

'The Prayer Impact'
**2nd Advent Sunday of a Covid-
Christmas**

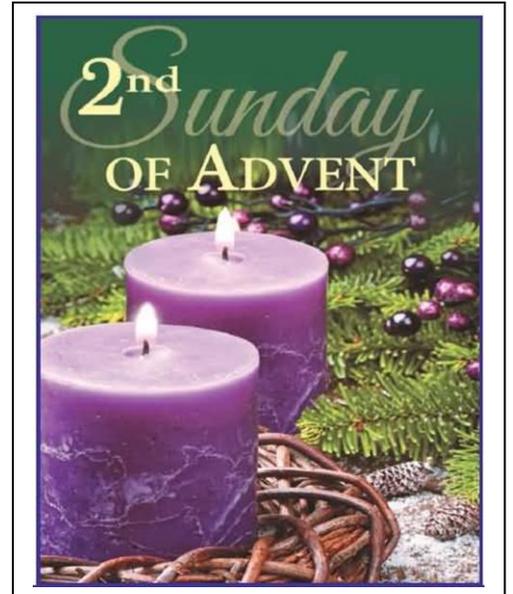
December 6th, 2020

Dear Partners In Prayer Team,

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

"And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete. This is the message we have heard from Him and proclaim to you, that God is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all... walk in light." **1 John 1:4-5 (ESV)**

"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth." **3 John 4 (ESV)**



Growing up, our church never celebrated Advent. It wasn't until later on in life while living in Iowa, that Lori and I were introduced to the beauty of the Advent season. We used Advent devotionals, lit candles and wreaths, or often just used a "calendar" countdown. But now that we are here celebrating our 15th Christmas season with you as our church family at Palisades Community Bible Church, we want you all to know how wonderful it is to know you are our lovely and loved church family. We had such joy lighting the first "hope" Advent candle as the Seltzer family with you last week. As we continue the tradition each week through December, our prayer is that you will find your own ways to remember Advent with your families, or even personally at home.

Advent begins on November 29th and ends on Christmas Eve. Many churches celebrate Advent with the lighting of candles during the Sundays before Christmas and each candle that is lit has a spiritual significance. Don't let its meaning just be a liturgical or meaningless ritual that happens every year if you go to a church building. Let the hope, joy, love, and peace of Jesus walk you through this time of year. Again, that is why we are calling this sermon series, "Walking With Christ Through a Covid- Christmas." When you actually think of it, this season is going to be unlike any Christmas we've ever celebrated. And trust me when I say every church around us in the United States is going into this season all the same. This Covid pandemic has stripped every church from unlimited to limited personal meeting of worship. Every church has lost people. Every church has seen people who came to church who were not regulars now abandon their church-going. Many are trying to fulfill their attendance through online services and messages to keep safe. That is wonderful! I praise God that we have that capacity. But every

church is also struggling how to return to live, in-house worship. Every church is seeing people leave. What does that say about followers of Christ? Has God used this pandemic to prune churches? So, you see how difficult and different this Christmas will be? But don't let it stop you from seeking a true genuine and wonderful relationship with Christ. And may our greatest prayer be that Christ's second advent is soon!

Christianity Today describes the meaning of Advent:

Advent symbolizes the present situation of the church in these "last days" (Acts 2:17, Hebrews 1:2), as God's people wait for the return of Christ in glory to consummate his eternal kingdom. The church is in a similar situation to Israel at the end of the Old Testament: in exile, waiting and hoping in prayerful expectation for the coming of the Messiah. Israel looked back to God's past gracious actions on their behalf in leading them out of Egypt in the Exodus, and on this basis, they called for God once again to act for them. In the same way, the church, during Advent, looks back upon Christ's coming in celebration while at the same time looking forward in eager anticipation to the coming of Christ's kingdom when He returns for His people. In this light, the Advent hymn "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" perfectly represents the church's cry during the Advent season:

***"O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appears.
Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel."***

While Israel would have sung the song in expectation of Christ's first coming, the church now sings the song in commemoration of that first coming and in expectation of the second coming in the future.

I want to give you our top prayer requests during this Second Advent Sunday called the Sunday of "Peace!" The seventh verse of the song says this:

***"O come, desire of nations, bind
In one the hearts of all mankind
Bid Thou our sad divisions cease
And be Thyself our King of peace."***

We are praying for peace and calm through these Covid-19 days.

Remember our greatest prayer needs as a church? Here is the list again with one or two amended.

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.

