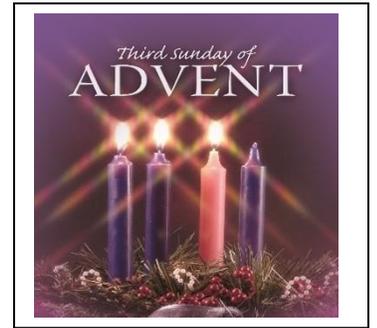


# 'The Prayer Impact'

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Advent Sunday of a Covid- Christmas

### December 13th, 2020

Dear Partner In Prayer Team,



*"When Jesus spoke again to the people, He said, 'I am the Light of the world. Whoever follows Me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.'" **John 8:12 (NIV)***

*"I am the Door; whoever enters through Me will be saved." **John 10:7 (NKJV)***

*"For we walk by faith, not by sight." **2 Corinthians 5:7 (NKJV)***

*"That you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light." **1 Peter 2:9 (NIV)***

Were you ever afraid of the dark? Growing up, I remember God using my childhood fear of being afraid of the dark to actually bring me to a place of openness and readiness to receive Christ as my personal Lord and Savior. I so thank Him for such a wonderful salvation which called me out of sin's darkness and into His marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9). As this week has progressed, I've noticed people getting their Christmas lights up. My mother-in-law even she said: "It doesn't surprise me that people are putting out more Christmas lights this year, after the year we've had, they are desperate to see the joy of Christmas lights!" I say, "Amen to that!" It is true that we are finding people more than ever in need of finding hope through seeing the light



of Christmas. We know, from God's Word, that it's not just seeing lights lit that brings our hearts and souls the healing and encouragement we need, but the actual faith and trust in Jesus, who is our light! We are spending this Advent season tracing the seven "I AM" statements of Jesus given us through the Gospel of John. And from our previous time in God's Word we learned that "Jesus is the bread of life", we now turn our hearts and thoughts to where Jesus said: "I am the Light" (John 8:12); and "I am the Door" (John 10:7). So, think about this for yourself: "If you were to measure your spiritual life and walk with Christ as a box of Christmas lights, what would be your answer as to the condition of your soul?" My lights are...

1. Not out of the box yet, tangled and forgotten in the attic.
2. Shining, but missing a few bulbs, and blinking on and off.
3. Needing replaced.
4. Perfectly lit and aglow.
5. Half on, and half off, blowing fuses.

## 6. Plugged in, and inviting others like a 'spot-light' to see Jesus.

If anything has been learned through these last few weeks of praying through quarantine, it is this: that Jesus is always enough! He doesn't want us to trust in anyone or anything to give us the life that only He can give. We need to trust Him, and come to Him for life. When Jesus said, "I AM" He was describing Himself by the three English letters to help us understand His nearness and power to live our daily lives as the ever present and real Son of God! Jesus is more than a man. More than a martyr, revolutionary, or even a great Rabbi. Jesus is more than a super-star! So "Who is Jesus?" Jesus is One who can "save us from our sins" (Mat. 1:21). There are many who say, "I know about Jesus." But do they actually and truly know Jesus? We pray that through this Christmas season, people will see that Jesus is all we really need! And oh, we do need Him! You and I are not by chance, but by God's choosing. His hand formed us and made us the people we are. He compares us to no one else- we each are one of a kind. We lack nothing that His grace can't give us. He has allowed us to be here at this time in history to fulfill His special purpose for this generation. We are so glad to proclaim His excellences who have called us out of "darkness and into His marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9). So, if you remember the Motel 6 commercial where they would leave the porch light on for us? We know that the Lord desires us to come to Him in a welcoming way this Christmas, and so today's message is entitled: **"Leaving the Door Open and the Christmas Lights On!"**

While preparing for this week and praying for many in our church body who have tested positive and are healing safely from Covid-19, God reminded me of three principles for prayer: the power, the importance, and the admonition to keep the prayer light on!

### **A. The power supply of prayer comes from God!**

No matter our desires and abilities, we all receive the same power and energy to pray. And it is given us from God the Holy Spirit. How often people say, "I'm sorry, all I can do is pray." We do hear it often, but that isn't a statement of excuse or weakness. It's not a small unremarkable statement. When we pray for others, it is backed by the most amazing power from the God of the universe Himself! John Wesley, that great revivalist of prayer said this: *"It is God alone who, by His own almighty power, works in us to achieve what is pleasing in His sight. And all outward things- unless the Lord works in them and by them- are weak and beggarly elements. But through prayer, our God longs exceedingly to prove Himself the Faithful God and the Mighty Helper of His people. The more we pray, the more conscious we become of our unfitness to pray, and the more power is given in Christ entirely at His disposal."* (*The Ministry of Intercession: A Plea for More Prayer, pg. 89.*) Our prayers work and are powerful, because God is the power behind all the prayer! It's hard for us to remember that to pray is the greatest thing we can do.

