

Coach Jim Harbaugh

July 17, 2022

Plymouth Right to Life

We Were Made to Be Courageous Pro-life Event

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Jim Harbaugh:

[...] I'm just so grateful for that opportunity and just want to start with what I'm for--with my beliefs. I believe in having the courage to let the unborn be born. I love life, believe in having a loving care and respect for both life and death. My faith and my science are what drive these beliefs in me. Jeremiah 1-8 "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you. Before you were born, I set you apart. I appointed you as a prophet to the nations. Ah, sovereign Lord, I said, I do not know how to speak. I am only a child." Science tells us there is new life at conception, there is new DNA, not the same as any other, including the mother and the father. I believe there's a nuance in the case of the mother's life being at risk, where science and medicine should inform these decisions.

Jim Harbaugh:

I know that this issue is controversial and understand there are varying opinions in this room, in our country, around the world and I truly respect that. I am passionate about this issue, I know many people on all sides are. Passion can make the process messy, but when combined with respect, it ultimately produces the best outcomes. This process has been passionate and messy, but I have faith in the American people to ultimately develop the right policies and laws that support all the lives involved. I recognize that one's personal thinking regarding morality of a particular action may differ from their thinking, regarding whether the government should make that action illegal. There are many things that one may hold to be immoral, even a majority, yet the government appropriately allows because of some greater good or personal, even constitutional right.

Jim Harbaugh:

Ultimately, I don't believe that is the case with abortion. Yes, there is conflict between the legitimate rights of the mother and the rights of the unborn child. One resolution to that conflict would result in what I believe is the death of that unborn person. The other resolution may result in an incredible hardship for the mother, family and society. Seemingly no good option, no good outcome, two bad options. Between those resolutions, I will always choose the latter, hardship, a lesser bad outcome, to the death of an unborn child. Recognizing the potential hardship being imposed on the mother and family, I've devoted just as much, if not more time and financial resources to the support of vulnerable mothers, families, children, orphans, and foster children. And while I advocate for pro-life laws from our government, I advocate just as aggressively for laws and government and private programs that will support the vulnerable mother, families, children, orphans, and foster children.

Jim Harbaugh:

Ultimately, the individual decision will not be based on words or slogans, but hard realities. Most are faced with the hard reality that the outcome will not be a win. "I can't care for a baby. I can't handle the responsibility nor do I have the financial wherewithal to do so." That's what I want to change. If that doesn't change, the reality of abortions happening will not change regardless of the laws. So recognizing that neither two options will potentially be good outcomes--one certain death, the other may result--*may* result--in incredible hardship, but also a tremendous opportunity for incredible joy. In God's plan,

each unborn human truly has a future filled with potential, talents, dreams and love. And yet their lives are threatened by those who would deny them their right to life. I have living proof in my family, my children, and the many thousands that I have coached, that the unborn become amazing gifts from God who make the world a much better place. To me, the right choice is to have the courage to let the unborn be born.

Jim Harbaugh:

To relate this to the game of football, it would be akin to playing to win, rather than playing not to lose. Placing your trust in God and in hope that you will be supported by your family, community, state and country and your brothers and sisters in Christ. God has provided the resources to bring all incredible joy. We must take steps to get closer however hard it may seem. Psalm 139, "You made all the delicate inner parts of my body and knit them together in my mother's womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex. It is amazing to think about your workmanship, it's marvelous and how well I know it. You were there when I was being formed in utter seclusion. You saw me before I was born and scheduled each day of my life before I began to breathe. Every day was recorded in your book." David who wrote this scripture was later called, a man after God's own heart.

Jim Harbaugh:

And as you read these scriptures and others, it's clear that God values life and sees life while it's still in the womb. And all life is sacred from the womb to the tomb. Adoptions, support for the hurting, foster care, education for a better future. It all matters to those who are truly whole life. I want to share a personal story with you. As I said, the way I think, what I'm for, my stances, come from faith, come from science, but they also come from experience. And I like to do this thing with my own kids and with people that I meet, because I'm really interested. "What was your first thought in life? What is the first thing you remember?" The first thing I remember, is being about three and a half years old. My dad Jack Harbaugh was speaking to a group of people at a baseball field, could have been Eaton or Xenia, one of those two.

