the moment he was conceived all the way through his birth and beyond. And to me, that is powerful – Elizabeth conceived a ***“son.”*** John was Elizabeth’s ***“son”*** from the moment of his conception. As soon as he was conceived, even as an embryo, John was her ***“son.”*** The same can be said of the Lord over in Matthew 1:20 where the angel told Joseph not to be afraid to take Mary as his wife, ***“...for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.”*** Jesus was the Lord God in Mary’s womb from the moment of conception.

**C. So now we face a question: If human life really is sacred, and if the Bible makes no distinction between life before birth and life after birth, then how does God view abortion?**

In Proverbs 6:17-18, we find a list of seven things that are an abomination to God, and ***“hands that shed innocent blood”*** are on that list. Certainly, no one is more innocent than an unborn baby. The bottom line, therefore, is that abortion is murder. It is not murder just because somebody may be offended by it. It is not murder just because one political party happens to be against it. But it is murder because the Bible tells us so. Human life is sacred, that which is in the womb is human life, and when we combine these two principles, we understand the seriousness of what we’re studying.

**II. Of course, at this point, people start thinking about OBJECTIONS – at this point, people start thinking, “Yes, but what about this, this, and this?”**

And again, we understand that this is a sensitive issue, but I would suggest that nearly every objection can be answered and resolved when we understand that we are dealing with a human life.

A year or so ago, for example, I was talking to one woman who defended abortion by saying that it prevents unwanted, abused, and neglected children. But think about that. Does abortion prevent child abuse? Let’s apply that line of reasoning to spousal abuse. Would anyone suggest that an abuser kill his spouse to prevent her from being abused in the future? You see, we need to remember what the Lord says about life in the womb. Shedding innocent blood does not prevent abuse and neglect – it is abuse.

Of course, in the news over the past month or so, we have heard a lot about abortion in cases of rape and incest. We have heard politicians on both sides say some incredibly stupid things. As Christians, though, it seems that we need to go back to what we learned earlier. Do we support the destruction of an innocent life? In my opinion, I would much rather see the destruction of the attacker. The child has done nothing wrong.

I find it interesting, though, that this is the one thing that's been on the news for several months now. This is the first objection that many people bring up. And yet when we look at the statistics provided to us by those who are lobbying for more abortion, when we look at the real reasons why women actually have abortions, this reason is at the very bottom of the list. These statistics are from the Allan Guttmacher Institute, a research arm of Planned Parenthood. In their mission statement, they favor the "freedom to terminate unwanted pregnancies." And as you can see, this reason accounts for only about 1% of all abortions. Several years ago, they did a study of 1900 women who had abortions, and the vast majority of reasons given were due to financial issues, not being ready, the concern that having a baby would interfere with school or work, being too young, or even the fact that they were done raising children altogether. Notice the top two reasons: This pregnancy will interrupt my life, and I cannot afford it.

By the way, in all of these statistics, I saw almost nothing about the life or health of either the mother or the baby – those concerns were way down on the list. As it is, doctors are learning more and more about correcting defects in the womb. Just by doing a little reading, I am amazed at what can be done these days. Most of us are familiar with Spina Bifida, a condition where spinal fluid leaks and pushes the brain into the skull. As of about ten years ago, about half of the 4,000 women whose babies are diagnosed every year choose abortion; however, doctors are now able to fix many of these cases before the baby is ever born. They go in, they fix the problem, they stuff everything back in, and then they allow the baby to be born on schedule. To me, that is amazing! And certainly we hope that more research goes in this direction – instead of killing those who are not well, let us focus on healing.

Others object to any limits on abortion by claiming that it is none of their business. And so we hear politicians saying, "I believe that life begins at conception, but I would never impose that view on others." We heard that in the vice presidential debate this past Thursday night. Imagine if Abraham Lincoln took that view on slavery, "My fellow Americans, I am personally opposed to slavery and would never own a slave...but I would never impose my personal values on others. If other people want slaves, then that is up to them." Well, that is ridiculous. Imagine applying that reasoning to the murder of any other group of people. How would we react if 1.2 million kindergarteners were being murdered each year? What if a candidate ran for office on the idea of being "pro-choice" concerning the cold-blooded murder of 25-year olds? What if the Supreme Court suddenly decides that the constitution no longer protects anyone over the age of 65? What would we do?

