

Sermon Series: “Front Page Faith”—Lord of Life Lutheran—Westfield, IN----1/20/2002

Title: “Death with Dignity?”

Text: Numbers 11: 10-15 & Romans 8: 37-39

Introd.: *Ills.: Unhappiness with life*

Theme: In our culture, today, death is often seen as a solution or remedy to our dilemmas and problems when in Christ Jesus his resurrection power and hope is what truly puts dignity back into our life and death

The rising phenomena of assisted suicide/euthanasia

- Across the world and even within our own country assisted suicide is seen as the solution to terminal illness
 1. Definition of assisted suicide: *death by doctor-prescribed drugs that the terminally ill patient swallows. Euthanasia is commonly thought of as death by lethal injection, administered by someone else, usually a doctor.*
 2. A report on what is happening around the world
 - a. The **Netherlands** legalized it with doctor assisted oral medication provided they satisfy the statutory due care criteria and notify death by non-natural causes to the appropriate regional euthanasia review committee.
 - b. **Northern Territory of Australia** Rights of the Terminally Ill Act 1995 passed and affirmed by a Supreme Court of the Northern Territory Ruling; on March 23rd 1997 it was effectively overturned by the Australian Senate.
 3. A report on what is happening in our country
 - a. **35 STATES** have statutes explicitly criminalizing assisted suicide
 - b. **9 states** criminalize assisted suicide through common law
 - c. **3 states** have abolished the common law of crimes and do not have statutes criminalizing assisted suicide
 - d. In **Virginia**, there is no real clear case law on assisted suicide
 - e. Only **Oregon** permits physician- assisted suicide (*source: Associated Press*)
 - f. **ILLS.: Recent Ruling**
- The emotional debate rages mixing the debate with other social issues (abortion, capital punishment, living wills, etc.)
 1. Penalizing the wrong people
 - a. **ILLS.: So What Are You Going to Do About It?!”**
 2. Not addressing the underlying problem— *why would someone choose assisted suicide/death as a solution?*
 - a. There is no dignity in death—it is an oxymoron to the purpose of God for our life
 - b. *“Like water spilled on the ground, which cannot be recovered, so we must die. But God does not take away life; instead, he devises ways so that a banished person may not remain estranged from him.” 2 Samuel 14: 14*

Reasons people feel that taking their own life is the only solution

- First of all, dispelling the false notion that only “*unbelievers*” ever think this way
 1. Plenty of examples of believers asking God *to kill* them when discouraged (so-called *divine assisted suicide*)
 2. **ILLS.: Elijah, Job, Moses, David, Jeremiah**
- **Moses’ discouragement, leading the people of Israel, often mirrors ours** (**PRINT/READ NUMBERS 11: 10-15**)
 1. Convinced that God authors the evil/trial burden (*11a*)
 2. Deceived that God never showed mercy (*11b*)
 3. Amplifying the problem (*burden = heavy lifting; of all this people---11c*)
 4. **ILLS.: Self-imposed Terror**
 5. Dehumanized and isolated **OURSELVES** from other human assistance (*these people—11, 12, 13*)
 6. Taking our eye off God’s possibility and power and focused on our mortality and weakness (*13, 14—lots of*

“I’s”)

7. Not able to step back and see his own, deeper spiritual need and so not able to see the need for a Savior (15)

God’s alternative through the resurrection hope

- **PRINT/READ ROMANS 8: 37-39**
- **It is not about “winning” but the fact that you have “already won”** (*more than conquerors—37*)
 1. “What did I do to deserve this?”
 2. Nothing---Jesus already paid the debt (*nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord.” 39*)
- **Remembering the truth and not focusing on the lie**
 1. “Neither death nor life. . .nor any other thing of creation will be able to separate us from the love of God.” 38-39
 2. “I consider our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.” Rom8:18
- **God’s eternal purpose and beneficial plan for our lives is not thwarted by our life-diminishing illness**
 1. **ILLS.: Lessons from a Boiled Coffee Bean**

Unhappiness with life

Ten percent of the British people believe they would be better off dead, according to a survey. One in four people said they were unhappy in their jobs, while one in three felt exhausted, unappreciated, or underpaid. Christine Webber, the psychotherapist who carried out the survey, said: "Sadly, it comes as no surprise to me that so many people are unhappy at home and work. It seems that people's lives do not live up to their extremely high expectations. It is particularly worrying to see so many people dwelling on morbid thoughts, with a large proportion just plainly exhausted by life."

