

Abortion and the Narrow Way That Leads to Life

by John Piper

God is our Father through Jesus Christ, and He is totally for us, empowering us to live the Golden Rule and care about every kind of suffering we meet on this planet.

Duration: 41:24

Scripture: Matthew 7:13

Topics: "Eternal Consequences", "Christian Ethics"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing God as our Father through Jesus Christ, highlighting the connection between caring for all forms of suffering on earth and the eternal consequences of heaven and hell. It challenges believers to embody the golden rule by empathizing, self-renouncing, and joyfully generous actions towards others, while also acknowledging the reality of eternal suffering for those who do not embrace the gospel.

Transcript

Let's pray. Father, we ask that your name now would be hallowed, that our hearts would rise up, cherishing it and treasuring it and you above all things. And we ask that your kingdom now would come, especially your saving reign in this room and wherever my voice is heard, and that your will would be done in abortion clinics and in hospitals around the world the way the angels would do it in heaven.

Perfectly, joyfully, savingly. We ask that you would give the daily bread that little ones in the womb need to survive, and we ask that sins would be forgiven for all of us. And we ask that we would be protected from the evil one who for these many millennia has never ceased to joy in child sacrifice.

So this is our prayer, and we ask you to come and do it in Jesus name. Amen. The first thing we need to see in this text is that there is a staggering truth, namely that God, the creator of the universe, the one who upholds all things by the word of his power, the one who is all governing and controls whatever comes to pass, is the father of all who receive and believe in Jesus.

And as our father is more ready and more inclined to hear when we call and help us, then the best father is that has ever lived on the planet. That's the first thing that needs to be seen. So let's read it.

Verse 9, Which of you, if his son asked for bread, would give him a stone? Or if he asked for a fish, would give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more, much more, would your father, who is in heaven, give good things to those who ask him? God Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, is the father of all who receive and believe in Jesus. That's the first thing that has to be seen. And the reason I say, limiting it, all who receive and believe in Jesus, he's not the father of everybody, is because that's what John 1 12 says.

And it's the fighter verse for this week. As many as received him, who believed on his name, get it, to as many as received him, believed on his name, to them he gave the right and the power to become the children of God, and thus he their father. God is the father of all who receive and believe in Jesus, and only those.

And what a glorious privilege. What manner of love is this, that God should be our father. Apart from Jesus, the abortionist, the mom, the baby, the protester, the right-wing, the left-wing, the pro-lifer, the pro-choicer, are all children of wrath.

Not children of God. I use the phrase children of wrath because that's what the Bible uses in Ephesians 2 3. We all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and we were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. Everybody is a child of wrath, not a child of God.

Until, by amazing, amazing, more than amazing grace, God draws us to Jesus. The God of terrible holiness and wrath is rich in mercy. He sent his son to die so that we might not perish, but have eternal life in a family with God as our Father.

He did not come to be served, but to serve and give his life a ransom for many. He came to lay down his life for the sheep. He came to bear our sins in his body on the tree.

He came to provide us with the righteousness that we can't have by law-keeping, but only through faith. He came to reconcile us to God. All the children of wrath may be children of God if they will come to Jesus.

That's why he died and rose again and reigns today. So the aging abortionist, a few blocks from here, after 3,000 plus abortions, can become a child of God. She could hear on her deathbed today, you will be with me in paradise.

She could. The same is true for the mother of five aborted children, or the selfish responsibility shirking boyfriend, or the secretive, shame-fearing, overbearing parents, or the desperate 14-year-old girl. It's all the same.

Jesus did not come into the world mainly to stop abortion in this age. He came mainly to die for abortion-committing sinners. I have not come to call the righteous to repentance, but sinners.

There is one way to know God as your Father, and it's the same for the people at Planned Parenthood, as for the people at Pro-Life Action Ministries, and the people at Bethlehem Baptist Church. Come to Jesus. One of his disciples, Philip, said to him, Lord, show us the Father.

