

All Lives Matter - From Conception to Natural Death
Alberta March for Life (May 11, 2017)
Rev. Dr. Glenn Schaeffer

"This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it!" What a beautiful day for a march! What a privilege it is for me to address you this afternoon.

A few years ago, I came upon an article in *Yahoo! News* with a bold print headline that screamed, "Unwanted!" According to the *Yahoo! News* report that was the Hindi name given to 285 Indian girls participating in a renaming ceremony. The Hindi name, "Nakusa" or "Nakusi" sounds sweet, but please ... don't call your daughter by that name. The name "Nakusi" is devastating to those who bear it because the word means, "UNWANTED." Can you imagine being called "unwanted" by your father and mother? Every time their name is spoken these girls are reminded that they are unwanted by the very ones who conceived them. (*Yahoo! News*, October 25, 2011)

Loved! That's what our Creator thinks of these 285 Indian girls and us! That's God's message to the world. All lives matter to our Creator from conception to natural death. We are created in His image – male and female. He is the Artist and each of us are His unique masterpiece. It matters not to our Creator whether we have 46 chromosomes or 46 plus 1! Whether we are 1 inch in length or 6 feet five! Whether we are female or male. Deaf or blind. Paraplegic or able-bodied. Diagnosed with MS, Lou Gehrig's disease, dementia or any other ailment. All lives, from conception to natural death, matter to God!

We are of infinite worth and value to our God – so much so that God shared in our humanity! Ponder this wondrous mystery for a moment: Jesus, who Christians believe was God in the flesh, was a zygote, an embryo, an infant, a toddler, a youth, a grown man! God gives all human life dignity and worth simply by the fact that He shares in our humanity.

But there was another reason why God's Son became a man. The Bible says, *"This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us."* (1 John 3:16) Jesus died on the cross to forgive us of our sin. Jesus came to *"heal the brokenhearted and bind up their wounds."* (Psalm 147:3)

If you ever wonder if you are loved look to the cross of Christ. If you are in search of renewed life and hope, look to Jesus who conquered death by rising from the dead.

All lives matter from conception to natural death to our Creator ... to our Saviour, Jesus Christ ... and therefore, all lives are of infinite value and worth to us! And that's why we are here today. We are the voices for the unborn who cannot speak. We march. We speak the truth. We pray. We petition those who make laws in our land to break free of the delusional spell they're under that some lives don't matter. We mourn the senseless killing of God's masterpieces in the womb – some 100,000 plus annually in Canada alone. We are angered by the fact that we live in a country where an, "*An unborn child has no more rights than a set of tonsils.*" (Dr. David Scaer CTQ 77 (2013): p. 213.) We are infuriated that, with little or no debate, the Canadian government can allocate \$650,000 of our tax paying dollars to fund and promote abortion, sex indoctrination, and aggressive sterilization programs in the developing world (and it's championed as good!). All the while millions of people, most being children, are malnourished or starving to death because of internal civil war.

And while we advocate for the unborn, we also affirm the sanctity of all life at life's end. It is alarming that, at least 1324 Canadians (100 in Alberta) have chosen to end their lives through medically assisted death in the past year. (Euthanasia Prevention Coalition Newsletter, May 2017, page 4)

The stark truth is that assisted suicide violates a basic law of God. It perpetuates dangerous views that the weak, the sick, the mentally-challenged, and elderly are "burdens." The practice of medically-assisted death normalizes and even legitimizes suicide as an acceptable way to end one's life. It promotes a culture of death.

These life issues are more than political issues. They are matters of the heart that touch people deeply ... they affect us deeply. For many of us, we know that God's Son, Jesus, is the answer for such issues of life and death, pain and suffering, grief and regret, and guilt. Jesus speaks to the hearts of those in situations involving disease, pain, and suffering assuring them that, as long as He gives life, life has meaning and purpose. Yes, God demonstrates His ability to bring good out of suffering through the cross and resurrection of His own Son. Hence, the reason Jesus invites, "*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest*" (Matthew 11:28 NIV).

My friends for life, these matters of the heart invite us to be engaged in the lives of other people loving them, serving them, caring for them, and walking alongside of them.

During the past 18 months, I have had five significant people in my life, die. In all these cases, they (and their families) were the recipients of the love and care of doctors, nurses, volunteers, home care providers, chaplains, and countless others who are dedicated to providing caring, sensitive, supportive help to people during illness, grief, and bereavement. These care givers affirmed the person's worth even as the dying person's dignity and pride was being stripped away by heinous diseases. To all caregivers and medical practitioners who provide these palliative and hospice care services, I say, "Thank you!"

I thank those people who serve at Pregnancy Care Centers and ministries like the Back Porch and other similar organizations for you embody the compassion of Christ for people struggling with the plight of abortion.

I thank the staff and volunteers who serve at the food banks and the shelters for vulnerable teens and abused women. I am thankful for people who provide a "home" to the refugee and who support and send relief aid to countries where people are displaced and experiencing malnutrition and starvation.

I am thankful for the politicians who understand that all lives matter from conception to natural death and are often a lone voice in the political wilderness.

And, please understand, all of you matter to God! You may be that teen who is scared because your pregnancy test tested positive. You may be that mother/father who overwhelmed with guilt, shame and regret because of a past abortion. You may be that grandparent who is heartbroken because you will never get to know your granddaughter because she was aborted. You may be that son/daughter faced with the confusing and painful decision of the appropriate care for your terminally ill parent. If you haven't already done so, the first step toward healing is to heed Jesus' invitation to come to him for forgiveness, comfort, strength, peace and hope! And you will find Jesus with his arms wide open to envelope you in a loving embrace.

You matter to God! He knows the frustration you experience as you try to persuade others to be passionate about these life issues. How you are met with anger, apathy, or indifference. But look around you and see how God reminds you that are not alone. We come from different walks of life – cultures, languages, religions but we share a common cause! Pray for one another ... serve alongside one another ... care for one another ... encourage one another.

Yes, all lives matter ... from conception to natural death ... to our Creator ... to our Saviour, Jesus Christ ... and therefore, all lives matter, to you and to me!

Thank you for being here this afternoon and being a witness to this truth!