Jim Harbaugh:

Somehow three-year-old me found my way out to the third baseline and I was in the coach's box and I was just playing in the dirt. And I remember looking over and seeing my dad, microphone at home plate, no idea what he was saying, but that's my first memory in life. My first *horrific* memory of life came when I was five or six years old. I think we were living in Bowling Green, Ohio. I don't know how I became aware of it, through what medium or told or books or movie or something, whatever it was. But I became aware that in past societies they would kill the baby. If a baby was born, they would let it out into the elements to starve or die or thrown into a fjord or over a cliff or to be eaten by animals. And that was the most horrific thing I had ever heard of, to that point in my life.

Jim Harbaugh:

When I was eight or nine, we were living in Iowa City at the time. And I was watching the news and the news reporter talked and showed footage of a dumpster, where a dead baby was found in a dumpster, presumably by the parents, in my mind and it's going around. And also to that point in life, the most horrific thing I had ever heard of or could imagine. When I was 10 years old, we were now living in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and that was 1973. It became legal through Roe V Wade to—again, in my mind, 10 years old-- kill babies. And that to me at 10, I can remember thinking vividly about it, and thinking about

it in my room on Anderson Street, "That's no different. That's no different than the baby in the dumpster. That's no different than barbaric societies of the past, who would kill their babies."

Jim Harbaugh:

And I remember sitting up in that room and I was thinking, "I could take that baby. I could use some of my lawn mowing money. I could use my snow shoveling money. I could feed that baby. It could stay right up here in this room with John and me. And that baby would have some fun sometimes, sometimes it would have some fun." And to this day, it still to me, remains the most horrifying, horrific thing imaginable that any society would not take care of their young, would not let the unborn be born, would kill their babies. So I really appreciate it, the opportunity tonight. And thank you all, thank you all for your generous listening.

Father John:

So again, just thank you.

Jim Harbaugh:

Thank you.

Father John:

Thanks for being here, thanks for doing this, thanks for stepping out. I mean, courage is... We were trying to determine a theme for tonight. And I think the two of you landed on our theme. You got the, "we were born for this, may they be too, right?"

Jim Harbaugh:

Yeah.

Father John:

And courage is one of these really rare virtues. It's the willingness to fall in battle, is how it's classically defined by the ancients. And your being here is, let's be honest... really courageous.

Jim Harbaugh:

Well, I have to tell you that the picture you painted and before people see it, the point you were making was so good. I mean yeah, we see what domestic violence looks like. I mean, there was a time that people dramatized war, like it was some wonderful thing. I remember watching Band of Brothers and on the video really seeing, I mean, just how horrific war is.

Father John:

Yeah.

Jim Harbaugh:

Or when I saw Roots at age eight or nine years old.

Father Riccardo:

Yeah.

Jim Harbaugh:

I mean, it's much different than what some people try to portray through words. Words can be deceiving. They can mislead us, but when you see it, you know it.

Father Riccardo:

Yeah. And that's why it's often, unfortunately the issue is left as words, it's left as rhetoric. So Jim first, so what is it that you would say---so say you get a guy in college who's playing for you, which is an all too real scenario, who his girlfriend is pregnant and he's thinking of an abortion. And he comes to you, just like George was talking about coming to talk to you as a mentor and father figure. What kind of advice do you give him? What do you say to guys when they come to you?

Jim Harbaugh:

So I treat my players just like I do my own kids. I don't treat my own kids any different than my own players. So the message is the same, for my daughters, I've told them that if they do become pregnant, that I want to see them have the baby. And after the end of that term, when the baby's born, if they still don't feel like they are in a position to take care of the baby, give it to me. I say the same thing to our female employees at Michigan, "After your term, if you don't want the baby, Sarah and I'll take it, we've got a big house. Give us that baby. We'll make a few additions onto it as well."