And Jesus said to him, Have I been so long with you, Philip, and you don't know me? That's wild. If you have seen me, you have seen the Father. Everybody who comes to Jesus has God as his Father in Jesus, now and forever.

That's the first thing that needs to be said in this sermon from this text. The heart of Christianity is not a culture of life. The heart of Christianity is Jesus Christ, dying and rising for sinners, who then become a culture of life.

Before we can speak of the demanding words that are about to come in this text, we need to hear these delightful words. The Omnipotent, all-wise, all-knowing, all-holy, all-just, all-good, all-governing God is the Father of all who come to Jesus and receive him and believe in him as their divine Savior, Lord of the universe, and treasure of their lives, and thus have in heaven a Father who is more eager, more ready, more on his toes, willing to hear their cry for help than the best Father that has ever lived on this planet. That's the first thing that needs to be said in this message.

So I would just pause here and say, is he your father? Where are you? I'm looking for you. You who have to say no, because I want you so bad to be my sister, brother. That's what we call them because we have a father.

So right now you could just do that. Why don't you just do it? You know, wait. I'm done running.

I'm done rebelling. I'm done questioning. I need a father in heaven.

I've been sinning all my life. I need forgiveness. If this is the way, I'll take it.

God open their eyes. Wherever you are on the line of sin and sorrow, the mother who aborted your child, you're probably here, the father who encouraged it, you're probably here, the doctor who performed it may be here. I knew a Christian doctor once who had this all rationalized.

An activist who tried to stop it, you may be here. Hope so. The politician who supported it or fought it, the passive person, this is probably hundreds of you, who never give a thought to it.

Those aren't the main issue, none of them. The main issue is have we thrown ourselves on Jesus for mercy? That's all. Things will change.

But do we have a father in heaven by throwing ourselves on the mercy of Jesus? Now the rest of this text is for the family. If you're not in the family, listen, please, because it might attract you into the family. Maybe things you didn't know about the family.

You've been watching from the outside all your life and maybe listening to what this family conversation is now. Might just change the whole way you think about it. So that was point number one, verses 9 to 12.

God is our father if Jesus is our Savior, and we need a father who cares for us because what's coming is so hard you could never do it without him, ever. Verse 12. So means therefore.

Therefore, because you have that kind of father, whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them. For this is the law and the prophets. Now that word so is very important.

He's saying, therefore, because of everything I've just said in the last 10 or 15 minutes, because of everything about God is your father, Jesus is your Savior, his readiness to meet every need that you have as you launch out in self-denying love of others, everything you need is yours. Because you got that father, there's no other way you can love like this. You try to turn it around, won't work.

So that therefore is really. God is your father. Therefore, what you want people to do to you, do to them.

I hope you see the connection. You seek his kingdom. Everything will be added to you.

I'll give you what you need. I'll guide you. I'll care for you.

I'm your father. I'm not gonna let anything happen to you outside my will. I'm totally on your side, always, no exceptions, and I'm God.

I own everything. I rule everything. You're my child.

Not gonna ever let you go. Get out there and do crazy love things. Please, please see the order here, the order here.

As children of wrath, we come to Jesus and we receive forgiveness for our sins. The wrath is taken away. We're adopted into God's family.

We receive the spirit of adoption and now God sends us as his beloved children, the apple of his eye, the cherished possession into the world to do risky things like treating others the way we would like to be treated. We do not love people in order to get adopted. We love because we're adopted.

Has everybody got that? We do not love people. We don't do nice things to get God to like us. Got that? We risk doing hard, nice things because God has committed himself to us in Jesus Christ and turned his wrath away and embraced us with everlasting love as our Father.

That's the only way, verse 12, is ever gonna happen. That's what the therefore is therefore. So, with a blood-bought root in the fatherly care of God, now the question is what's the fruit? What is involved in the golden rule? Goodness, this is a famous verse and has anybody thought this through? Whatever you wish that others would do to you, you do that to them.

