



On Wednesday, March 22 I was pleased to join a hearty group of NED-LCMS members (some are pictured above) and several thousand other concerned citizens (mostly Roman Catholic, but not all) for a rally on the steps of the capital of CT in Hartford and then a march. The purpose was to uphold and promote human life as a gift of God which is to be honored and protected, from its conception in the womb to its natural end. It may seem as if this was a useless event. Connecticut, after all (at least the great majority of its legislators), prides itself on supporting a women's right to an abortion, and even provides funding to bring women from outside of CT to the state for abortions. Nevertheless, we are called by God to speak out in support of those whose lives are threatened. The Lord says in Prov. 31:8-9, "Open your mouth for those unable to speak, for the cause of all who are passing away. Open your mouth, judge righteously, contend for the poor and needy."

Before attending the rally in Hartford our LCMS group gathered at Our Savior Lutheran in South Windsor, CT for a Service of Prayer and Preaching. My sermon at that Service follows.

Open your mouth for those unable to speak, for the cause of all who are passing away. Open your mouth, judge righteously, contend for the poor and needy. Proverbs 31:8-9

If you have ever heard me teach the Scriptures, you know that I like to stress context. What's the background of the story, of the verses being studied? Who is present? Who is being addressed? Context often makes things much more clear.

It certainly does with Proverbs 31:8-9. ***“Open your mouth for those unable to speak... Open your mouth, judge righteously.”*** A few verses before we're told that these are instructions that the King's mother gave him to help him to rule wisely. So: a good case could be made that they apply to me – I'm the District President, after all; but they certainly don't apply to you, do they? You're not rulers!

And, boy, it's a relief to think that they don't apply to you, that you don't have to open your mouth. This is so especially after considering God's words in Ps. 139: ***“O Lord, you have searched me and known me! You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways.”*** Wow. When you consider this, who are you – and who am I, frankly – to speak up to anyone about what they're doing? Like those who aren't married, yet fooled around and got pregnant and then ended that pregnancy through abortion... well, God knows full well the lustful thoughts and desires that arise in our own hearts and minds. Or, those who fear becoming unable to speak because of dementia, or becoming a burden because of frailty, and so feel it would be better to end it all first – well, do we not have such fears and desire to not be a burden, also? There's just as much sin in our hearts as in the hearts of others, just as much for the holy and just God to hate and punish.

“Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it altogether.” God also knows the many times we don't have a word on our tongues and don't want to say anything – at least, anything good. *“I hope you get what you deserve!”* When it comes to evildoers and people who oppose God's good Word, those are the words that are in our minds, even if not on our tongues... and God knows them!

So... it's a good thing that Proverbs 31 was written for kings, and not for you. It's a good thing that you don't have to open your mouth for those unable to speak, for the cause of all who are passing away.

Oh, but you do! Even sinners like you and me are kings! Our God has made us such.

“Put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness,” says Eph. 4. Put on the new self that God put on you when He baptized you! You were then born again, Jesus says; literally, born from

above, given birth into the Triune God by the Holy Spirit. The God who spoke at the beginning and created Adam and Eve in His image and likeness spoke in your baptism, and in that simple act created you anew in His image and likeness.

In His image. Images are powerful. An image that speaks most powerfully today is the ultrasound image. How clearly it shows that that which is growing within the womb of the mother isn't just a mass of cells but is a developing human being... a baby who is being fearfully and wonderfully made. Thanks be to God for this technology, which enables us to see what would otherwise be hidden from our eyes!

God's Word is His ultrasound. It enables us to see, not only what is hidden from our eyes, but is especially hidden from our minds and hearts. It does so by showing us Jesus. The Bible proclaims Him to be truly God, one eternally with the Father and the Holy Spirit. And yet, He is also a man, come to us in our flesh to be of one substance with us. He came to do what we fail to do and cannot do: love and serve God gladly and completely... including by doing what Ps. 139 says: hating all sin and all sinners. Jesus hated them with such complete hatred that He would not ask God to spare Him when He became all sinners by taking us and our sin into His flesh. He did not speak up to earthly rulers to defend Himself during His trial as a sinner, but hated His own life and offered Himself up to God's hatred of sin and sinners and judgment unto death and hell in our place.

Hatred is such a strong word. But, it is a Biblical word. It's intensity springs from the intensity of love, which will not tolerate or overlook harm that is done, or even threatened, to the one it loves. Because God so loved the world – the sinful, defiant, self-seeking people of a world fallen into sin – He sent His only-begotten Son into sin and death, that we might not remain in it and under His judgment. Because God so loved the world He poured out His Holy Spirit to create us again... to give us a new birth... to make us like Jesus: kings, rulers over sin and death and hell, and over every evil of this world!

You are such kings! For, you are baptized! You are in Christ! Open your mouth, then, for those unable to speak, for the cause of all who are passing away. These words of God in Proverbs 31 are for you!

So, today we march and we speak for those unable to speak, those in the womb whose mouths are being formed. We march and we speak for those who are losing the ability to speak due to injury or illness or frailty. And, we march and we speak for those whose sin has **“darkened their understanding [and] alienated from the life of God,”** even those who are obstinate in their opposition to Him as the Lord of life, whom Eph. 4 rightly says are **“callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.”** We do not only have words of warning and judgment; although, we must at times speak up clearly with such words. But, above all

remember: in Baptism we have been created after the likeness of God... the likeness of our Lord Jesus Himself. As He prayed for those who hated and crucified Him, saying, **“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,”** so we pray for those who are our opponents in the battle for life; for seeing God as the Author and Giver of life. We pray for God to have mercy; for the Holy Spirit to change their hearts.

And He does, as He speaks His Word. One of those who will be marching with us today is one who, although a Christian, when she was in her teens and early 20's believed in such things as a woman's right to choose. Like many people, even many Christians, she did not look clearly and carefully at the meanings and intents that lie behind phrases such as “the right to choose” and “women's healthcare.” God's Word led her to see the truth, and she now **“opens her mouth for those unable to speak, for the cause of all who are passing away.”** Another prominent example is Abby Johnson, whose story you probably know from the movie, *“Unplanned.”* She ran the largest abortion clinic in TX. But finally, it was ultrasound, the gift of God given through the wisdom of men's minds, that showed her the truth of what she was doing: taking the life of a human being in the womb. Then the ultrasound of God's Word, given to make us wise in Christ Jesus, showed her the One who gave His up life to forgive her and so save eternally the life of every human being.

God's Word makes clear who we are in Jesus and why we are, what the purpose of our lives is now in Him. Like Him in whom we have been born from above and given life eternal, we open our mouths for those unable to speak, for the cause of all who are passing away. We judge righteously and contend for the poor and needy. May God direct and bless our speaking and contending, to the glory of His name and the good of many! Through Jesus Christ, our Lord, our Life. Amen.