

# Pro Love

by Stewart Ruch

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*The sermon emphasizes the call to love one another, particularly in the context of legalized abortion, and encourages compassion and action towards the unborn and their families.*

**Duration:** 24:11

**Scripture:** John 15:12

**Topics:** "Abortion", "God's Love", "Compassion for the Unborn"

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## Description

Stewart Ruch emphasizes the profound love of God and the importance of recognizing ourselves as cherished by Him, particularly in the context of the abortion debate. He shares a personal experience of feeling Jesus' closeness and how it transformed his understanding of being a beloved son of God. Ruch calls for compassion towards the unborn and those affected by abortion, urging the congregation to pray and act against this social injustice while also emphasizing the power of confession and the need for love in all relationships. He highlights that the church's response should be rooted in love, prayer, and active engagement in fostering and adopting children in need.

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## Transcript

Father in heaven, we give you thanks for the life of Jesus Christ. And we give thanks, oh Lord, that there's the promise in the word of God that there's no sin, there's no action that can ever ultimately separate us from Jesus when we will confess and come close to him. And I just pray now, oh Lord, that you would come and that your love would be made known through every heart here, illumine our hearts, illumine our minds, Lord, set us into that clear, clear way.

I'm seeing your face, and we pray this in Jesus's name. Amen. You may be seated.

I was recently talking with a new friend, and he asked me a question that surprised me a little bit. He just said, so when was the last time you felt close to Jesus? I guess I was surprised, because I often ask other people that question, but I haven't had it asked of me for a while. So I thought about it, and immediately I knew.

I had been away a few weeks prior to this conversation and had spent some time on prayer retreat, and this doesn't happen at every prayer retreat I go on, but I was in a chapel, and I'd been praying for a while, and I just had a meeting with Jesus that was very tangible, it was very profound. I felt him close, I sensed him speaking to me. Indeed, his closeness grew and grew and grew to the point where I had to get down

on the floor because it felt so heavy, the sense of his presence and his closeness, and I communed with him.

I spent time with the Lord, and I shared that experience with his friend. I said, this is what happened. And then he said, so how do you think Jesus viewed you in that moment? That was a question I've never heard asked ever.

How did Jesus view me in that moment? I'm always thinking about, how am I looking at Jesus, and how am I doing by Jesus, and am I doing okay by Jesus? And I said, I gotta take a minute and think about that. And then I knew. I said, I think he viewed me as a cherished son.

And when I said that, and this was a new friend, something very unexpected happened to me, and I burst into tears. There was something about recalling that profound time with the Lord, and then about imagining that as the Lord saw me there in that little chapel where no one else was, and no one else saw, he actually saw a cherished son, that the love of God broke into me at that moment. And I realized, I really am a cherished son.

Could it be that God actually loves me the way that the Bible tells me he loves me? And it all just flooded in, and I was just filled with God's love, with his cherishing as his son. I keep thinking about that conversation, and I've been different since that conversation, because I've carried with me something even more fully of the love of Jesus Christ, the cherishing of God. I'm gonna speak about legalized abortion today.

I'm gonna speak about the verse from John chapter 15 in which Jesus says, love one another as I have loved you. And I wanna be clear that you have to understand the premise of teaching on this is the premise of Jesus' call to love one another, which is the premise as I have loved you. I wanna be very, very clear.

If you are here, or you are listening to this, and you have had an abortion, or you were the father of the child that was aborted, and you were complicit in the abortion, or you were a friend who drove someone to the abortion clinic, or counseled someone to have an abortion, you are cherished by God. Your sin can be forgiven by the Lord. There is a way of confession and cleansing, and you are cherished by God, and he is seeking you out.

Indeed, it may be this very morning, or this very sermon when you're hearing it that he's finally able to reach you and get that message to you. I wanna speak today about this call to love the unborn child, and to love the pregnant mother who's considering an abortion, and the father who's considering an abortion. I've been very clear that the perspective of our leadership team, the perspective of our archbishop, the perspective that I carry, that this is the great social injustice of our day.