You think that's easy, simple? It's not even, not only it's not easy, it's not simple. Here's what it involves. Too wise acts of imagination, one massive act of self renunciation, and one beautiful act of joyful generosity.

And if those aren't there, this isn't gonna happen. So let me walk through that. First, an act of imagination, wise imagination.

Number one, suppose that there's a 20 year old sophomore at the university, a girl, young woman, and her parents are paying her way through school, and she's dreaming of medical school, and suddenly she finds herself pregnant, and she's terrified. Her parents are going to be furious. The dream of medical school looks like it may be falling through her fingers, and worst of all, she doesn't know who the father is, because that's the way she's been partying.

Now, suppose that you're a 30 year old guy married at Bethlehem. Good job. Virtually no needs at all in this world, and somebody says or asks, what would you wish that others do to you? And you might laugh and say, give me an iPad or a gift certificate to Amazon.

Always think of something to get. Don't need anything, but if you're asking what I wish that others would give to me, iPad and a gift certificate to Amazon. How will this man obey this command in relation to that young woman if their paths cross? Do unto others whatever you wish that others would do to you, do them.

Give her an iPad and a gift certificate. Now, if he does, if he gives her what he wants, he is not obeying this text. No! So it's not easy.

This is not an easy command to figure out. Well, I thought you told me that I was supposed to do to others what I want others to do to me. That's what I want others to do to me, and so I'm doing it to her, and I'm done.

This is supposed to work. You told me to do that. Jesus, well, he expects you to think, and he expects you to feel, and he expects you to get inside himself and not be so mechanical.

Jesus wants us to ponder what's here. What's required at this moment is two acts of imagination. One, you have to imagine yourself in her situation.

There has to be a wise, imaginative act of empathy. What is she experiencing? What are her pressures? What are her options? What is she contemplating? What is she feeling? And some of that is only knowable by talking to her, which means love always draws you into relationships. That's the first act of imagination.

Getting yourself inside her head, her heart, her skin, feeling some of what she feels and seeing life from her vantage point. That's not enough. If you stop there without the second act of imagination, you couldn't love her yet.

Because if you just say, I'm gonna be her. I'm gonna be her. I'm gonna get inside.

I'm gonna be her. Well, the problem is probably she doesn't know what she really needs. She may be so in agony, she doesn't even know what she really wants.

So you can't just get inside her and just do what she wants. You have to get inside her and still be you. The Bible-saturated, humble, God-shaped you with a creative act of empathy, giving in her life and her skin and her feelings and being both her and you and out of that discerning what is wanted and needed at the deepest level here, and that's what you do.

And that requires, thirdly, I said there were two acts of imagination. First, get inside her experience and have some creative empathy, and the other is stay you and try to imagine what you, as God has taught you in the Bible, would be needed here. Now, the third thing is that's impossible without a massive act of self-renunciation because this isn't what you planned for this afternoon.

This is not what you plan to do with your time. It's not the kind of stress you expected to get into. This is totally not what this semester was supposed to look like for you.

You, the good, loving, caring person. No, everything is changing. You're now in another's life bearing a load and trying to get her around you and you into her and figure out what would be loving here.

And that's just stopping being all the stuff you were going to be. This is called self-denial. He would come after me, let him take up his cross and deny himself and follow me.

And lastly, I said it was four things. Two acts of imagination, one act of self-renunciation, and then a joyful act of generosity because if we stay right here and say all we need to do to obey verse 12 is to deny ourselves and do unto others as we have them do unto us, or here's the reason I say that needs to be followed by a joyful act of generosity, whatever form it takes, is because nobody feels loved when you try

to help them begrudgingly. You try to do the right thing for somebody murmuring, murmuring, murmuring all the way along that this is hard or that this is inconvenient or this is costing you, they will not feel cared for.

And so it gets more and more impossible. This verse just gets more and more impossible unless you have a father who says, I don't care how much time you spend, I don't care how much you give, I'm taking care of you all the way. I've got your back.

