

Today is January 22, 2012. Today we commemorate the 38th anniversary of the supreme court decision of Roe vs. Wade; the legalization of abortion in America. I was born on October 14, 1973. 38 years ago. My mother carried me to full term. I was ten pounds. If you do the math, I was conceived in my mother's womb on January 14, 1973, roughly 8 days ago. I was conceived outside of the bonds of marriage, which means, my mother, had she made the choice, would have had the time to abort me. But thanks be to God she didn't. She chose life, not death.

Today is "Sanctity of Human Life" Sunday. Our theme is "Choose life!" How could such a positive, biblical statement stir up such controversy? It's because this statement is associated with the abortion debate and that always stirs things up. There may be people here today who would just as soon not be talking about this. You might be thinking, "Abortion is a political issue or a social problem or we might offend someone." Perhaps someone here has been involved in an abortion decision and it's uncomfortable hearing it talked about. Others might be glad we are talking about it.

But today is not about abortion, it is about choices. Today is about what we as God's people base our choices upon. We do not choose based just upon *what* we are choosing. We base our choices upon *who* has chosen us. So let's look first at the fact that we are chosen. As children of God, our relationship with our God is not, "You do this for ME and I will do this for you." It is instead God saying, "I've done this! I've chosen you and you had nothing to do with it." We are not chosen because we are special people. We are special people because we are chosen. We are chosen by the God of forgiveness, life and salvation.

St. Peter writes, "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession, that you may proclaim the excellences of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." You are God's chosen people, people He has rescued from the slavery of sin, people on your way to the Promised Land of heaven. We can take it down one step further. Each of you as an individual is special because you are chosen, chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world and then called in the waters of your baptism to be a child of God. Your name is written by the finger of God in the Book of Life. Each of you has been chosen, rescued from the slavery of your sin, rescued from death.

We live our lives in the context of being chosen by God. The fact that we are chosen by God shapes who we are and how we live our lives as people of God. We make our choices in the context of being chosen by God. We are God's chosen children purchased and won with the blood of Jesus. Jesus set His great love on us when we were completely undeserving. We can fear Him. We can love Him. We can trust Him above all things. That is why, when faced with choices, the first thing we need to do is turn to Him and depend on Him.

Now let's look at the choice God places before us. We can choose good or evil, we can choose blessing or curse. But both choices flow from the choice of life or death. Good and blessing follow the choice of life and evil and curses follow the choice of death. And yet, the fundamental choice runs even deeper than life or death. The fundamental choice is either to trust God or turn away to other gods. Do we choose God or the government? Do we choose the God who made us and still takes care of us or do we choose the government who allows us to break God's commands and tells us it's okay to not love our neighbor. That's why God warns, If your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them; that's when the evil and the curses will come.

Death is the god of choice in our culture today. We choose death through abortion to rescue us from a crisis pregnancy. We choose death through the destruction of human embryos to rescue us

from disease. We choose death through assisted suicide to rescue us from pain and suffering. It is estimated that over 32,000 people are negatively affected by an abortion decision every single day in our country and with roughly 50 million abortions committed in this country since 1973, that is quite a few people affected.. An innocent, unborn child is destroyed. The mother of that child has her life changed forever. The father of that child has his life changed forever. Grandparents, siblings, friends, society itself—all suffer greatly as the result of a single abortion.

Allow me to pause just in case there is someone here today who is burdened with the act of abortion. A woman who had an abortion once asked, “How come abortion is the only sin that gets its own Sunday?” Although today we celebrate the “Sanctity of Human Life Sunday” and not “The Sin of Abortion Sunday,” her point is well taken. It reminds us that it is not the sin of abortion that separates us from God, nor the sin of homosexuality, nor the sin of coveting. All sin, original and actual sin, separates us from God. We all stand equally guilty before Him. But the sin of abortion, because of its nature, can be more difficult to deal with than some other sins. That’s why I want to make sure that if you are burdened with this particular sin, you know you are welcome here with all the rest of us sinners. You are welcome as one chosen in Christ Jesus. You are baptized in His holy name. You are welcome as one cleansed by His blood. You are forgiven.

This obsession with death as the god who can rescue us from our problems has especially manifested itself in the past 38 years. The massive devaluing and destruction of human life in the womb leads to the devaluing of human life in all stages. It has overflowed into an alarming climb in teen suicide. It has overflowed into a drastic increase in the incidence of child abuse. It has overflowed into our classrooms with children killing children. Death does not relieve the burden, it does not remove the pain, it only adds to it. Jesus brings relief, He alone brings peace, which the world can neither give, nor understand.

The choice of death as our rescuer-god always leads to “evil and curses.” There has never been a choice of death that rescues us from our problems and leads to life. Well . . . there was that one time! Holy Scripture says, “Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, He himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death He might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery”. Jesus chose death “so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone”. Jesus chose suffering and death to pay the price we owed God because of our sin. Jesus chose death to destroy it once and for all through His resurrection from the dead. Jesus chose death and “brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel”. Jesus chose death to rescue us. We never have to! Jesus chose death and He has chosen you. Jesus has baptized you into His death and into His resurrection; heaven is yours.

That is your assurance that you can trust Him. That is your assurance that you can choose life. It really is that simple. You can do it! You can trust God because He has set His love upon you in Christ. You can trust God because He promises that nothing can ever separate you from that love. You can trust God because He promises never to leave or forsake you. You can trust God because He promises to be at work in every aspect of your life accomplishing His will. You can trust God because He loves you and has proven that love in the death and resurrection of Jesus. You can trust God because He “sets His love upon you” every time you come to His holy meal to receive the very price He paid to rescue you, His chosen people.

We can make good, God-pleasing choices because we are first chosen by God in Christ. No matter what choices we face, we can trust that the God who chose us will never abandon us. We are very special people. We are chosen people. Chosen people choose life! Chosen people can bring their influence to bear on a sin-broken world and sin-broken lives and make a positive difference. That difference is forgiveness, life and salvation, found only in Jesus Christ. Amen.