Assisted Suicide Laws State by State

Currently, **35 STATES** have statutes explicitly criminalizing assisted suicide : **Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Washington, Wisconsin** **NINE** states criminalize assisted suicide through common law: **Alabama, Idaho, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nevada, South Carolina, Vermont, West Virginia** **THREE** states have abolished the common law of crimes and do not have statutes criminalizing assisted suicide : **North Carolina, Utah, Wyoming** In **Ohio**, that state's supreme court ruled in October 1996 that assisted suicide is not a crime. In **Virginia**, there is no real clear case law on assisted suicide , nor is there is a statute criminalizing the act, although there is a statute which imposes civil sanctions on persons assisting in a suicide. Only **Oregon** permits physician- assisted suicide. *Source: Associated Press*

Recent Rulings

- The most significant recent development in the debate over assisted suicide occurred in June 1997, when the Supreme Court upheld two state laws that barred assisted suicide. In *Vacco v. Quill* and *Washington v. Glucksberg*, the court ruled that the Constitution did not guarantee an individual's "right to die." While finding that states could make assisted suicide illegal, the court also made it clear that states could legalize assisted suicide if they so chose.

So what are you going to do about it?!

SIGN AT A RAILROAD STATION: *Beware! To touch these wires is instant death. Anyone found doing so will be prosecuted.*

Lessons from a Boiled Coffee Bean

A daughter complained to her father about how hard things were for her. "As soon as I solve one problem," she said, "another one comes up. I'm tired of struggling." Her father, a chef, took her to the kitchen where he filled three pots with water and placed each on a high fire. Soon the pots came to a boil. In one he placed carrots, in the second, eggs, and in the last, ground coffee beans. He let them sit and boil, without saying a word. The daughter impatiently waited, wondering what he was doing. After a while, he went over and turned off the burners. He fished out the carrots and placed them in a bowl. He pulled the eggs out and placed them a bowl. He poured the coffee into a bowl. Turning to her he asked, "Darling, what do you see?" "Carrots, eggs, and coffee," she replied. He brought her closer and asked her to feel the carrots. She did and noted that they were soft. He then asked her to take an egg and break it. After pulling off the shell, she observed the hard-boiled egg. Finally, he asked her to sip the coffee. She smiled, as she tasted its rich flavor. She asked, "What does it mean, Father?" He explained that each of them had faced the same adversity—boiling water—but each reacted differently. The carrot went in strong, hard, and unrelenting, but after being subjected to the boiling water, it softened and became weak. The egg was fragile. Its thin outer shell had protected its liquid interior, but after sitting through the boiling water, its inside hardened. The ground coffee beans were unique, however. By being in the boiling water, they changed the water. He asked his daughter, "When adversity knocks on your door, which are you?"

Numbers 11:10-15

Moses heard people from every family crying at the entrance to their tents. The LORD became very angry, and Moses didn't like it either. ¹¹So he asked, "LORD, why have you brought me this trouble? Why have I never found mercy in your eyes because you put the burden of all these people on me? ¹²Am I their mother? Did I give birth to them? Are you really asking me to carry them in my arms—as a nurse carries a baby—all the way to the land you promised their ancestors with an oath? ¹³Where can I get meat for all these people? They keep crying for me to give them meat to eat. ¹⁴I can't take care of all these people by myself. This is too much work for me! ¹⁵If this is how you're going to treat me, why don't you just kill me? I can't face my own evil, anymore."

Romans 8:37-39

But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. ³⁸For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.