

How Did a Medical Procedure Become So Politicized? – Part 3

The last two posts explored the history surrounding the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* and the implications this decision has on pregnant people. Today's post will look at global implications of overturning *Roe* and also what the Bible has to say about fetal life and abortion. I appreciate you sticking with me as we delve into an extremely controversial topic.

As we've seen in the previous two posts, the issue of abortion was used to garner support for a conservative religious political movement based on racism in order to keep certain white people in power. The Bible is clear that racism, which is a form of oppression, is wrong. The implications of banning abortions are both racist and misogynist. Despite the misogynistic and patriarchal practices of His time, Jesus elevated women. He also socialized with the poor and the marginalized. Jesus' commandments to love God and love people (Matthew 22:36-40*) compel us to seek to understand the implications of the politics and policies that impact us and our neighbors. Let's take a look at global trends in reproductive rights and then look at how banning abortions in the US affects our neighbors around the world.

Since 2000, the global trend has been for countries to expand abortion rights. To restrict them puts the US in line with countries such as Nicaragua and more recently, Poland, and out of step with over 30 other countries who have expanded abortion rights.

Laws and policies in the US have far-reaching implications around the globe. The US is the largest global health donor in most countries around the world. The Helms Amendment (to the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961) impacts low-income countries when the US sends them financial aid for health services. While technically these funds can be used for abortions in cases of rape and incest, in practice, they are not, even when young girls are raped and become pregnant, often by family members. This young group of vulnerable people (ages 10-14) have the highest maternal mortality rate of anyone anywhere. This is one of the reasons the World Health Organization calls abortion a "life-saving procedure" for its ability to save these young lives who are pregnant through no fault of their own.

As an aside, the Hyde Amendment is a similar law that prohibits federal funds to be used for abortions in the US. This means that Medicaid, a government-provided health program for primarily lower income people, cannot use federal funds for abortions. This law directly negatively impacts the very people who cannot afford an abortion, let alone the costs of raising a child. Both the Helms Amendment and the Hyde Amendment disproportionately impact pregnant people of lower income status, those of color, and often those who are young.

The controversial crux of the matter for many people is when they believe life starts: at conception, at fetal viability (the point at which the fetus can live outside the womb, usually at 23-24 weeks of gestation), or at birth. As we saw in a previous post, the Old Testament supports the view that life begins at birth. Exodus 21:22-25** sheds light on the view that the fetus was considered property, not a human life. There was no "eye for eye, tooth for tooth" when a

pregnant woman miscarried due to physical violence unless she herself suffered serious injury. Numbers 5:19-21*** depicts a priest-induced abortion.

Sometimes in our religious fervor we lose sight that not everyone believes the same. Religious freedom in the US means not having someone else's religious beliefs forced on us. Respecting another's view and allowing them choice over their own health is important. Pregnant people's circumstances are complicated and nuanced. There is no one-size-fits-all. Hence, having agency over your own body is extremely important.

Another point that often gets overlooked is that overturning *Roe v. Wade* tips the balance between the fetus and the pregnant person undeniably in favor of the fetus. This imbalance significantly devalues the life of the pregnant person, someone who is made in the image of God. Perhaps a more compassionate approach would be supporting the pregnant person's choice up until fetal viability. After that point, both the life of the fetus and the pregnant person would be protected. This allows pregnant people agency over their own bodies and supports the fetus at viability.

In summary, the issue of abortion is a tool used to promote a white power structure in our society that benefits mostly wealthy white men and the women who support them. The underlying reason of the politicization of abortion is racism and its impact is both racist and misogynist. Although I've covered many potential results, other implications of overturning *Roe v. Wade* will continue to become apparent to each of us, to this country, and to the world. The intended and unintended consequences will impact everyone unless we can replace this tide of hatred and oppression with love and compassion, and restore the dignity of pregnant people everywhere.

What can you do? If you disagree with the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, you are not alone. The majority of Americans believe the right to abortion should remain, at least in some form. The obvious thing you can do to help turn back this tide of oppression and to show mercy, is to vote. Choose candidates that are pro-choice in the upcoming mid-term elections this November. Select pro-choice federal and state legislators as well as the down-ballot local offices, such as sheriffs and district attorneys. Consider giving political contributions to these candidates. Emily's List (<https://www.emilyslist.org/>) is a political action committee (PAC) that funnels funds to women candidates who are pro-choice.

Other things you can do to make your voice heard is to peacefully protest. Call or write your representatives in Congress and in your state legislature. Give to or volunteer at organizations that are working to protect reproductive health rights, such as the American Civil Liberties Union (<https://www.aclu.org/> or the local ACLU chapter), NARAL Pro-Choice America Foundation (<https://www.prochoiceamerica.org/>), Planned Parenthood Federation of America, Inc (<https://www.plannedparenthood.org/> or the local chapter), and the Guttmacher Institute (<https://www.guttmacher.org/>).

Thank you for reading this 3-part blog series. I hope that it has opened your eyes to the nuances of a very controversial issue. If you learned something new, consider sharing those learnings with those in your sphere of influence. Feel free to forward these posts to them. As you consider the many tentacles of this issue, prayerfully contemplate how to use your voice and your power to instigate change to help your neighbors, those God has called you to love.

*Matthew 22:36-40 - "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

**Exodus 21:22-25 - "If people are fighting and hit a pregnant woman and she gives birth prematurely (per footnote - or she miscarries) but there is no serious injury [to her], the offender must be fined whatever the woman's husband demands and the court allows. But if there is serious injury [to her], you are to take life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise."

***Number 5:19-21 - "'Then the priest shall put the woman under oath and say to her, "If no other man has had sexual relations with you and you have not gone astray and become impure while married to your husband, may this bitter water that brings a curse not harm you. But if you have gone astray while married to your husband and you have made yourself impure by having sexual relations with a man other than your husband" – here the priest is to put the woman under this curse – "may the LORD cause you to become a curse among your people when he makes your womb miscarry and your abdomen swell."

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