I think it's the most urgent. In saying that, though, I'm not saying that there aren't other urgent and critical social injustices in our day, for there are. We're clearly not a racially reconciled country, nor racially reconciled church.

That's urgent. There are clear and profound issues of compassion being ministered to the refugee and to the immigrant. Trafficking, often of women who don't know what they're getting themselves into in regards to sexual practice is also an urgent issue.

All those issues, we are engaged in in one way or another here at Resurrection. But I hope it'll become clear why we call this the greatest, most urgent social injustice issue of our day. Here's what I hope will happen for you.

I hope two changes will happen. I hope as you listen, this will change how you pray. And I hope as you listen, this will change how you practice compassion in regard to the issue of legalized abortion.

Why are we called to love the unborn child? It's important to understand that since 1973, when abortion at any stage in the child's life, in the unborn child's life, at any stage, is legal, that since 1973, when that was made legal, there have been 55 million children who have been killed through abortion. If all of, let's do a macro on that, if all of those people existed today, that would be the population of England. So our country has been radically altered in ways we'll never fully understand by the loss of a massive percentage of our population.

We don't know of what that means, but certainly it could mean that one of those people might have had the gift and the ability to discover cures to particular cancers, perhaps stave off the profound disease of diabetes, perhaps have written a worship song that we would have loved as a church to sing together, composed a glorious symphony, written an important poem, discovered things as a journalist that were not discovered before. Raised a daughter, raised a son, raised a daughter. While this has macro and sweeping implications to have lost 55 million Americans in 42 years, it also has very personal implications, right? Some of you don't have a brother or a sister living that you would have had, a cousin, auntie, uncle, roommate, business partner.

The loss is actually very, very personal. I think this is important for us to pray in a more connected and different way and to understand how it's truly and profoundly affected our lives. It's also important to understand what happens to the unborn baby in an abortion.

It's important that we know when we drive by the Anchor Abortion Clinic on Roosevelt Road, what's going on inside of there. I'm gonna walk you through what happens, and this comes actually from Planned Parenthood. Planned Parenthood is the key abortion provider in our country.

It's come from Planned Parenthood's website. There are two main methods of abortion. One is vacuum and one is evacuation.

In the vacuum method, the woman is sedated first. Her cervix is dilated, and then once it's dilated enough, there's a handheld vacuum or a machine vacuum that's placed within the cervix. The unborn child is killed by the vacuum and then removed.

If the child is 20 weeks or older, and by the way, medical science has improved to such a degree that it doesn't have to be a 20-week child can be born and survive in almost all cases as a premature baby. Then the method of evacuation is used where the mother is sedated. The dilation is far more complicated, takes more time.

Often a shot is given through the mother's abdomen to reach the unborn child to kill it. Then because the child is larger, the child is dismembered within the womb and then removed part by part. Now I've given this to you almost exactly as the Planned Parenthood website would give it to you, but I didn't use an adverb that they use.

They speak of gently removing the contents of the womb. I didn't use that because another report has been given by an abortion doctor who has eschewed abortion practice, but he practiced for decades as an abortion doctor, and he actually gave and testified before Congress a year and a half ago in May of 2013. And he gave a clear testifying testimony as to what happens in the evacuation method.

And he detailed the details I just gave you. And clearly there's nothing gentle about that. His name is Dr. Leventino, and I would encourage you to consider listening to his objective, straightforward, non-emotional testifying before Congress of what happens in an abortion.

It's just so hard to hear. It's hard to write these words on a page. What do we do as Christians and as Christian Americans? What do we do? If you don't really believe in the power of prayer to pray in the promises of God, then what I'm about to say will sound casual and cavalier and impotent.

But if you've truly become convinced of the power of prayer, then you'll understand that when I say that the first thing we must do, and continue to do, and regularly do, like a widow that keeps going to a judge begging for justice, is that we pray and we continue to give our hearts in prayer. It's fascinating to note that in Illinois, a bright spot amidst this dreary and tragic news that I'm giving you, is that abortions have gone down in 2013 for the first time since 1974. I think in large part, and I can't give you a polling or a data piece to prove this, that has a great deal to do with the fact that churches, Roman Catholic churches, Orthodox churches, Evangelical churches, Anglican churches, have begun to join in a kind of unity in prayer.