I've got you covered. Seek the kingdom first. Everything you need will be added to you.

Move. I'm your dad. I'll be right there.

Words will be there. Money will be there. Time will be there.

I'll make it up for you at work. I'll make it up for you at church. I will be for you.

I'm your father. So go ahead. That's point number two in the message.

First verses 9 to 11, we have a father through Jesus Christ, and he's totally for us. And third, whatever we wish that others would do to us, with an imaginative act of putting ourselves in their shoes and being us in them, denying ourselves and joyfully stretching ourselves to meet their need. That's what verse 12 is after.

And now, verses 13 and 14 drove this message. I'll just admit it. I wrote this message backward.

This is what I wanted to say. And the other I said because I'm supposed to this weekend, and because it's in the text and is God's Word. But this is heaviest on my heart right now.

Verses 13 and 14. It's burning in me. It's been burning since October when I was preparing for my message at the Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization in South Africa.

And what I said to them in one paragraph, I want to say to you, my church. I was thinking you the whole time. I was preparing for it.

I was thinking of us together. I was thinking, this is part of building one people, big time. I want to be a kind of people.

And a few things. I want to get really clear as a people so that when when you start forking out money to pay down the North Campus and create a South Campus and spread this, you really believe in it. And if you don't, we don't want your money.

So what I want to get you on board for a reality here in verses 13 and 14. And if you're not into this reality, you shouldn't give any money to this church. You shouldn't even be at this church, unless you're willing to consider it.

So, what I see here in verses 13 and 14 is that Jesus connects the golden rule with heaven and hell. And I want to get that connection right. I don't want to say it wrong.

I don't want to get the balance wrong. I don't want to get anything out of joint here, because lives are at stake. Hearts are at stake.

Emotions are at stake. Churches are at stake. How you talk about heaven and hell and love.

I want us to have clarity about the relationship between social and political causes on the one side and heaven and hell on the other. I mean things like abortion, human trafficking, the global AIDS crisis, healthcare, homosexuality, alcoholism, drugs, unemployment, homelessness, fatherlessness, illiteracy, crime, racism, the inaccessibility to education or clean water or medicine, and the list goes on and on. The sufferings of this age are enormous.

Call them what you will, social causes or political causes. I want to know how our engagement of those, for example, through the global diaconate, relates to heaven and hell. And the death of Jesus to rescue people from everlasting suffering.

And I want us as a church to be able to say a few really clear things that we are all yes. Yes. All right, so this is risky.

I might choose the path that could have glossed this over, let a lot of diversity hang out there, just keep views quiet, or try to get everybody on the same page. So that's what I'm going to try to do. Let's read the text.

Verse 13, enter by the narrow gate. Now, what is that? That's verse 12. He didn't just throw this in here.

Whatever you wish that others would do to you, I have just showed you this is impossible. This is hard and impossible. The narrow gate.

It's a hard way. It's not, this is a new topic. This is just bullets, explosives on that topic.

Enter by the narrow gate, verse 12, enter by the narrow gate, it's verse 12, for the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction. And those who enter by it are many, for the gate is narrow, the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few. In other words, what's at stake in living the golden rule is whether you go to heaven or go to hell.

Destruction and life. Paul uses the phrase eternal destruction away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might. There is a narrow way that leads to eternal life, and there's a broad way that leads to hell and eternal destruction.

And Jesus said that, not me. Jesus spoke more of hell than anybody else in the Bible, and he used the most grotesque language for it. He called it outer darkness.

He called it the gnashing of teeth. He called it torment. He called it unquenchable fire.

He called it eternal punishment. So for Jesus, it is eternal, it's conscious, and it's horrible. And the point I want to make as we close is that Jesus connects the most practical earthy command to that.

He connects them. Whatever you wish that others would do to you, do so to them means that we will care about every kind of suffering that we meet on this planet. Right? I hope nobody disagrees with that, because if you see some suffering, you know in the bottom of your heart.