Jim Harbaugh:

And then to my boys or my players, same message that I want them to be a loving supporter. Nobody gets pregnant without the man as well. It's been too long that we've made this just the woman's responsibility. We have to do more as men, not less and encourage them to be a loving father for the family that they've started. And I've told them straight up too, "When the baby comes and you can't take care of it, she can't take it, you can't do a baby. Also, give it to me and us, my family." So that's what I would tell our family, whether it's anybody in our family or our family on the football team.

Father John:

What would you say to some of the younger people who are here, who are afraid to act on... So you guys are acting on what you know to be true. What would you say to those who are here--and maybe they're not so young--who are afraid of that? How would you inspire them and rouse them and encourage them to not care about the pressure that often comes our way?

Jim Harbaugh:

Yeah, much like I would at halftime of a football game when talking to our players, I mean, this is what you've chosen to do. You've chosen to be a football player. You have trained all summer long. You have gone through grueling two a days and practices. And now it's time for the game, get in the game and fight tooth and nail. You believe in your brothers, you believe in this team, you believe in yourself, let's get in there and fight tooth and nail. Now, if there's somebody that believes, and you're going to have to teach me on belief, I heard you talk earlier and I must be --'Stand for' -- Maybe there's a better word for me to say.

Father John:

Yeah.

Jim Harbaugh:

But if you stand for something, then I mean, what kind of person are you, if you don't fight tooth and nail for that. And the last thing I would say to you is, and a lot of people don't want to think about it this way, but the truth is you get to choose your haters by what you stand for. I want to be on the side of David. I want to be on your side. I want to be on God's side.

Father John:

Yeah.

Jim Harbaugh:

I want to be on the side of those unborn children.

Father John:

Yeah, amen. Beautiful.

Jim Harbaugh:

And George said it earlier. I mean, it's probably our favorite saying on a team amongst coaches to players, players to coaches, players to players, coaches to coaches, Rhett will tell you, Lou Hansen will tell you, the guys will tell you, I mean, "Your actions speaks so loudly, we cannot even hear what you're saying. Your action speaks so loudly, we can't even hear what you're saying." And I just thank everybody here by your actions. Just being here tonight, I appreciate it.

Father John:

It's beautiful.

Jim Harbaugh:

Everybody here.

Father John:

It's beautiful. So let me ask you maybe one last thing. What can we do collectively? How can we make an impact? We've talked a little bit about some things tonight, but from your perspective, what can we do?

Jim Harbaugh:

I thought you might ask that.

Father John:

You did, didn't you?

Jim Harbaugh:

I did, I did. So I wrote down a few things here, if you don't mind. First to recognize that millions of women will feel hopeless during this time. And the church and us will need to have compassion, not a voice of condemnation. My heart goes out to women who have gone through unplanned pregnancies, and we need to train men to lovingly own responsibility for families they create. We need to be active in adoption and foster care. We need to continue to support ministries, who rescue women, who are

victims of abuse. And we need to pass laws to support these initiatives. Our talent, our resources, put those into action, like George said. Not words, but when it comes time to action, we have a chance to be active. You talked about, we have a chance to vote in November. I mean, that's the least amount of effort it would possibly take to do anything. And then let's step it up from there [...]

Father John:

[...] I just want to ask you one more thing. There are so many men here, a lot of fathers here. I'm just wondering, because you have this unique opportunity to coach and to form young men sometimes who come from tremendous home lives, sometimes who don't. And sometimes come from great examples of fatherhood and sometimes don't. Is there something you might say in a very special way to fathers here just to calm them, rouse them?

Jim Harbaugh:

I think we've done that tonight. I think we've probably spoken to the fathers, to the men, right? I mean, that you have a family, you've started a family, you know what that's about. Whether they're football players that are on your team, whether they're children that are in your home and these children have these big, wide open hearts, that this world loves to step all over. Who's going to stand guard? Who's going to protect them? You are, I am, the fathers are going to protect them and need to protect them. And that's what you've been called to do, that's what you've been called to do by God. That is your God given responsibility.

Father John:

Love it. Thanks. That was great. Thank you, much. Appreciate it. Thank you.