**III. WHAT SHOULD WE DO? Whatever we do, we need to have that same reaction to abortion. So, as Christians, WHAT SHOULD WE DO? I would like to offer four suggestions:**

**A. First of all, I would suggest that as Christians we can weep and pray over this issue.**

We can pray that parents will not consider abortion as an option. We can pray that our Supreme Court will change its mind. We can pray that our President will have a change of heart. We can pray that our state and national will understand what they've been defending, and that they will come around to more of a pro-life position. We can pray for and encourage those senators and representatives who already support and defend the lives of unborn children. In 1 Timothy 2, we have been commanded to pray for those in positions of

authority over us, and certainly this is one topic that we need to be including in those prayers. We can pray for the closing of Planned Parenthood, the largest abortion provider in the United States.

**B. There is something else we have the privilege of doing in this nation, and that is, we can get involved in the political process.**

Most of you know that I serve as an election official in the City of Madison. I've been a poll worker for roughly twenty years now, and in those twenty years, I have been shocked by the low turnout at some elections. Sometimes we think that the presidential elections are the only ones that really matter, but that is certainly not the case. If we do not vote, we are not using our Christian influence.

Unlike the First Century Christians, we are not on the outside of government looking in, but as Christians who are citizens of the United States, we are the government of this country. I am so thankful for the good comments made by the federal judge at brother Michael's citizenship ceremony. He pounded the voting issue. As a judge, his opinion was that citizens should vote, and I certainly share that opinion. In the Old Testament book of Isaiah, God's people were told that when they failed to seek justice, and defend the helpless, and plead the case of the orphan and the widow, that their worship became offensive to God – God couldn't stand it anymore. Certainly, when we refuse to vote, the same thing could be said of us today. Let us ask ourselves, then, whether we are standing up for the helpless at the polling place – that process starts by at least being there.

As Christians, we have an obligation to do some research. I think most of us have come to the point where we despise the political commercials. Here in Wisconsin, we are getting ready for our sixth election in a single year. So, it is understandable that we might be a little burned out on this, especially when it comes to the commercials. I'm to the point where I pretty much don't believe anything I see on a commercial anymore. I would encourage all of us, though, to do some research. Go online and carefully examine what each political party is fighting for and pushing for.

From a Christian point of view, it would be difficult to find a political issue more important than this one. Whether we're talking about the economy, or the environment, or jobs, or healthcare, or foreign policy, or whatever – let us not be the ones beating the drums and playing the flutes trying to drown out the cries of more than 55 million children. Sometimes financial issues are used to purchase the silence of the blood of the more than 1.2 million children who are murdered in this nation every year. I know that I have cast some votes in the past that have hurt my family financially, but my vote is not for sale. As a government official, King Solomon said, ***“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all the unfortunate. Open your mouth, judge righteously, and defend the rights of the afflicted and needy”*** (Proverbs 31:8-9).

I know in my own life, I have written a lot of letters to politicians of both parties. In the recent past, I have written Governor Walker and Barack Obama. As some of you have, I have also been in touch with Fred Risser and Terese Berceau. I have attended numerous meetings with my own city alderman, Steve King, and with the alder from this district, Lauren Cnare. As I was driving across town several weeks ago to attend the neighborhood association meeting for this neighborhood, I saw a bumper sticker, “The world is ruled by those who show up.” As Christians, let us be the ones who show up.

**C. Beyond getting involved in the political realm, there is something else we can do, and that is, we can offer support in some concrete way – either directly to young women who are in the process**

**of making this decision, or maybe to an agency dedicated to this cause, or maybe some might even be able to adopt a child of their own or support those who do.**

2000 years ago, when unwanted children were born in the Roman Empire, they were often left under bridges to die. And in that culture, early Christians made it their habit to routinely check those places. They would regularly collect those children, they would bring them to the weekly worship assembly, and they would then distribute those children among the families of the congregation. Can you imagine one of our members showing up next Sunday, “Hey, I found two babies under the Highway 51 overpass on my way to worship this morning – who wants them?” And yet that is how the early Christians dealt with this problem. Today, we might choose to support Shults-Lewis Child and Family Services, a Christian residential treatment program for children who have been abandoned and abused by our society. Locally, our family has supported CareNet, a local organization dedicated to offering an alternative to abortion right here in Madison. They offer free ultrasounds, they offer care and support for young mothers who have made the choice to let their children live, they offer a maternity home as a place where young moms can stay. Not long ago, I got a letter from CareNet. They are always looking for funds and donations of baby clothing, and diapers, and other supplies, but they are also looking for volunteers – counselors, receptionists, administrative assistants, clinic volunteers (nurses, doctors, and ultrasound technicians), they are looking for people to clean their facility, to provide babysitting for their other volunteers, respite workers, they are looking for people to assist with grant writing, and the list goes on. Their facility is located near the intersection of East Washington Avenue and Highway 51, just down the street from Planned Parenthood. There is a lot we can do locally.

