

2019

PRAYING THROUGH

*Advent*

CARE  NET

1



*"And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you, so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints." — 1 Thessalonians 3:12-13*

---

**S**o, here we are, brothers and sisters. Advent.

This year, I'd like to invite you to join me again as we prepare for Christmas. Starting this week, I'd like to share a few thoughts and two or three things that I hope you'll pray with me about.

Advent is a season designed to remember what it is like to actively wait for something. Proverbs 3:12 tells us: *"Hope deferred makes the heart sick, But when the desire comes, it is a tree of life."*

Christ is that for us. He is our hope realized. And our relationship with Him is paramount to our spiritual health. That is why it is so critical that we continue to not only reach out to women and men considering abortion with a message of truth and love, but of the everlasting and never-changing hope that is found in Christ.

May this Advent bring you ever closer to the Father's heart as we prepare to celebrate the birth of His only begotten Son.

**This week, please join me as I pray:**

**For mothers and fathers facing pregnancy decisions** to find an enduring hope despite their situation that would encourage them to choose LIFE for their unborn children.

**For all those who feel they have no hope,** that they would hear the story of the Holy Child in the manger and learn for themselves where their true hope and help lies.

**For families who have chosen life but are struggling financially, emotionally, or spiritually,** that they would be surrounded by members of their families and communities and given new reasons to look with anticipation towards the future.

## 2



*"And he went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, saying: 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord; Make His paths straight. Every valley shall be filled And every mountain and hill brought low; The crooked places shall be made straight And the rough ways smooth; And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'" — Luke 3:1-6 (NKJV)*

---

**T**he Bible has a lot to say about love.

In Matthew 22:38–40, we read:

Jesus replied, "'You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments."

Every law and demand, hinged upon love. Theoretically, then, if we could just love God right and love each other right, everything would just fall into place.

...Right?

Unfortunately, humans historically have a real problem with getting it right. Even if we get close, we inevitably can't keep it up for long. So the Heavenly Father decided that He wouldn't just tell us what love is supposed to look like.

***He'd show us.***

Christmas is an important chapter of God's cosmic love story. In it, we see clearly demonstrated the Father's love for his Son.

The family unit is one of the very first places that a child learns to love and to be loved. It provides formative experiences on what love "is supposed" to look like.

The Christ-child was placed by the Father into the care of Mary and Joseph, a mother and father united in marriage. The Holy Family was *wholly family*. Jesus was also born not to a wealthy family, where a servant might have done the bulk of the work raising Him, but a poor family where both parents would share it.

## 2



I've seen plenty of evidence through the years that mothers and fathers are both critically important for a child's best outcome, but it wasn't just His Son's well-being at stake that first Christmas. It was **ours**.

The Heavenly Father also loved us—**all of us**—so much that He sent His only Son to us. Christ came to love us, knowing how offensive we were in our sin. He heard our voices with mortal ears, and learned our faces with mortal eyes.

He touched us with mortal hands, healing wounds and illnesses and broken hearts. He preached with mortal lips of God's unfailing love for us.

And then, He would ultimately die a mortal death on a rugged cross, defending that love eternally from the grave and Hell.

We serve God and minister in His mighty name, knowing He did infinitely more for us than we can ever repay.

And we do it for Love.

**This week, please join me as I pray:**

**For mothers and fathers to be challenged to marry and to choose marriage when facing pregnancy decisions together**, that they would form with God the three-strand cord that cannot be easily broken and provide a loving and God-fearing family for their children.

**For the unborn whose lives are in jeopardy**, that their parents' hearts would be turned towards them and they would live and be loved and cherished as gifts from God by their parents, natural or adoptive.

**For our culture**, that we would become a people who universally recognizes the intrinsic value of every life and who loves each other as ourselves... including the unborn.

## 3



*"Now as the people were in expectation, and all reasoned in their hearts about John, whether he was the Christ or not, John [the Baptist] answered, saying to all, "I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire. And with many other exhortations he preached to the people."*

— Luke 3:15-18 (NKJV)

In Luke 1:44, we hear of John the Baptist leaping for joy at the approach of his unborn cousin, Jesus Christ. Elizabeth knew that the unborn child that Mary carried was hope embodied and she rejoiced with her child for it. John was celebrating the approaching end of his people's wait for a Savior. The approaching end to sin and death's tyranny.

Later, in Luke 2:10, the angel announcing the impending birth of Christ to the shepherds tells them, *"Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people."*

The order of that is incredibly important. The angel tells the shepherds to first stop fearing what is in front of them—here, it's his own angelic presence—so that they can then hear the vital message that follows clearly.

He tells them to stop being afraid, so that they can focus on the joy of what is coming to pass.

That resonates loudly with the ministry that happens every day through Pregnancy Decision Line, our network of over 1,100 affiliated pregnancy centers, and churches as they minister to those actively considering abortion.

The list of fears changes from parent to parent, but the underlying problem is the same. They are so focused on the fear that they miss the important message: that the new life growing is a celebratory event... despite any circumstances.

Maybe they've lost their joy. Maybe they're overwhelmed with anxiety or guilt. Situations can easily rob us of it without the foundational joy that comes of salvation. Of what that babe, grown to adulthood, did for us at the cross. It is imperative that we look for opportunities to share the Gospel with everyone

# 3



struggling with a pregnancy decision, so we can address their fears and reach them with a life-affirming message of abiding JOY.

**This week, please join me as I pray:**

**For parents considering abortion because they think a child will steal the joy from their lives,** that they would be awakened to the wonder of an innocent new life coming into being and find it to be a cause to celebrate.

**For children born into difficult circumstances,** that they would be profoundly aware from the earliest age of God's delight and joy in their existence, and blessed with a contagious and enduring spirit of joy rooted in identity with Christ that spreads to those around them.

## 4



*"Now Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste, to a city of Judah, and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord."*

— Luke 1:39-49

---

**O**ur peace matters to God.

The world, however, can't deliver the peace that the soul seeks. True peace—the perfect peace of the Lord, like man knew in the Garden before the Fall—has to come from Him.

But the world is loud, filling our ears with all kinds misinformation about how one finds peace. About what peace even is.

Is it financial security? Is it health? Is it having a ten year plan, and being eight years in? A good family? The ancient Israelites had just as many different ideas about what "peace" looked like as we do.

So many women and men considering abortion today do so because they are rattled to the core about the power of their unborn child to shake up their world and change it forever.

***God knows a little something about that.***

You see, in His perfect wisdom God sent His only Son to us. And Jesus was sent to intentionally change the world forever.

After generations of separation from God, after countless bridges made of sacrifices, mankind was offered the opportunity to walk again with God in the flesh on earth. God didn't just off us "a" peace, but the *Prince of Peace*.

## 4



The Lamb of God was born in a manger—maybe among a few other sheep mingled with the donkeys and cattle—to be the last blood sacrifice that the Father demanded of the world.

He wrapped his only Son in a mortal skin, to walk among us. To teach us. So we could hear from his mouth what peace is. And then He would die for us. Because of His birth, His life, and His death, we can know and have peace, and have it eternally.

**This week, please join me as I pray:**

**For the the Lord's peace to settle on expectant mothers and fathers,** that they would not worry for a future with their children, and they would find peace and security in the knowledge that God holds their futures and accept the Prince of Peace's lordship over their situations.

**For ourselves,** that we would be instruments of peace to our family, friends, and neighbors this Christmas and after, including those who may be struggling with unexpected—or unexpectedly complicated—pregnancies.