

**Hungering for a Godly Nation**  
**Caring for the Poor and Marginalized**  
**Isaiah 58, Psalm 139:1-18**  
**Sermon Outline**

**Introduction:** Caring for our country will inevitably involve us in some hot-button issues. We will look at a few of them, asking the question, "Which high moral principles are at stake?" We will not be advocating how to vote, however, since voting is a limited and short-lived strategy for advancing moral principles, and when it comes to political strategies we need to respect each other's consciences so that no-one in the church feels like a second-class citizen simply because of the strategy he wants to pursue. Today we will think about God's love for the poor and weak.

**I) God's attitude toward the poor and weak**  
**A) He champions their cause**

**B) He calls us to join his 'fast'**

*vv 6-7: Is not the fast that I choose...to break every yoke...To share your bread with the hungry...and not to hide yourself from your own flesh.*

Jesus' 'fast'

**C) Meaning for us**

Not the way to earn God's love, but evidence that we are inside it  
Care for the poor and public policy

**II) Caring for two groups of the poor and weak**

**A) The unborn**

How are we to think of them, according to the Bible?

- God's attentive handiwork
- Persons
- Defenseless with no place to hide

**B) Their mothers**

- Persons
- Often weak

**C) The unborn, mothers, and public policy**

**Conclusion:** Hope and cleansing for us all

### Questions for Reflection this Week

- 1) Reflect on the following: “The church, from the pulpit, has the obligation to declare and embrace God’s high moral standards (say, the Ten Commandments, the call to love God with all our hearts and to love our neighbors as ourselves). But the moment we move to political and social strategies (that is, our fallible efforts to move the culture into greater conformity to God’s high standards), the church, from the pulpit, has the additional responsibility to protect the consciences of its people from each other, so that no one in the church feels like a second class citizen over strategy.” Pick an issue in the present political debate that concerns you deeply. What high moral standard is at stake? Try to separate from the standard the range of strategies that are aimed at asserting or advancing that standard.
- 2) Read over Isaiah 58. The people of God, apparently in some sort of trouble (failing crops, enemies at their gates...), have been crying out to the Lord. List all the things they have been doing in their quest. What is God’s explanation for why he is not responding?
- 3) Describe in detail the “fast” that God chooses (vv 6-7, 9b-10). Is God’s ‘chosen fast’ in Isaiah 58 an isolated incident, or does it reflect the sort of ‘fast’ that God chooses all the time?
- 4) How does Jesus life and ministry reflect the “fast” that God chooses?
- 5) What does God promise to Israel if they join him in his chosen ‘fast’ (see v 8-12). What do the promises mean? What do they hearken back to in Israel’s earlier life? What do they point forward to? What might they mean for us?
- 6) List the evidence for the value and/or personhood of the unborn child from Psalm 139:13-18. How does the psalm speak to the various definitions of personhood that are used in the present public debate? Reflect on the fact that unborn persons are not only defenseless, but are also completely exposed (they cannot run away and hide).
- 7) Reflect on the following: “Anyone who cries out for the safety and protection of the unborn must with equal zeal cry out for the safety and protection of the mothers-to be. They will wrestle hard to find ways not to have to choose between one group and the other.”
- 8) Oftentimes people who choose abortion have never encountered the Bible’s argument for the personhood of the unborn; they have been persuaded that what is in them is not a person. Others have chosen abortion, for a range of reasons, despite what they knew about the personhood, either from the Bible or by intuition. Regardless of the understanding or the circumstances, God is full of grace, forgiveness, and love for any who turn to him. Take to heart the following passages: Matthew 11:28-30, 1 John 1:9, 2:1-2, Romans 8:1-2, 31-39.