- 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.
- 4.** We need to pray that people will return to worship with us.
- 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.
- 6.** We need to pray for our missionary, Joel Stewart. He left this week to fly to Cambodia. I had an update and will copy in the bulletin.
- 7.** Pray for hearts in our area to be open and ready for Christmas Eve. We are having a Christmas Eve service outside because of Covid-19; pray for wisdom in logistics of having that service or not. Pray that we can.
- 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 27th 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 are our guest missionaries living in the apartment upstairs. I promised that I would share with you the great miracle of prayer that has occurred this last week. Saturday night, Tim and Helen came over to our house to share their joys and answers to prayer. All last week when the mission agency reported that they were fully funded, they hurriedly pulled together the extensive paperwork to buy tickets and apply for the visa to enter Thailand. As they were working on the huge regulations, they needed to have proof of money and all the funds in place to retire in the country. They had to have signed affidavits that they are not criminals. But when they tried to have the police sign that sheet, the state and local police all said they couldn’t do that in person. They had to get that online, which would takes days. So they found out that they could only apply for the visa to Thailand in person at the New York City Embassy. They had to have all the proofs of being negative with Covid-19 testing and also had to have tickets for the flight to Thailand. But the tickets couldn’t be purchased until they received a visa. And the visa couldn’t be given unless they had the proof of flight and tickets. So they gathered what they had and went to the New York Embassy. They were allowed to enter and sat waiting to see the representative for Thailand. When they were ushered into his office, he was ending a phone call in Thai. Not meaning to listen in, Tim and Helen understood the close of the conversation. The representative man was talking to his father in Thailand, who has cancer. Tim and Helen introduced themselves using Thai. The man was very surprised. Tim said, “I’m sorry to hear that your father is very ill. Would you mind if we pray with you for your father before we

start?” The man jumped up so excited, “You would do that? I’m Buddhist! What do you want me to do?” Tim said, “Nothing, just listen, and he prayed for the man’s father to be healed.” The man was so moved. He asked why they were retiring to Thailand. Tim and Helen shared that they had been missionaries there for many years in the eighties and that their daughter and family are missionaries there now. The man just thumbed through the large file of documents, and said, “You want the visa today? Come back at 3:00.” Tim said, “We were expecting to come back tomorrow.” The man said, “You can wait ten days, or come back at 3:00 this afternoon; you will have your visa ready, everything is in order.”

They couldn’t believe it. Long story short, God used this moment to move in the man’s heart. So they returned with the visa, they were able to call the



airlines and have the tickets confirmed, and a hotel paid for in Bangkok as 14-day requirement. All of it, and the funds were all waiting for them. They couldn’t believe that during such restricted and shut-down relations to enter Thailand, that

God would open the doors so quickly. And He did. God is so good! Tim and Helen can only say, “It was a huge God miracle! And the seed was planted with that man. Who knows what kind of fruit will occur?”

What does it mean that our joy is complete? Most people think it means that they themselves feel a fullness or happy heart all the time. Is that even possible? Not really. As I was reading 1 John this week, John tells us that when we walk in truth, and join the light fellowship of God through having Jesus as Savior, that it “completes” John’s joy. This Christmas we want to “walk in the Light” as Jesus said: “I am the Light of the world.” John reminds us about the importance of walking in the Light, “And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete. This is the message we have heard from Him and proclaim to you, that God is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all... walk in Light” (1 John 1:4-5). I propose to you that when John mentions that his joy feelings are ultimately met and complete it comes from his reference to 3 John verse four: “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.” I happened to think of a great illustration of this from last Sunday.

Last week when we lit the Advent candle, Lori was lighting the candle, and I was watching our grandson Oliver. When she lit the candle, Oliver, being held by his dad Andrew, made a expressive “Ooh,” and delightedly pointed to the

flame. Oliver was responding to the light. Of course seeing his response to the light filled my heart with joy. John is saying that as he shares the truth that "God is Light" to this world, when His spiritual children respond to that truth, it gives Him the ultimate feeling of completed joy. I as a Pastor want to challenge us, that when we see God's children respond to the flame of God's truth and light, it gives us joy. And with that, If we see a loved one respond to ask Jesus Christ to be his or her Lord and Savior, it is like Oliver responding to the candle; we experience the ultimate joy, seeing our spiritual children come to Jesus and walking in the Light of that truth. Then faith is real. Then we can say we are walking by faith and not sight. Will you pray that you see someone whom you love, a friend, a relative, a neighbor, a co-worker, find and trust Jesus this year at Christmas? If we do, we will receive the greatest of joys! Our joy will be complete.

So, now, let's pray...

"Our Father of Lights, we praise You for the privilege of knowing You. We have walked in the darkness of this old world for so long, that many of us are scared of the darkness. Maybe not with a child-like fear of the dark, but we are fearful in a spiritual sense that this world is profoundly blind and deaf to the Gospel and to the truth of who Jesus is. He is our Prince of Peace and 'Shalom.' Jesus, thank You for entering into the darkness of our world in order to purchase us, possesses us, and save us. Thank You Jesus, that You are the open door that protects us and keeps us for eternity. You are open wide in welcome for us to come to the Father through that doorway of great love and grace. Holy Spirit, grant that we may weep in praise of the mercy that we have found. Make us Your 'lights' this Christmas season. May we tell others as long as we live that You are a pardoning God who pursues selfish sinners, and transforms them into grateful, humble, loving, and sacrificial saints. May Your perfect love cast out all fear in us today. May we shine and reflect our Savior's light. And make our joy complete, as we pray for You to save our friends, families, neighbors, and even those who may be our enemies. Give us boundless gratitude and increasing grace and eternal joy. We pray in the precious Name of the One who laid down His life for us, Amen."

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

Quote: "God grant you the light in Christmas, which is faith; the warmth of Christmas, which is love; the radiance of Christmas, which is purity; the righteousness of Christmas, which is justice; the belief in Christmas, which is truth; the all of Christmas, which is Christ!"... Wilda English