

Text: Exodus 1.8-22
St Stephen's

January 14th, 2007
Sun AM

The Weight of Life!

34th anniversary of the 1973 Roe/Wade Supreme Ct decision that made abortion the law of this land. All across this land over the past 34 years this week has become known as “**Sanctity of Life**” week. This year I want to think with you for a couple of weeks about **the issue underneath the abortion issue**. That is the issue of **life itself**, and how that issue is **rooted in our culture**.

Mark Steyn wrote a remarkable book last year called “**America Alone**”. It is he traces **emerging cultural themes** that need our attention. One theme is that in the countries of Europe and Canada and the rest of the West, people are **not having kids**. That is true of almost every developed nation other than the United States. It takes an average of 2.1 live births per woman for a country to keep its population level. That is about the birthrate in the US. Canada has a birthrate under 1.5. Europe as a whole, 1.38. Japan, 1.32. Russia, 1.14. By mid century tiny Yemen will have more people than vast empty Russia. In Russia 7/10 pregnancies are terminated by abortion. Italy and Greece are leading the decline. The West is simply going out of business. **Why are we doing that?**

I am not sure I know, but part of the answer has to be this:

We have lost our **vision for life, our passion for life, and the strength and courage that life calls forth**. We retreat into the cocoons of our self-centered life-styles, and we are not having babies.

Our **OT reading today** documents a moment thousands of years ago when the same issues erupted in Egypt. In those days the **Jewish people were captive in Egypt**. The years of their favored position in that culture under Joseph had long since past. Now they were a **despised but large and growing minority**. So the Egyptians put them into **forced labor**, slavery...

But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread; so the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites and worked them ruthlessly.

Ex 1:12-13 (NIV)

The **Hebrews loved to have kids**. No matter how hard their life, they loved to have kids! That's worth noting. But Pharaoh didn't like all their kids, so he took a more direct approach. He instructed the Hebrew midwives...

“When you help the Hebrew women in childbirth and observe them on the delivery stool, if it is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, let her live.”

Ex 1:16 (NIV)

Today we call this **selective full term abortion**. It is widely practiced in China at the expense of a generation of baby girls, tilting the gender of the whole population, and it is legal in the US if the baby is killed before it takes its first breath. The Hebrew midwives **couldn't do it**, though. Because in the middle of their culture, their homes, their hearts was the **God of life**.

Those Hebrew midwives knew that...

- **Every Life Is The Handiwork of God**

From beginning to end, the Bible is clear about this. God's value on every human life is one of the pillars of the Judeo-Christian religion...

the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

Gen 2:7

You have never laid eyes on another human being who was not given the gift of life by God:

He himself gives all men life and breath and everything else.

Acts 17:25

David knew that, that's why he prayed in Psalm 139...

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.

Ps 139:13 (NIV)

From the moment of conception to the time of natural death God is the **author** of your life, and of the life of everyone else. Because **God makes people and gives them life**, they matter to him. God is the God of life. And to him -

- **Every life Matters**

These Hebrew midwives knew that. So...

The midwives... feared God and did not do what the king of Egypt had told them to do; they let the boys live.

Exodus 1.17

They **risked** a great deal to bring those boys into the world. Disobeying Pharaoh was dangerous stuff. And the boys lived. Moses turned out to be one of those boys.

Did you follow the story this week of the disappearance last Monday of 13-year-old **Ben Ownby in Missouri**? After a frantic 4 day search they found him. Heroes all over the place! And when they did, they found in the same apartment a 15 year old boy **Shawn Hornbeck** who had been kidnapped 4 years ago.

Craig Akers, Shawn Hornbeck's step-dad had a remarkable **news conference**. Craig and his family had never given up hope of finding Shawn. They had formed a team and a foundation. They had a war room with maps of every acre that had yet to be searched. There were post-it notes all over the walls of leads and tips to trails that had long gone cold.

And then came **the phone call** from the DA. Craig and his wife were in their car. The DA asked him to find a place to pull over. When they did, he said, "we're 95% sure we've found Shawn. He's OK. You have to come here." It was the longest drive he had ever been on. Craig told the story in his own words, weeping his way through the news conference... "It is hard to come up with words to describe this. It is the best day of our lives. That phone call is the one I will remember for the rest of our lives. This is why I have told everyone **not to give up hope**. To have one missing child found is extraordinary. To have two found is unbelievable. I am so thankful."

"We want to give hope to other parents in this situation. Miracles can happen. Don't give up hope."

"This is the start of a new chapter for us. We have a new member of our foundation to help us **look for other missing children**. Just because we have recovered our own child doesn't mean our work is done. We devoted our lives to this four years ago, and I don't think this work will ever be done."

“It's hard to believe that somebody could be that brazen and just boggles my mind that somebody can just get away with it. This has been going on for four years, and he's been under our nose this whole time. It is not the same world that we grew up in. **It is not a safe world.**”

[Think about that... Why not?]

When asked what he made of that, he said that the only think he could think was that **people simply don't watch out for each other any more.** We just keep our eyes down, focused on our own worlds. We don't even know our neighbors. We certainly don't look out for them.”

Craig Akers is a hero. Because he is a man who believes in the gift of life and the God of life and the goodness of life. And with that vision and heart and that faith he is infecting he world, touching his world. **Making his world safe again.**

You can make your world safe again. This culture can be rebuilt and reformed. What it will take is people like Craig Akers. People who find the vision for life and heart and faith and courage that this vision demands – like Craig Akers did. He **believed that one boy was worth an all out search.** (Do you remember Jesus story about the lost sheep and the shepherd?)

And he believes that **all lost boys and girls are worth an all out search.** Who is building a community of people who care about people because the care about life because they have **this God of life and new life** in their midst.

You and I are people of new life. It is to people of new life that God entrusts the stewardship of the vision of life. Because it is in the light of the cross that the value of life – of every life – is seen. That is where we see the terrible price freely paid that defines the value of every life.

The God of life and new life, gives to the people of life and new life, the vision of life and new life. By that vision we live. By that vision we must live, courageously and clearly and compassionately.

So... Reach out to mothers who have crisis pregnancies.

You can welcome foster kids and adopt children into your own family.

You can reach out to disadvantaged kids.

Get to know the kids on your streets.

Have children and raise them for the Lord.

Welcome those grandchildren! Welcome them and celebrate them!

You can say, we've got room for you! We'll look out for you!

Life is a gift. People matter.