

Thesis: People are precious to God!

(The sermon will begin as I interview Jay from the Pregnancy Care Center.)

“Jay, I am thankful for the PCC and I am thankful for you being with us this morning. Ridgecrest has been proud to be a small part of the big dream of the PCC. Let me ask you a couple of questions: First, what is the PCC doing in the area of Abstinence Education, and what results are you seeing? (Jay’s answer.) Second, tell us about how mothers are being resourced and babies are being saved through the efforts of the PCC. (Jay’s answer.) Jay, I want to pause right now and pray for you and Cindy and for all the team at PCC. (Prayer)

(Share why we have not yet received our morning offering . . .)

Why are we doing this? Why do mothers matter to us? Why do unborn babies matter to us? For such a fundamental question as this, we go back to the beginning, back to the earliest record of human existence, back to the Word of God, back to Genesis. I invite you to turn with me to Genesis 1. You know how it begins: *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth . . .* With those profound words we begin the Creation Story, and at every step we hear the bible say: *and God saw that it was good.* Let’s look now at verse 26 and following:

26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." 27 So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. 28 Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

29 And God said, "See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food. 30 Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which there is life, I have given every green herb for food"; and it was so. 31 Then God saw everything that

He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day. (Genesis 1:26-31 NKJV)i

Why are we taking a special offering this morning? Because mothers and fathers and their unborn babies matter to God! “They are **precious in His sight!**”

Children are **precious to God** – and to us! That is why we are engaged in:

- Sunday School
- School partnership
- KTTS Christmas Crusade
- Isabel’s House
- LifeBuilders

Teenagers are **precious to God** – and to us!

- Student ministry
- DYS Graduation at Remington’s
- School Proms at Remington’s
- Special Needs Prom at Ridgecrest

Adults – Single or married, younger or older, are!

- Small Group Ministry
- Ministry to single adults and senior adults
- Mission Trips
- Men’s Ministry and Women’s Ministry

The sick are precious to God! That’s why Joe and Jim and Ken and Phillip and Chaz and Neva and Bob visit and visit and visit!

Those in Assisted Living and Nursing facilities are precious to God! Ask Joe and Nancy and Anita and Dorothy and they will tell you that is why they go!

Those with hurts, habits, and hang-ups that are adversely affecting their lives are **precious to God!** Ask Les and Beverly, ask Gary and Joy, ask Kevin and Chris and the singers and the band and the group leaders and the cooks and many more who serve in Celebrate Recovery!

The homeless are **precious to God!** That’s why we have helped Jim Harriger and the folks at Victory Mission!

Those affected by HIV and AIDS are **precious to God!** Ask Robin and Chris and those involved in Lighthouse Ministry. Ask Geoff and Joy and those who volunteer their time at Remington's to host the APO Christmas Party. Ask them why, and they may well say: **People are precious to God!**

Our soldiers are **precious to God!** That's why we have had a ministry focused on them, and are working to minister to the families left behind.

The people in Haiti are **precious to God!** That's why Southern Baptists and so many others (Convoy of Hope, World Vision, Red Cross, etc.) are responding magnificently! People within our own congregation are affected directly by this tragedy. On Wednesday evening we will have a special prayer service at Remington's because **people are precious to God!**

Let me say it simply and clearly: People are precious to God!

Women who have chosen abortion are **precious to God!** Those living in a homosexual relationship are **precious to God!** Those who are addicted to various substances or to pornography or to any number of other things are **precious to God!** Every person you see is **precious to God!**

President Obama is **precious to God!** If you are a Republican, hear this: Democrats are **precious to God!**; and Democrats hear this: Republicans are **precious to God!**

Every color, every race, every socio-economic class, whoever and wherever: **People are precious to God!**

The person sitting next to you is **precious to God!** (Tell them: "You are precious to God!") Finally, **you are precious to God!** (tell yourself that – often)!

When we dishonor a life, we dishonor our Lord!

How do we know people are precious to Him? If we read Genesis 1 and 2 and elsewhere, we see these things:

1. We know **people are precious to God!** because He designed us in His image. What does that mean? Professor John Rendle-Short, in an essay in *Creation* magazine back in March 1981 said it at least includes our capacity

for “language, creativity, love, holiness, immortality and freedom.” On the website Gospel Way, a writer indicates that the image of God includes these realities: Man has rational intelligence; Man has a will and a power to choose; Man has emotions; Man has a conscience; and Man has a spirit nature. To say it simply and leave the mystery in place, God made us to be like Him! We know **people are precious to God** because He designed us in His image.

2. We know **people are precious to God** because He dignified us with His mandate. Genesis 1:26 and following establish what some have called the creation mandate or cultural mandate. It is summarized by [Nancy Pearcey](#) in her book *Total Truth*:

In Genesis, God gives what we might call the first job description: "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it." The first phrase, "be fruitful and multiply" means to develop the social world: build families, churches, schools, cities, governments, laws. The second phrase, "subdue the earth," means to harness the natural world: plant crops, build bridges, design computers, compose music. This passage is sometimes called the Cultural Mandate because it tells us that our original purpose was to create cultures, build civilizations-nothing less.

To be human is to be dignified by our creator as co-creators in our worlds of influence. Our mandate from God dignifies our very existence! We know **people are precious to God** because He dignifies us with His mandate!

3. We know people are **precious to God** because He died for us while we were still sinners. When we failed to bear accurately the image of God, when we failed to carry out the cultural mandate, God did not throw the clay away! He already had a plan (Before the world began, God had a plan.)! I know this is not explicit in our text, but we see the first hint of it in Genesis 3:15 where God pronounced a curse on the serpent who deceived Adam and Eve (*He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.*) God saw the fall and He saw the remedy – His own Son dying for the sins of the world. More than anything else, the cross remind us that **people are precious to God!** The work of Christ was in part to restore in us the image of God. *For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.* (Rom 8:29-30)

Paul tells us, in Colossians 3:8-11, *But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, 10 and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, 11 where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.* We know that **people are precious to God because He died for us!**

Imagine for a moment if all the world understood who God is and that we are His! Imagine how the world would change if every person knew there was a God who matters and that people matter to God, that He designed us for His glory and dignified us with His mandate and died on the cross for us! Imagine what if every person began to see every other person with new eyes, saying: **You are precious to God!** “That will never happen,” you say, and on this earth you are right. But what if **we** did? What if every one of us who are followers of Christ looked at everybody else with the acute awareness that **they are precious in His sight**? Isn't it still possible for God to use us to change our world?

So here is my challenge: Look in the mirror and say: **I am precious to God!** Look at everybody you meet, especially those in your own household, and say to yourself: **They are precious to God!** Then, by the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit, love them for Christ's sake! Finally, look to heaven and say, “Thank you, Lord!”