**D. There is something else, though, that is far more important than anything else I have mentioned so far this morning, and that is, we can step up and teach the gospel to the people we know and love.**

You might have noticed: I have not encouraged us to protest. I have not encouraged us to storm the capitol on this issue. I have not encouraged us to stand on street corners with graphic posters. I have not encouraged us to scream and yell at women entering the abortion clinic. I have said this before: If I have one hour to dedicate to this issue, I would much rather sit down in my living room with my wife and with a young woman contemplating this decision. I would much rather do that than protest, or scream, or shout, or do anything else. I would much rather have a talk one-on-one than go door-to-door for my favorite candidate. I would much rather have a discussion concerning what the Bible says about the value of life, and the role of intimacy in marriage. As our Creator who knows us better than we know ourselves, God has told us to save intimacy for the marriage relationship. That weighs in here. I want to show you a graphic concerning the marriage status of those who commit this sin. As I see this (unless I have missed something), 85% of all abortions are committed by those who have no business being pregnant in the first place. Only 15% take place among those who are married. So it seems if we taught God’s plan on marriage, that right there would go a long way toward solving this problem.

Abortion as we have discussed it this morning is the shedding of innocent blood, so we are dealing with a sin problem. As I see it, abortion is a symptom of a much deeper issue. And I know sometimes it is much easier to get mad at our politicians, but we as a nation have elected these people. As a nation, we have sent leaders to Washington who have as their goal the taxpayer funding of abortion. So, they would like to take money out of my wallet to pay for this. Some of us are mad at that. But whether we want to admit it or not, our politicians reflect who we are. As a society, we are people who approve of murdering 1.2 million little children every year. That is a big number, but it is a very personal problem.



So let us then think about this in terms of the gospel. We can teach what we've learned this morning, that all human life is sacred, that life begins at conception, and that abortion is the shedding of innocent blood. We can pray, we can get involved politically, we can offer our support to pro-life organizations, and beyond this we can teach what God says about marriage, and we can also reach out to those who need forgiveness. Every year, 2% of all women between the ages of 15-44 have an abortion. One in 10 women will have an abortion by age 20, 1 in 4 by age 30, and 3 in 10 by age 45. That's a lot of women. And once they've gone through with it, the research tells us that 93% report significant feelings of guilt, 88% report depression, 81% report anger, 82% report grief and sorrow, 91% report feeling shame, 84% report loneliness, and 70% feel an intense fear of punishment from God. 46% report having nightmares, 45% report insomnia, 80% report uncontrollable weeping, 56% report suicidal feelings, 39% report eating disorders, 37% begin to drink more heavily, and overall, 94% of the women say that they regret having the abortion.

As Christians, we are responsible for bringing a message of forgiveness. We have the privilege of passing along the Lord's offer that was read earlier in our service, ***"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."*** In my opinion, the only way we will ever overcome abortion will be in the same way that the early church overcame slavery. They didn't have violent protests where they destroyed property and killed the slave owners, but instead, they very slowly changed the world through the preaching and the living of the gospel. That's what we are talking about here this morning.

### **Conclusion:**

With one abortion taking place every 21 seconds, there are many, many people all around us who need God's forgiveness, and like any other sin, the sin of abortion can also be forgiven. Forgiveness is available when we repent of our past sins and when we allow ourselves to be immersed in water for the forgiveness of our sins. If you have any questions or concerns, I would be more than willing to study with you one-on-one. If you have something we need to pray about as a congregation, let us know. But if you are ready to become a Christian right now, you can let us know as we sing this next song. Let's stand and sing...

To comment on this lesson: [furlakeschurch@gmail.com](mailto:furlakeschurch@gmail.com)