You know every part of your heart. You don't want that. So if you don't want that to happen to you, then you can't want it to happen to anybody else.

This is crystal clear. Verse 12 commits us to caring about all suffering we meet. And not just caring, but I'll care and see you later, but movement.

So there we have in verse 12 Christians care about all the suffering they run into. They care, and they move, and they act, and they risk, and they deny, and they're generous, and they're joyful, they're hopeful. And then comes verses 13 and 14, and he brings up the issue of hell, and heaven, life, and destruction.

In other words, there is a worse suffering coming. I don't care what you see on this earth. There's a worse suffering coming.

The suffering in this life is terrible, unspeakable, would make you throw up, or scream, and hit your head against a brick wall. You would faint. And there is something infinitely worse coming.

It lasts forever. That's what Jesus brings up after verse 12. So I conclude suffering in this world is terrible and limited, but suffering in the next world is terrible and eternal.

Love sees it that way. Love sees it that way. Love is a realistic impulse.

May your love increase with knowledge and all discernment. Paul prayed. Love reckons with the reality of suffering here, and the worse reality of suffering there.

Love does. Love does. If love puts his head in the sand with regard to suffering here, it isn't love.

If love puts its head in the sand with regard to suffering eternally, it isn't love. Now here's my burden. I see around us, I tried to overstate it, I want to say everywhere, very prevalent Christians in the church who are driven by the tendency to care only about suffering now or only about suffering later.

And we move into these two camps. I'm a activist for the cause of justice and life and wholeness and shalom and flourishing. I am not going to be distracted by that.

I'm going to rescue people from hell. That is irrelevant to my life. And there we go.

Here's what I want. Here's the building one people. I want Bethlehem.

I want us all to say, we will not make that choice. We will say this sentence and mean it. We care about all suffering now, especially eternal suffering later.

That's the sentence I want to leave ringing in your ears. You test it. You go home and you test it.

I'm not going to force you to stand up or do any signaling right now. I want you to feel whether you can embrace both of those, because my guess is that in this room there are people that are very resistant to the first half and others who are very resistant to the second half. I don't want us to be among the sophisticated Christians who cannot take the word hell on their lips, let alone fire or brimstone or outer darkness or gnashing of teeth or torment.

No, no, we're too sophisticated for that. That's not who we are. I don't give a rip about sophistication.

I want truth. I want to know, God, are these people that I hobnob with day after day, are they on their way to destruction? And if so, I know what love requires. And there are others who are so jealous to guard that truth that they're afraid to death of fighting any evil in this world.

It's going to look like liberalism, for goodness sakes. Well, it can look like whatever you want to call it. It's just what verse 12 says we should do.

So there it is. I'm done. I'll just try to sum it up.

We have a father because we've come to Jesus, and none of us, the abortionist, the mom, the baby, none of us deserves anything but wrath. We're children of wrath. And Jesus comes into the world, gets his arms around us, and draws us to himself, and forgives our sin, imputes righteousness to us, adopts us into God's family, and now God says, I love you.

You are my child. I will meet every need that you have. I'll always be there for you.

Now you go, and whatever you wish that other would do for you, you do that for them on every part of this planet, with every kind of suffering, especially the horrible place to which people are going if they don't hear and believe the gospel. Which means that we're gonna, we're gonna get down dirty with real practical needs that people have, and at every single moment of our shoveling, and digging, and carrying, and bandaging, and hugging, we're gonna be praying, give me a way, give me a way into this heart, because this will mean nothing if they perish. I hope that we can be together on.

As we build one people, one of the banners flying over this one people is, we care about all suffering, especially eternal suffering. So Father, I ask now that you would become, by grace, through Christ, the father of every person listening to me. And then in that sweet, wonderful, unshakable, eternal security in the family, you would send us ways we've never been sent before, to go do unto others what we would like done to us in their situation, knowing all the truth that we know.

And God, never, never let us forget what's at stake, ultimately. I ask this in Jesus name. Amen.

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