**Mark 1:14-20 (ESV)**

**14**  Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, **15** and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.” **16**  Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. **17** And Jesus said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men.” **18** And immediately they left their nets and followed him. **19** And going on a little farther, he saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, who were in their boat mending the nets. **20** And immediately he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed him.

**“Right To Life”**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen. Today marks

thirty-nine years since the legalization of abortion. It is a strong and divisive topic cutting right into the heart of families. Political leaders always seem to address the topic during election years. Yet, this picture of murder extends out to the ends of the earth. In a years’ time Minnesota (Iowa) had roughly 11,000 (7,000) babies aborted, well over a million in America, and as Lutheran World Relief and Human Care reported 52.5 million in the whole world. The numbers are surely higher when including those who use the “morning after-pill” and the practice of IVF. Lord have mercy that we know life and not death. To speak against abortion is our right to life in this world.

The powers of darkness mislead many, but Christian records from the earliest times in a pagan society made it clear, “You shall love your neighbor more than your own life. You shall not slay the child by abortion. You shall not kill that which has been generated.”[[1]](#footnote-1) Of course, the whole purpose of protecting life at the present is because God is the proclaimer of eternal life by the Gospel. This is where we part ways with others who acknowledge life as a moral law, but not Him who lovingly says, “I am the resurrection and the life…” (John 11:25-26). The act of abortion always needs to hear the better answer pro-life. We find this especially truth with God who is pro-savior. Jesus enters our world of death with the need to give life rightly by the Gospel.

You would have thought there would be a change of tactics when Herod imprisoned John the Baptizer. Jesus could have done something different perhaps, but the Savior brought the same word of salvation saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.” There were plenty of reasons not to go to such a place as Galilee. Political and military strife was evident. Immorality and religious idolatry was all over. Yet, the darker the place is where God dares to shine even more love upon those trapped in such darkness. Not all would believe, not all would hear, not all would be thankful for what Jesus said. The statistics of success stood against the saving nature of God’s Son, but He still chose to speak life to sinners.

Without God speaking, there is no right to life. If the Lord had not sent reluctant Jonah to Nineveh, they would have never heard salvation. This act of revealing comes by the gracious love of God. It is not a lifeless product bought at the store like other stuff sitting on the shelf. Jesus is life and His Word gives life in our world of death. As our Lutheran Fathers proclaim, “…the Gospel does not preach forgiveness of sins to indifferent and secure hearts, but to the ‘oppressed’ or penitent (Luke 4:18)” (Tappert 559:9). This life giving Spirit of God works to turn dead sinners into living saints. As the writer from Hebrews declares, “For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened” (Hebrews 4:2). Jesus dares to speak in our culture of death, to shine His light upon lives deadened by sin. Where a person might wrongly choose abortion, The Savior does not choose to abort us. He draws closer to sinners calling out to repent and hear life by His Word.

More than just a proclamation of life in Galilee, Jesus made a promise to those who believed in His Name. Simon and Andrew, James and John had God’s Son personally call them to service. John had baptized them, but they went back to what they did. Only Jesus said, “Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men.” There was no reason behind His choosing them as if they had some inner glory or power. These fishermen were still sinners at heart. They were nothing special in terms of success, but this made the promising Word of Christ particularly special. As the early church father Eusebius notes, “When He had thus called them as his followers, he breathed into them his divine power, and filled them with strength and courage” (Ancient Christian Commentary, 18). Where their natural abilities were in fishing, following Jesus meant the Savior would supply what these first disciples would need to serve Him.

Where effectiveness today is in measuring the person, God makes the promise to be effective in our lives by His Word. The call to “follow me” is a command that comes from Jesus as Savior. He later said, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. (John 10:27). Of course, there is hesitation about this right to life in following God’s Son. Doubts arise over what we hear and cannot see no different from those who deny life in the womb. Yet, what Jesus sees and speaks go hand in hand since sin, death, and the devil do not hinder Him. He is the life giver saying, “I will make you.” This is the promise for all His baptized saints. Out of this death by water is our life called forth by Christ. He still greets us as Savior to forgive our shortsightedness by Word and Sacrament. None need despair over sin or serve selfish ways. St. Paul notes, “God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Corinthians 1:9). As it was for the four disciples, so we have a call built on courage from Christ. Becoming fishers of men is to hope in Him who already caught us.

Where God creates believers and makes promises by His Word, there He works His way into our lives. The disciples did not have time for questions or could wait and count the costs. They had to make room in their life leaving earthly jobs and families. It would have been strange in a pagan society to see there was more to life than what meets the eye. Instead, setting their eyes on Jesus, they would have life and He would actually save their lives. As St. Paul warns us, “the present form of this world is passing away.” We think we have all the time in the world, yet today as every day, a call goes out to take seriously the work of the Gospel in a dying world. Caught up in this present life leads to missing the kingdom of Christ. It is to ignore the only true life sent from the Father in His Son. Rather than changing the world, Jesus comes to save those in it who believe in Him. Thankfully, the work of the Holy Spirit keeps calling us to repentance and faith throughout our days by the Word. This is our right to life that needs no march in Washington D.C. for God’s love marches to the cross for us all. Amen. Now may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting, Amen.

1. http://www.lutheransforlife.org/article/what-the-early-church-church-said-about-abortion/ [↑](#footnote-ref-1)