It is displayed often in front of the abortion clinic, displayed in little chapels like ours throughout Illinois and throughout DuPage County. DuPage County has the second highest rate of abortions next to Cook County in Illinois, but those are also dropping. And I think it has to do in large part to God's people praying.

So pray for the end of legalized abortion. Pray as well, if you might, that your heart might connect with how Jesus sees this. The cherishing of the unborn child, the cherishing of the pregnant mother, and the grief, the absolute grief, and so much loss.

Ask for that heart. You must then practice even more compassion in your life and in your ministry. It might be that you'll be stirred to work with Karenette, a partner in ministry here in DuPage County that we're very close to, and very connected with.

Indeed, our postulant, Brett Kroll, who'll be ordained the diaconate in February is an employee of that team at Karenette. We love Karenette, and you may wanna work with Karenette. They do phenomenal work.

You can come work with us in our sanctity of life ministry. Simply go to our webpage on our website, [churchofresurrection.org/compassion](http://churchofresurrection.org/compassion). You may wanna march, as we'll do this afternoon.

You may wanna find different ways of being engaged. But also, and perhaps one of the most important practices of compassion can be to understand confession. Indeed, even if you've not been involved in an abortion in any way, the importance of confession for yourself, as well as if you have been involved with abortion, and sinned in that way, for abortion is a sin, the power of confession.

Let me say more about that. As we love the unborn child, so we also, as Jesus has loved us, we love the pregnant mother and the father. I think it's really important to ask this question in any situation of significant sin in our own lives or someone else's life, and that is why.

Why does a woman have an abortion? It's actually really clear among several different kinds of polls, polls both done by pro-choice groups and polls done by pro-life groups, that almost every woman that has an abortion has a sense that it's wrong. She may not articulate it as sin, although many will, but there's a sense that it's wrong and it's not right. The Caring Foundation did a remarkable poll several years ago that's been supported by other more recent polls, in which it asked women after their abortion, why did you have an abortion? This is absolutely critical.

Those women categorically responded in this way. It was the lesser of two evils. It was the lesser of two hardships.

I faced an impossible situation where I viewed motherhood as the greater hardship to abortion, which I viewed as wrong. And what became clear is that these women said very clearly to have had that baby would have been to give up my life. Not necessarily literally, although they were afraid of the medical procedure, but more than that, emotionally, spiritually.

They were saying, I have no financial future. The man who I had this baby with is absolutely gone already. I faced two impossible hardships, two impossible evils, and I viewed motherhood as the greater evil because it meant the losing of my life and the giving up of all that I've planned for and all that I've hoped for and all that I've wanted.

And so I chose what I thought to be the lesser evil, which was abortion. Paul Swope, a writer on this matter, quotes from this very specific study. Unplanned motherhood, according to the study, represents a threat so great to modern women that it is perceived as equivalent to a death of self.

While the woman may rationally understand this is not her literal death, her emotional, psychological reaction to carrying the child is that her life will be over. This is because many young women simply have developed a self-identity that does not include, doesn't prepare them or they're not ready to be a mother. And of course, the same can be said of men and fatherhood.

And of course, the same can be said of me and of you. Because what's the crisis behind abortion? Well, first we see that it's a crisis of love. Love one another as I have cherished you.

We see it's a crisis of not being able to give up your life for a friend, as Jesus talks about there in verse 14 and 13. Greater love has no one than this, as someone laid down his life for his friends. Is there any greater picture and human experience of giving up your life for a friend than of a woman giving birth to a child? Any greater moment where joy and terror and life and death, they all come together.

There's all these fine lines, all these moments in which you're not sure which way things are gonna go, in which one truly lays down their life. In this case, for their child. There's a crisis of love.

