

December 2021



NEW DIRECTION Mustard Seed

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Dear Friends,

As a nation we are, once again, grieved.

A Christmas parade, having been the tradition for over 60 years, with lights, singing, music, dancing down Main Street; spectators and family members along the sidewalks, spirits lifted with “it’s here again; that most wonderful time of year when we gather to celebrate.” And, perhaps more so the lift this year, having been under the oppression of Covid restrictions preventing gatherings last year. Out of the blue comes a red SUV plowing into the parade. A tragic event. Several killed, many wounded physically, masses emotionally scarred (those present and those who have repeatedly watched the video). A dark shadow remains. “Wasn’t supposed to be like this.” “We remember when life was safe and predictable.”



For the longest time I had an image etched in my mind of the birth of Jesus being in a peaceful setting. Mary and Joseph, the babe in the manger, sweet barn animals forming a warm hedge. “Silent night. Holy Night. All is calm. All is bright.”

The true image is one of Jesus being birthed in a city which was in the throes of chaos. Mary and Joseph took the difficult journey, along with the many others who were ordered to Bethlehem by the decree of Augustus Caesar for census. Overly crowded conditions, individuals weary and hungry from days of travel. The greater historical context, important to note, is this was during a time, when for many years, there was widespread oppression and terror: darkness under the iron fisted rule of political leaders.

The story of a coming Messiah is found in the book of Isaiah, written 700 years before the birth of Jesus Christ. In the midst of the current chaos in our country, we can rest assured the Author of Life is actively involved, ever weaving the continuation of His story in history. God’s timing is perfect. It was at the perfect time, according to His perfect plan that Jesus was born. His life, death and resurrection were all according to a perfect schedule.

Humanly, we have a tendency to judge God through lenses of our limited understanding coupled with our life experiences. So very often, as a counselor, this issue of a client having an issue against God due to something He sovereignly allowed in their lives, is presented. More often than not this person has decided they can’t really trust God because of this. I remember years ago on New Direction Farm, one of the teenagers, who had a tough childhood, saying “I have an ought against God.” As she spoke of this she crossed her arms over her chest and turned her back against me. Very descriptive of her position with God. She couldn’t understand why He seemed so distant.

The women who are clients of the Mustard Seed, all have the same thing in common: they are coming out of a season of tyranny and oppression with their children. Over the last year we worked with 19 mothers and their children. We are, at this time, working with 10 mothers, 23 children combined. Each has their own, unique story of having lived in a chronic state of instability and unrest. A darkness entered their family circle, undermining a sense of safety and wellbeing. We have the privilege of hearing their stories and coming to know them in a deeper way as we walk with them through this piece of their journeys. Many of you have financially contributed to their various needs: housing, utilities, repairs to homes, safe vehicles, emergency needs, Christmas.

Five of these mothers are still in the throes of fighting for the protective custody of their children. You have provided the funding for their legal representation. Over the years we have met many a mother who took out credit cards to pay for legal counsel before we began working with them. Some had judgements against them due to not being able to pay off the debt. Such a picture: to step out of tyranny only to find you are still tethered to a debt you know you can never pay off. Here is the good news: these ladies have been freed of those tethers. We could tell you story after story of impossible situations, dire circumstances of housing, consistent attacks from ex-husbands, which incrementally became mitigated. “When the time is right I, the Lord, will make it happen.” (Isaiah 60:22) Just as the timing was providentially perfect for Jesus’ arrival to earth, the same is true about God’s timing today in all matter. Essentially the Lord has broken the yoke of oppression from these women.

A few years back an artist presented to us, for the office, a beautiful calligraphy print of her rendition of psalm 23. As I read the psalm I realized there was a section missing. Verse 4: “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and staff, they comfort me.” Not wanting to offend her I said “This is absolutely beautiful (which it was); I notice you have left out part of the psalm.” She replied, “Yes, I did. It is such a beautiful, light psalm I didn’t want to ruin it with that depressing, dark section. My goal is to shine light and lift spirits.”

I found this to be quite interesting. We cannot dispel the darkness through the denial of its reality. It exists. The women of the Mustard Seed can each testify to the Good Shepherd’s presence leading them through the valley of the shadow they have had to walk through. Of course this was not on the map of their desired travels in life. “If any of you have ever been to Israel and have been down to Petra, you will know about this kind of valley where the bottom is only a matter of fifteen to twenty feet across, maybe less, but the walls may rise to as high as eight hundred feet very close together so that at the bottom of the valley the sun hardly penetrates it, it is a dark valley” These women, with whom we walk, can relate. And just as was true with David, their point of safety, of which they can now testify is:

“THOU ART
WITH ME.”



We are thankful that in the midst of this dark world in which we live, we have One, the Master of the Universe, Lord of all creation, who walks with us; His Word a light unto our every step. We are thankful we can trust that He is ultimately in control. We are thankful for the testimonies of the women of the Mustard Seed and how we have seen the Lord's attentive care as He leads them forward. We are thankful for you who have sown so generously into their lives.

Merry Christmas,
All of us at the Mustard Seed

"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.....

For as in the day of Midian's defeat, you have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of the oppressor.....



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For to us a Child is born, to us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and His name shall be called

Wonderful Counselor,

Mighty God,

EVERLASTING FATHER,

Prince of Peace.

—Isaiah 9:6 ESV



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Encompassing Hope and Care For Families.