**B. Prayer is the most important thing we can do during dark times and moments of suffering and crisis.** So, when you feel weak, or unable to make a difference in your prayers, if you feel they are just words and you don't know if they are even going above the ceiling, know that God is the power for you. Just place yourself before Him and look up into His face; think of His love. Think of His wonderful, tender, pitying love. It is the Father's loving heart that will give light and warmth to yours. Just do what Jesus says, "Just shut the door and pray to your Father, which is in secret." Is it not wonderful? Yes, wonderful to be alone with God, our infinite, loving Father. E. M. Bounds wrote this as a great encouragement: *"More time and early hours for prayer would act like magic to revive and invigorate many a decayed spiritual life. More time and early hours for prayer would be manifest in holy living. A holy life would not be so rare or so difficult a thing if our devotions were not so short and hurried. A Christ-like temper would not be so rare if our closeted prayers were lengthened and intensified. We live shabby because we pray sparingly."* (*Power Through Prayer*, pg. 82).

Just as we display and take the time to put out the Christmas lights, make sure you are doing all you should to keep a prayer time for yourself. Here again, are the ten top prayer needs for us as a church family...

**1.** Protection and healing for those who have come in contact with Covid-19; that God will protect our church, people, and keep us open and safe. There are several in our membership who have tested positive and are safely finishing their quarantines. They have been in touch with their doctors and health care professionals, and they have been following their doctor's guidelines. Do understand that these individuals were not infected severely enough to need to go to hospitals or be put on respirators. Let this bit of news encourage you that even our worst fears of this pandemic are real for some, and we in no way want to diminish those who catch this virus, but it isn't always a horrible experience for all. We praise the Lord that when the doctors clear these individuals, they are returning to their jobs, families, and workplaces. They also will be returning to church with us.

**2.** We need to first pray that we truly live and share our church verse for 2020: "We walk by faith, and not by sight!"

**3.** We need to pray for a new church verse for 2021. If you have any suggestions, do pass them along to me! I am really serious!

**4.** We need to pray that people will return to worship with us. I love this poem I found:

***"Some go to church to take a walk,  
Some go to church to laugh and talk.  
Some go there to meet a friend,  
Some go there their time to spend.  
Some go there to meet a lover,  
Some go there a fault to cover.***

***Some go there for speculation,  
Some go there for observation.  
Some go there to doze and nod,  
The wise go there to worship God!"***

5. We need to pray for the Marks family that they are able to get the paperwork, visas, flights, and everything needed to return to Thailand before December ends. Just this week, I received this update from Steve and Kelly Marks: ***"We heard good news last Friday. Anna's passport is finished and will be shipped to us this week. We are praising the Lord for His perfect timing. We will be waiting on original paperwork to arrive from Thailand (after we receive Anna's passport). Then we will be driving to the Thai embassy in New York City to request a visa to return to Thailand. Your prayers in this matter are greatly appreciated."***

6. We need to pray for our missionary, Joel Stewart in quarantine right now in Cambodia.

7. Pray for hearts in our area to be open and ready for Christmas Eve. Our desire is to hold a Christmas Eve service outside because of Covid-19; pray for wisdom in logistics of having that service or not. Pray that we can. We have reserved a tent. We are planning it to be an outside, safe, old-fashioned "candlelight" service. Pray also for the planning and for others to participate.

8. We've been planning a mailing for our church area, but because of the pullbacks due to the Covid-19 restrictions, we have decided to plan the mailing for after the New Year.

9. Two individuals have come forward in the last week seeking to join our church. They have come to the conviction that they want to not just believe in Jesus, but they want to be used, and feel conviction to join our church family as a step of true faith to show love by serving Jesus. I am starting a church membership class around the 27<sup>th</sup> of December and will have it on Sunday nights so that we can have a new membership Sunday just in January. If the Lord has been speaking to your heart about this, please join us.

10. We need to pray for Tim and Helen VanSumeren who last week helped lead our service, and Tim preached a message for us while we were unable to attend. Please express thanks to them for their help and availability despite their current schedule and commitments. They sacrificed time to help us. We need to be very grateful.

If we are praying, we must not just give fragments of prayer here and there. We must remember devotedly to pray for others.