There's a crisis of knowing the love and the cherishing of God as I have loved you. There's a crisis of understanding choice. The choice is actually first and foremost in scripture and in Jesus and in God.

Choice is always positioned as you didn't choose me, but I chose you. That you are a person of choice. We as Christians love choice.

We say choose this day whom you will serve, but we say it knowing that God is always the first chooser. That God always makes the first choice and his choice has been to love you and to send Jesus to reach you and to give you the fullness and the power of the crucifixion and the resurrection. That indeed we

have a crisis of choice and a crisis of love and a crisis of knowing love.

And at the heart of it is a seed of sin that says I will protect my life at all costs. I cannot lose my life because it's all that I have. Don't you know that too? I mean, are we any different than that? If you've not been part of an abortion, have you not been a part of saying I will have my life and my life alone? I've had six children.

I love children. I love the call of life. I love the call to be pro-life, but it has turned me inside out.

So often I don't want to give up my life anymore. I don't want to give up my time or the finances that I thought I finally had settled and then they go away again. I know that same impulse so deeply in my own heart and don't you as well? It's the same sin.

The results are different, but the seed of it is the same. It's the same sin that St. Paul committed when he said I will protect my life as a Pharisee and I will do everything I can, including murdering others to do away with these Jesus followers. It's the same sin of Peter who said I will protect my life and not give it away and I will betray the one I told I would never betray because I will protect my life and preserve my life and not give it up.

It's the same. The manifest sins are different and sins have to be confessed in particular, confessed in specific. If you have suffered abortion and you've committed abortion, you've committed a sin that needs particular ministry, but be very clear here.

If you're in this room and you've been a part of abortion, that same seed of sin, I've committed as well. It just looked different. But it's in my heart and it was in Paul's heart and it was in Peter's heart.

And here's the phenomenal news of Jesus. He came for that. He came precisely for this seed of sin.

He came precisely and said in Mark chapter eight, if you seek to save your life, you will lose it, but if you lose your life for my sake, if you give up your life for my sake, the very impulse of those women honestly said they couldn't overcome because they didn't have Jesus and they didn't have the gospel and they didn't have the power of faith and they didn't have the community of the church. We have. And we can be freed from that and released from that and absolutely cleansed from that and stand shoulder to shoulder with Peter and shoulder to shoulder with Paul who happen to be absolutely notorious sinners who were forgiven by the power of Jesus Christ.

We need not let the reality of abortion as overwhelming as it is overwhelm us as Christians because we have an answer. We have a very clear response and it is Jesus and Jesus alone and the forgiveness of sin and the good news of God in Christ. We have it and we have to give it.

One of the most profound things that we can do in the face of legalized abortion, and by the way, before I say that, let me say political advocacy, absolutely. Sanctity of life ministries outside the church, absolutely. They're an extension of the church.

Carry Nut is one, again, that we're very engaged with. Please be involved, be engaged there. But the church as a pro-life movement.

We have everything in Jesus that is needed. It's the work of prayer. It's the work of discipleship.

It's the work of evangelism. It's at the heart of the work that we're called to do as the church. I don't mean that abstractly.

There's a glorious ministry here at Resurrection called Replanted. I love this ministry. I get choked up when I read stuff about it because it's our people saying, we will be engaged in the fostering and adopting of children that others cannot have, that others cannot raise.

Extremely concrete, extremely hands-on. The church doing discipleship, the church doing evangelism. We have five families praying about, will I foster, will I raise, will I adopt a child? And we're helping those families financially, personally, pastorally as I go about and do that work in something like Replanted.

This is very real. There's very many ways. If you try to save your life, Jesus said in Mark chapter eight, you will lose it.

But if you lose your life for his sake and the gospel, you will find it. I hope your prayer life will change, more connected, more engaged. Praying for the end of legalized abortion, praying for the unborn child, praying for the pregnant mother, father.

I hope your practice will change. I hope you'll confess wherever you too know the sin of self-preservation and self-protection. I plead with you to confess the sin of abortion if you've had an abortion.

And to know the profound love that is waiting for you here at Church of the Resurrection. In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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