**C. The light of prayer must never go out!** Let Jesus be front and centered in your heart this week. During this time, we often let the interruptions and daily busyness keep us from prayer. We often are so busy; we don't stop a moment to understand that others are not experiencing the same things we are. I want to share a true story by Jerry Voll entitled, *"An Unmerry Christmas:"*

*"We had never experienced anyone taking offense at the singing of Christmas carols. Indifference occasionally, mocking once or twice, but not offense. My wife and I looked forward each year to joining a group of friends for a night of door-to-door caroling. Imagine our shock, then, on receiving a letter from a neighbor, riled that we had come uninvited to her doorstep and sung several carols. We had meant no harm. Our only intent had been to spread a little Christmas goodwill around the neighborhood. But for this neighbor it brought no cheer at all. Judging by her note, we had pretty much spoiled things for her.*

*Screwing up our courage, my wife and I phoned her and asked if we could pay her a visit. We mentioned her note to us and told her we were eager to make amends. She listened, then gave us her address and invited us for a cup of tea.*

*The following afternoon, the three of us were sitting at her kitchen table. As Jane (I'll call her that) poured the tea, she said to us, 'I suppose you want me to tell you why I was upset that you came here to sing at Christmas?' 'We would appreciate that. We certainly didn't mean to offend you.' 'No, I'm sure you didn't. And that's one of the reasons I didn't go to the door while you were singing and ask you to leave.' 'It was on a Christmas Eve when a drunk drove his car into my mother and two of my daughters as they walked along the hedgerow on the side of the road nearly thirty-four years ago. My mother saw the car coming and tried to shove the girls into the bushes, but it did no good. The driver never stopped and was never discovered. But my mother and my two little girls' lives were snuffed out like a light forever. That night drained away all my joy in Christmas, for good. Now, each Christmas, when everyone else is partying and carrying on, I have that black night to look back on. I was lost in those memories when your group of carolers came along. I want no part in the worldly ways of celebrating Christmas. There's nothing merry about it for me.'*

*My wife and I listened in silence. We hadn't expected this at all and were quite shaken by Jane's story. What could we say? 'We're so sorry,' we offered. 'If we'd only known, we wouldn't have sung at your door. Please accept our apologies.' It sounded so inadequate. 'Thank you for being so open with us about your loss, Jane,' my wife said. 'We can't begin to feel what it must be like for you to relive this each Christmas,' I added. 'But our hearts go out to you, and from now on we'll think of this burden you carry. In some small way, we'll try to carry it with you in our hearts.' Jane thanked us warmly for understanding and refilled the three cups. The conversation from that point on was very friendly but short.*

*As we were about to leave, we took Jane's hands in ours and prayed the Gospel asking for her to know the peace of heart that the real Christ Child offers to each of us when we trust Him to be our Lord and Savior. We closed asking her to know the gift of His love to her. And she replied, 'Thank you. I do reflect each year on the first Christmas, and I pray asking God for light.' Then with a quiet chuckle, she admitted, 'Sometimes, I even find myself humming, Hark the Herald Angels Sing!'*

As my wife and I walked home, we spoke of how many people must find it hard to have a merry Christmas, and how little we know of the burdens others carry, even our closest neighbors. We reminded each other of the gift Jesus brings; the gift we and all mankind desperately need, and which the hearts of all people long for, but as Scripture says: 'God is light and in Him is no darkness at all' (1 John 1:5), 'Yet, men loved darkness rather than light' (John 3:19). This Christmas, now miles and years away from that encounter with Jane, I remember her as I sing my timeless Christmas carols, 'Oh, come to my heart, Lord Jesus, there is room in my heart for Thee.'" (Fishwrapper, December 3, 2019).

*Will you pray with me?*

***"Our Father so bright and pure, we Your children who know You delight ourselves in Your presence. We are never happier then when we are near You. We pray that we may be people of prayer, taken up with it, that it may take us up and bear us up as on its wings toward heaven. We come to You thankful for the light of Salvation that has been ignited within our very souls by Jesus our wonderful Savior. Thank You for the perfect pardon of every sin, and blotting out all our sins like the new fallen snow covering we witnessed this week, and let them never be seen again. Lord, You know that some of us have not yet begun to live and shine for You. Lord, would you be born in someone today? Dear Savior, we are Your children, as we delight in You, do so very much delight in us. Don't be impatient with us, but keep us near You. Keep knocking on the doors of men's hearts. O Lord, we are sighing more that we want You! We are crying more and more after You! The more we have of You, the more our lives are brighter and shinier. Bless, we pray, at this time, our entire church. May we be Your light in every part of this 611 corridor and in every part of the earth. We ask You to use every one of us according to the ability we possess to be used. Let Your peace reign in us. Let holiness adorn us! Let the light of Christ descend and show through Jesus Christ our Lord. We pray, amen."***

**Leaving the porch light of Christ on,  
Pastor Corvin <><**

*Quote: "It is Christmas every time you let God love others through you... yes, it is Christmas every time you smile at your brother and offer him your hand."  
... Mother Teresa of Calcutta*

## HOW TO BE A REBEL IN 2020:

1. Love God
2. Love Your Country
3. Think For Yourself